



Paco Collars - Ana Poe

Opportunity Fund helped turn a hobby into a small business success, complete with hard work and dogged determination.

▶ PACO'S FIRST COLLAR

Ana Poe started making leather pet collars in 2002 as a side project during her days working at a dog daycare facility. She began working with leather by making leashes for the daycare's training clients. Her dog Paco (the future company's namesake) was growing from puppy to mature dog and Poe wanted an adult dog collar for him. She was disappointed to only find designs that didn't fit Paco's personality as a friendly pit bull.

"I couldn't find anything that I liked that wasn't also decked out in spikes," she said.

Poe's leather-working mentor suggested that she use her newly learned skills into a craft project for Paco. She turned out a leather collar so popular the dog daycare owner asked her to make more for display and sale at the facility. Paco Collars was born, but turning it into a business wasn't easy.

▶ GROWTH WITH OPPORTUNITY FUND

After trying some traditional alternatives—and some not so traditional ones—she learned about Opportunity Fund from her husband, who had received financing from the CDFI to expand his robotics startup in San Francisco.

"I was amazed that there was even a product out there to help people like me," she said. She was even more impressed with the range of options she was offered. Ms. Poe opted for the smaller \$1,000 loan and was able to borrow another \$1,000 a year later, which helped her build credit and get capital she needed to fill a large order.

"When I got the first loan [from Opportunity Fund], I wasn't necessarily looking to expand," she said. "But sure enough, a year later we had a massive order from Italy that we needed to fill. Before, we didn't have the capital to buy the parts before getting paid for the products. Now, we can able secure parts other companies don't have. It makes our brand more exclusive."

Poe's next big goal is to focus on expanding the company's range by offering their products in Paco Collars outposts and hand-selected retailers around the U.S. When she's ready, we'll be there to help. No begging necessary.

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