



"We are attempting to appeal to both comfort stores and fashion stores." —Jennifer Lovitt Riggs, founder, Nota Bene

UpClose
COMFORT

Ladies: 'Take Note' Nota Bene combines high style with supreme comfort in shoes built for professional women.

Jennifer Lovitt Riggs knows her target customer—because she *is* her target customer.

Before she founded Nota Bene, a high-end comfort/fashion line for women, Riggs was a consultant in Washington, D.C., working in large systems acquisitions. "I was walking to a briefing across a parking lot one day and started getting a blister," she recalls. "I thought, why is it so difficult to find that balance between good looks and comfort?" Riggs decided to address this void. "I felt there was a need for shoes oriented to women who needed to dress up but were moving and walking all day," Riggs says. When she used to shop for such shoes, offerings came up short. "I could find shoes that were high-quality, comfortable or stylish, but I could never find an even emphasis on all three," she says.

While developing Nota Bene (which means "take note" in Latin), Riggs had 400 women wear-test the shoes. The resulting collection, which retails starting at \$150, offers what those women wanted: room in the toebox, high heels

that are still steady and at least 3/4-inch wide, all-leather soles with added thickness for protection and Poron comfort footbeds. In addition, the latest sizing data was used in making realistic widths and last sizes.

All of the comfort features remain hidden in a sleek dress shoe exterior. The collection offers a range of heel heights and toe characters. "We put a lot of work into revising the lasts, making sure they have the look and architecture of a dress shoe but are built like a comfort shoe," Riggs says. She uses mixed textures and materials in close color families. "Our market wants versatility," she says. "It's possible to have beautiful shoes you can wear with multiple outfits. The woman we are targeting is often thinking in terms of packing: going from the airport to three meetings and then out to dinner, and to a couple of cities in one week. She wants beauty that is versatile and supportive."

Handmade in Spain, Nota Bene debuted at the recent WSA show among the designer lines in the Venetian, and Riggs was pleased with the outcome. "We are attempting to appeal to both comfort stores and fashion stores, and both made orders," she notes. "The reaction far surpassed what we had anticipated; we got some good traction." On the horizon: matching bags to complete the line on the fashion side. —P.G.