



Ethan Nyohlm and Adina Jacobs took a simple business idea and harnessed their desire to make it an international success.

As the old saying goes, a lucky break is often about being in the right place at the right time. This couldn't be further from the truth for co-founders of STM Bags (Standard Technical Merchandise), Adina Jacobs and Ethan Nyohlm. Launching STM Bags in 1998 then running the business from Ethan's garage, they basically took to the streets to sell the product, store to store, doing their own packing and delivery. 'We just pulled out the yellow pages and made a list of all the luggage stores and computer stores,' says Adina of the early days.

Starting with just two products, their shoulder bag and backpack were both designed as laptop bags with functional features and a stylish design, a drastic deviation from the dreary black briefcase bag that was the archetypical product available in the late '90s. 'Basically I had a notebook at the time and was going to

Be inspired by...

ETHAN NYOHLM
& ADINA JACOBS

university so I went to the post office and purchased a plastic bubble wrap bag and threw that inside my backpack,' says Ethan about how the idea came about. 'I went online as online purchasing and online marketing was just emerging and I looked and I couldn't really find anything out there except that simple black briefcase.'

Having no luck with door-to-door canvassing, it wasn't until they uncovered an untapped Apple market that their luck began to change, as PCs were sold with black laptop bags and Apple buyers had to purchase their own. 'We found people who were interested in Mac notebooks a little more creative, a little more willing to spend extra money because their laptop was more expensive and they wanted to protect it properly and because we were all about fashion and function our product fit in really well in that market,' says Adina.

The business got the kick it needed when the Occupational Health and Safety department of PricewaterhouseCoopers

IT'S NOT ABOUT AGREEING ON EVERYTHING, IT'S ABOUT BEING ABLE TO WORK THROUGH THE CHALLENGES.

decided they wanted STM backpacks to replace those little black laptop bags in their offices. STM's black backpack became the new accessory for the suit and was spotted all

over Sydney. Soon after, Apple buyers embraced the product. 'We happened to be lucky enough that the colours we chose [for the product] coincided perfectly with the colours of the Notebook that Apple released at the time – it was just pure luck!' says Ethan.

Fourteen years on, they have expanded to four offices worldwide including the one in Sydney and have a range of products from the updated backpack and shoulder bag to iPhone covers and stylus pens.

Ethan says he's seen a lot of changes over the last six to ten months so they have taken a strategic look at their product. 'We've made a huge adjustment on how we think about our market and our product development cycle and how quickly we need to get things to market,' Adina adds.



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

STM was named iLounge's Apple Accessory Maker of the Year Award. Here are their top tips for business success:

- Get your idea down and get familiar with it.
- Stay on track and focused.
- Don't be seduced by quick growth or let the business get out of control.
- Prioritise – don't get bogged down in the small details.
- Stay true to what you wanted at the beginning.
- Have a supportive network of family and friends.
- Make sure the business fits in with your family and lifestyle.
- Start the business how you want to finish it.
- Evolve with what's happening in the world: fashion, technology, etc.,
- Be financially savvy – know how to crunch the numbers.
- Always have enough money to pay your suppliers and the people you work with.
- Choose partners or suppliers you will work with carefully.
- Deal with people how you would like to be dealt (e.g., good communication, honesty, pay them on time).

NEED A BUSINESS PARTNER? HERE'S WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR:

- Find someone who complements your skills and thinks differently to you.
- Someone you can get along with long term – almost like a spouse.
- Someone who will stick with you through the good and the bad times.
- If you don't know a thing about finance, find somebody who does.

WIN

WIN 1 OF 3 STM PRIZE PACKS

Each prize pack includes an STM Ranger Backpack (medium in Bondi Blue), iPad Grip (navy) and iPhone 5 Harbour case (navy) and is valued at \$255. To enter to win, email 50 words or less telling us why you want to win. Entries must be sent to editor@fitnessfirst.com.au and be received before **3 June 2013**. Remember to include your delivery address. The best three entries will win.

