

Calleen Cordero  
in her L.A. factory



## Q&A: Calleen Cordero

The designer, who has produced her shoe line in Los Angeles for 18 years, talks about how she's overcoming challenges and expanding her business.

By Charlie Carballo

**D**iversity pays off. Since launching her luxury label in 1999, Calleen Cordero has gone on to create and produce three distinct product lines at her factory. While “Made in L.A.” means a lot to the designer, she admits that it can be tough to stay competitive. That’s why she has expanded beyond shoes and into other categories. Here, she tells us more about her strategy.

### How have you been able to expand?

“Business is getting tougher, so that’s why I diversified — and it’s working. I’m doing collaborations, and that’s another way to get exposure. That’s the kind of fresh stuff that keeps my name and art [out there] and production being filled. I make shoes, but I cross-train

lections and venues of distribution. I’ve been diversifying myself and what we’re capable of manufacturing into four new divisions. I’ve diversified not only by making footwear, but also small leather goods and accessories.”

### What is your biggest challenge?



“Business is

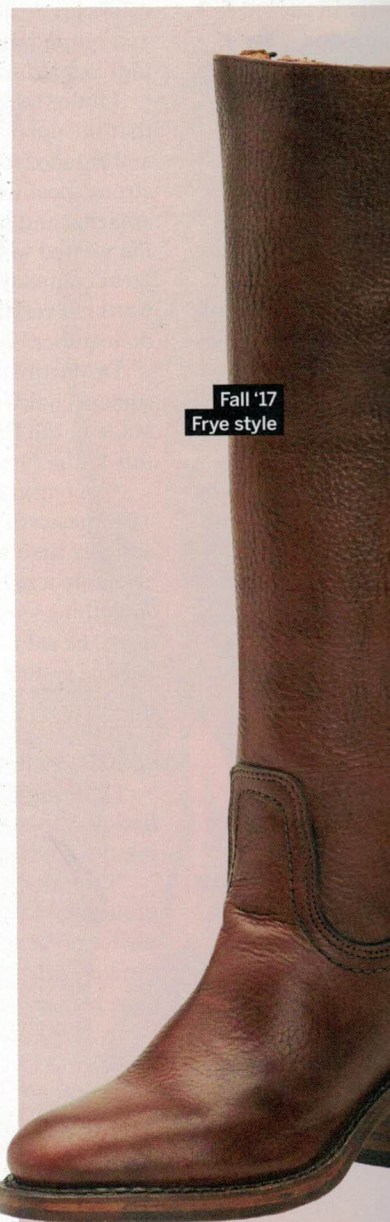
“Workers’ comp [insurance] is my biggest challenge. Now it’s gone up to \$120,000. It could put someone out of business — it’s massive, so we don’t make a lot of money. It all goes to insurance, where it shouldn’t be.”

### How do you think the Trump administration’s pro-U.S. trade rhetoric will affect business?

“If he raises the duties 30 percent, it’s going to make it very difficult. My glue isn’t domestic. All my lasts and forms are made in Mexico. There are some components we have to bring in. The best are from Italy, and I have to bring them in, so it’s becoming price prohibitive.”

# 64%

The percentage of U.S. footwear producers who **employ 10 or fewer people**



Fall '17  
Frye style

## CAUSE AND EFFECT

Frye is committed to doing good through its Made in the USA collection.

This fall, for every pair sold from the line