

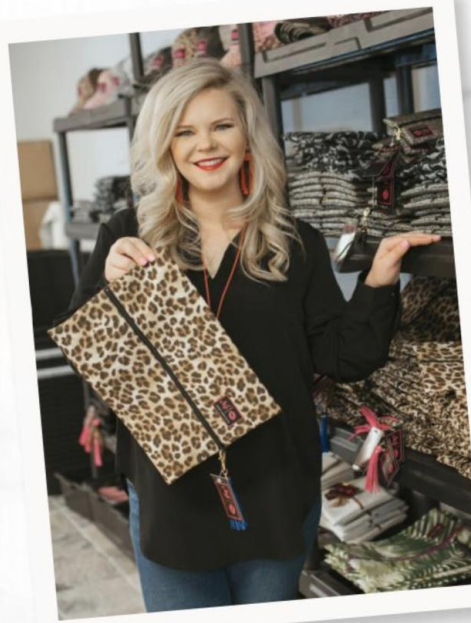
— I AM HOUSTON —

# meredith jurica

## FOUNDER OF MAKEUP JUNKIE BAGS

interview by Eshaan Mani, HFM Kid Ambassador

Meredith Jurica, aka MJ, is the founder and CEO of Makeup Junkie Bag. The Makeup Junkie Bag is a cosmetic bag that lays flat and allows easy and full access to all materials while eliminating the chances that the bag will fall over and spill products everywhere. MJ's bags are all handmade in Texas, sold in more than 2,000 stores nationwide and come in more than 400 trendy styles and seven different sizes. MJ hand-selects each designer fabric for her lines. Houston Family Magazine spoke with MJ about her story as a working mom and entrepreneur, heading a multi-million dollar empire, and about her journey to Shark Tank and back.



### HOW DID YOU GET INTO MAKING MAKEUP BAGS?

Well, I had a completely different career before creating this business. I studied to be a speech pathologist and practiced for 10 years. I've always been a beauty product addict; I was just going on a trip and couldn't pack all my makeup, so I went to Hobby Lobby, a local craft store. And I was like, "You know what, I'm just gonna get some fabric and make a little bag to carry all my makeup in." Then I made the Makeup Junkie bag, which didn't have a name at the time. And I took it on a trip. Then, all my friends wanted one, and I started getting messages on Facebook: "Are you the girl making those bags? Can you make one for me?" So, after making a bunch, I thought I needed to start charging for these. My sister suggested that I make a business out of it. I was hesitant at first, but then I opened a free Facebook

page called Makeup Junkie Bags. And the first month I got like 700 orders just through Facebook Messenger. I opened an LLC in Texas, and I worked out of my home for several months. I started trying to source materials because I was paying full retail for all the materials. I didn't understand how to source bulk or anything like that. And it just kind of snowballed.

### THAT'S AMAZING! YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU'RE NOT FROM A BUSINESS BACKGROUND; WHAT WERE SOME HURDLES YOU HAD TO OVERCOME IN ESTABLISHING YOUR BUSINESS?

Well, first of all, trying to figure out pricing structures and how to see the business world in retail. The business

handbook is already written. But whenever you're new like me, you would take years to study up on certain elements and figure out how to actually survive in the world of business. You kind of learn as you go. But the good thing is that I have a very adaptive personality and anytime I'd face a hurdle I would discuss it with the person I had it with, and keep on going, acquiring new knowledge along the way. I'm way more knowledgeable today than I was three years ago when I started. But I have a lot more to learn too.

### GROWTH IS ALWAYS GREAT, ESPECIALLY IN BUSINESS. NOW, HERE'S A HURDLE: HOW DO YOU BALANCE BEING A MOM OF TWO KIDS AND ALSO A BUSINESS WOMAN?

That is a Tetris game that I play every day. On a given day, I'll have a million meetings, and my kids will have activities, and I have to figure how to be in two places at once. I've done Zoom calls in my car, on my laptop with a hotspot, trying to make everything fit. And then we have some calm days. It's like a roller-coaster. I try to make sure that I never pick one over the other. I never pick my job way more than my kids or pick my kids way more than my job. I try to meet in the middle.

### WHAT IS A MILESTONE OF YOUR COMPANY THAT YOU'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER?

Obviously, Shark Tank is a huge milestone that I'm very proud of and that changed my business. Actress Blake Lively put a picture on her Instagram with my bag next to her in the

seat of her passenger car. But before all of that, hitting our sales goals. I started by working out of my home, and my first office was a little 400-square-foot cubicle that I sublet out of a real estate agents' office. And now I have 18,000 square feet of my own here in Conroe.

### TELL ME ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE ON SHARK TANK - HOW DID YOU GET THERE AND HOW WAS THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE?

