

# From one bow tie to family business

BY OLGA RUDENKO  
RUDENKO@KYIVPOST.COM

What happens when you can't buy something that you crave? Most often, the idea just gets abandoned.

But Dmytro Kryvolap, 28, didn't give up easily when he decided this spring that he couldn't live without a tie. What he got out of it is a flourishing business.

"I went shopping for a bow tie, but Kyiv shops only had some black or white bow ties, most of them polyester, of lousy quality," Kryvolap says. "I wanted a bow tie with an interesting pattern, and there was nothing like that in shops."

Instead of dropping the idea, Kryvolap asked his wife Tetiana, who knew a bit about sewing, to make one for him. Patterns were easy to find online. The problem was they could not make up their mind what fabric to choose out of about 7,000 types offered by a U.S.-based website for the purpose.

"The fabrics were really beautiful and we couldn't just choose one or two. So we ordered enough to make 100 bow ties, and thought we would make some for Dima and sell the others," says Tetiana Kryvolap.

Since they weren't very optimistic about potential sales of

**Unlike most of Kyiv shops, Churchill offers colorful, flowery bow ties. (Kostyantyn Chernichkin)**

the accessory, the couple thought they would give them to friends as presents as a last resort. But they were very wrong indeed.

Four months on, the Kryvolaps are happy owners of a successful startup, having sold 150 bow ties in three months.

The first sale came on May 4, just 10 days after their funky fabrics arrived from the U.S. Predictably, the customers came through the social networks – a typical first order for modern-day startups.

By now, the couple have a website bowtie.com.ua, offering dozens of colorful bow ties in four designs. They decided to pick Churchill as their brand name, making a reference to the famous British prime minister and lover of bow ties Winston Churchill.

Their online catalog carries pictures of all bow ties on offer, with individual numbers and descriptions. There are classic bow ties, as well as large and narrow ones, and even bow ties with pointed ends. They all sell for Hr 280 per piece. The Kryvolaps say that income from their new business already makes up half of their family budget.

Dmytro says Hr 280 price is a bit more than bow ties cost in regular Kyiv stores, but is compensated by much higher quality of Churchill produced bow ties. Online

Tetiana Kryvolap cuts fabrics for another bow tie while her husband Dmytro Kryvolap helps her. (Kostyantyn Chernichkin)



shops and auctions like Ebay offer bow ties that start from just two dollars for polyester bow ties shipped from China and go up to \$296 for vintage designer items.

Most of modern bow ties, offered online, are ready-tied, while Kryvolaps only produce old-fashioned "tie-it-yourself" bow ties.

"It's a matter of good taste. Gentlemen must know how to tie a bow tie," says Dmytro.

Happy customers have sent them a number of photos, featuring trendy look, complete with somewhat eccentric bow ties. In one photo, a customer named Vladimir is pictured with a delicate flowery bow tie with pointed ends, and is quoted as saying that he was "looking for a bow tie for a long time, a quality and interesting one, with its

own soul. And thanks to you, the wish came true."

There is a picture of a female customer from Belarus wearing a bow tie over a jeans shirt, and a customer from Simferopol boasting six different ties by the Kryvolaps.

The couple sell three accessories per day on average. All of them are shipped in custom boxes carrying the brand name and logo designed by a freelancer.

But the actual sewing and processing of orders is done by the couple on their own. Tetiana makes the bow ties, using an old Soviet sewing machine, while Dmytro takes care of the rest.

"When the business picked, I suggested that we buy a modern machine, but Tanya refused," Dmytro says. "I've got so used to this one," Tetiana smiles

in response.

With some bow ties made up and waiting for new owners, Tetiana only works for three hours several times a week. She expects more work coming as the winter collection is getting ready. Some of the bow ties will be made out of high quality wool, and will be more expensive than the current lot.

Apart from online clients, the Kryvolaps sell their accessories through Be In Trend shop in Kyiv and a showroom in Moscow, which has sold about 30 bow ties since taking them up in early July.

Only half of their customers are male. "But we have never had a woman over 30 years buying a bow tie. Men over 30 are not rare though," Dmytro says.

Seeing people on the streets wearing bow ties is still rare, but they have made their way into fashion blogs and photo shoots. Some of them feature on the Kryvolaps' website, showing off the ties. The couple's next step is adding classical ties to their collection, in a little while.

Kyiv Post staff writer Olga Rudenko can be reached at rudenko@kyivpost.com.

**WHERE TO FIND:**

Dmytro Kryvolap and his wife, Tetiana, run Churchill's bow-tie shop online at bowtie.com.ua, offering dozens of colorful bow ties in four designs. They also sell their wares at the Be in trend! Shop, 4a Verkhniy Val St., office 205-206, in Kyiv. They can be reached at +38-068-700-7743 and email bowtie.kiev@gmail.com.



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