

WALL STREET JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 25, 2008

For Entrepreneurs, Opportunity Still Knocks



Bonitas International's Kimberly Martinez, chief executive, (left) and Lisa Harrington, chief design officer

Kimberly Martinez, founder of Bonitas International, a Burton, Ohio-based manufacturer of so-called "functional jewelry" – which includes attractive necklace-type chains to attach to employer IDs or eyeglasses — says that exporting her line to the U.K., Germany and Australia is one of the main drivers behind the company's growth. This year has been especially tough, as "U.S. retailers are more nervous about purchasing," she says. To make up for lower sales in the U.S. and drum up more business abroad, Martinez is planning to attend

upcoming trade shows in the U.K. and Germany — moves she might have foregone in better economic times. However, since U.S. products are generally cheaper in countries where the currency is appreciating relative to the falling value of the dollar, she says, "we have some competitive advantages in these countries that we'd like to leverage. That'll also help us get away from the economy woes in the U.S."