I was watching the show, and I thought: "I have a good idea! I want to get on the show!" So, I filled out an application, uploaded pictures of my product, and uploaded videos of myself pitching the product. I guess I kind of forgot that I applied after a while; I think 40,000 people applied for my season and only 80 of us made it onto the show.

Four months later, I was at work and I had two employees at the time and Shark Tank called! I couldn't believe it! I thought that I was being punked for a minute. They asked me to ship them some samples of the bags and send over all the paperwork that showed that I really owned the company. It took nine months for them to whittle through all the people and pick their final contestants. Each month, I'd lose hope and then get a call. And that happened again and again and again.

Then the very last roundup cuts came; there were 500 of us left. So the odds were pretty favorable. I didn't hear from them for six weeks, and one day, I was eating lunch with my staff. I was saying, "It's okay, y'all. I only spent nine months and \$5,000 in lawyer fees and stuff... it's all good!" And then ABC called while we were at lunch, and they're like, "can you be in LA in 10 days?" Of course, I said yes! They pay for the whole trip, they give you money per diem for all



expenses, because you're actually there for about five days. It's not just a one-day filming process, because you have to practice, get your setup correct on set, and get settled. It was such a cool show and I'd do it again in a heartbeat. The Sharks and everyone on set were so nice to me.

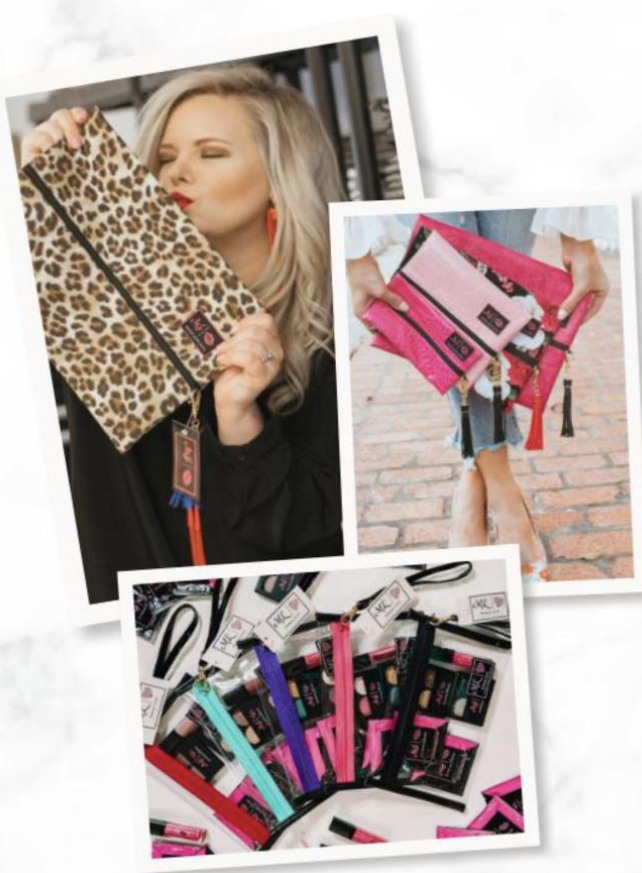
## ARE YOU STILL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LORI GREINER, THE SHARK WHO GAVE YOU AN OFFER IN THE END?

Actually, that is something that a lot of people don't know. So after the show, we had negotiations about the partnership and my manufacturing here in Houston. Lori manufactures more overseas, while I had all these wonderful people sewing for me in Texas. We just couldn't meet up on that, and in an amicable way, I didn't take her money, and I didn't sign the contract. I actually own 100% of the company. That being said, though, we have a great relationship. I went to a party with her about three months ago in LA, and it was so fun to see her and hug her and reconnect. She has always said that if I need anything,

she's there for me, which I appreciate, but we're actually not partners. But the show was amazing for my business overall. There was a surge after that kind of exposure; I'd be lying if I said it didn't skyrocket us and shape us into what we are today.

## AS A BUSINESSWOMAN, WHAT DO YOU HOPE OTHER WOMEN TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR INCREDIBLE SUCCESS?

I hope they take away that it can be scary and overwhelming to take massive leaps, like when I decided to establish my business. But if you take it one little step at a time, and you teach yourself along the way, you can do whatever you want to do. Sometimes I wake up and I can't believe this is my life right now. Don't let fear stop you from doing something that you want. I am very, very happy to own my own company. And I know there's a lot of people out there that have ideas or have things they want to try and do and they're just afraid to leave the safety of a nine-to-five job governed by somebody else. So don't let fear stop you. You only get one life.



**Check out all of the Makeup Junkie Products on their website.**

[makeupjunkiebags.com](http://makeupjunkiebags.com)

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This summer, we're rolling out Collab-Lab, our digital classroom on wheels. Follow Collab-Lab's progress and download activities to do with kids at home at [collabforchildren.org/CollabKid](http://collabforchildren.org/CollabKid). Together, we can make the future bright for all children.

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