



SERIES EPISODE 2

Women In Business Leadership: Growth Paths to Entrepreneurship

Intro: Welcome to Strategic Insights, brought to you by PrideStaff. On each episode, we bring you interviews with leading management and employment experts from across the country. Your host for Strategic Insights is Brad Smith. And now here's Brad.

Brad Smith: Hello, and thank you so much for joining us for another episode of Strategic Insights from PrideStaff. This is part two of our three-part series of women in business. Today we are going to talk about breaking down barriers in business leadership and the journey from working as an assistant in the business to owning the business. Joining me on today's episode is Blanca Covarrubias, owner and strategic partner of PrideStaff Visalia. Blanc, thank you so much for joining.

Blanca Covarrubias: Thank you for having me.

Brad Smith: Blanca, let's start off by talking a little bit about your background. How did you first get started in the staffing industry and how did you find PrideStaff?

Blanca Covarrubias: So actually, I have known of PrideStaff since I was 19 years old. That was a long time ago. But during the recession in 2010, I was actually laid off from what I had gone into my career as far as the construction industry. And unfortunately, I was laid off, and so I had to look for a new career opportunity. I couldn't relocate my family. So, I again had known of PrideStaff, and so I reached out to them to see what opportunities they had, and I applied for a recruiting assistant role. They actually had a couple of different ... There was an assistant branch manager and there was a recruiting assistant role, but because I didn't feel that I had the strong skills as far as applying for the assistant branch manager, so I applied for a temp position starting off as a recruiting assistant.

Brad Smith: So, you went from a temp position to climbing the ranks in the business, then?

Blanca Covarrubias: Yes. So shortly after I was hired on as a temporary recruiting assistant, I was hired on full-time into a staffing [inaudible 00:02:09] role, and throughout the first four years, I was able to move into different roles such as a payroll specialist, a PrideStaff financial staffing consultant, running a blended desk. On the PrideStaff side, I was also a PrideStaff staffing consultant as well as the business developer.

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Brad Smith: So, you learned so many different areas of the business, and you went from a temporary position to full-time, climbed to the ranks, got your feet wet in so many different areas. What actually made you decide to make the leap from working in the business to entrepreneurship and owning a business?

Blanca Covarrubias: It was during in 2013 when I decided to go back to school and do my master's program. One of my business projects was to do a business plan on opening up a business. Little did I know, I wasn't even sure what that was going to look like for me. And one day, I saw a couple come in through PrideStaff, and they were actually doing their Discovery Day, and the light bulb just kind of went off and I was like, "Wait, I really enjoy this industry. I've had the opportunity to work in the different roles that I had the opportunity to work in."

And so, then I just thought, "Why don't I do my business plan and actually open up a franchise?" It actually just made sense. And when I did think about the idea, I don't think that there was a question. I just was very excited to be able to have something to where I could put it on paper as a business plan, because I did feel that it was something that I felt very strongly about and was very passionate about.

Brad Smith: What a great light bulb moment, actually doing classwork, realizing that you wanted to be a business owner and then making that decision. Congrats.

Blanca Covarrubias: Yes, yes, yes.

Brad Smith: So, talk to us a little bit about that journey, then. So you went from temporary associate, you were back at school, you're going through your master's program. Who helped you along the way? Were there people that were influential in helping you get from temporary associate to business owner?

Blanca Covarrubias: Yeah, so I was very, very fortunate to have a couple of mentors, coaches that helped me along the way. George Rogers was very instrumental, very ... He really took me underneath his wing and just coached me, mentored me. There was a lot of questions that I had. He was there to answer those questions.

Brad Smith: And for those listening, George Rogers was the founder of PrideStaff.

Blanca Covarrubias: Yes.

Blanca Covarrubias: Yes, George Rogers was the founder of PrideStaff. So again, I think that not very many get that opportunity, so I truly felt very fortunate to have him as one of the best mentors I've had in my career. And again, there was a lot of questions. There was a lot of dialogues that we would have on a daily basis, which really, again, was instrumental in the success of opening up a franchise.

In the beginning, when I first started, Ann Gilbert, which she is the owner of two offices in the state of Arizona, and she was my coach, she was my mentor. She

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really pushed me. She believed in me. I think that that was definitely a huge factor, is knowing that somebody believes in your potential. So, both of those individuals, just a great impact in the success of my career and the direction that I took. I still have a very close relationship with Ann, so I'm very excited. Yeah, they definitely were two individuals that took the time that it takes to really focus on somebody that they believed would be great in this business.

Brad Smith: I think that's terrific. You had mentors that were inside of PrideStaff that knew the inner workings of PrideStaff that could help lead and guide you with the PrideStaff system.

What about externally? When you launched your business, did you reach out to any local associations, work with any chambers, find any other mentors outside of the PrideStaff network that helped you?

Blanca Covarrubia: So as far as, yeah, professionally, there was the Chamber of Commerce, the [inaudible 00:06:36]. There were different organizations that helped set that foundation, especially when I was opening up my business.

Throughout the different career that I previously had, there was some strong connections there, just individuals that I really bounced off information to.

And then one from my immediate family. My husband actually owned his business and still owns his construction business, and so he really was kind of a support on the back end. There were things, dialogue that we had as far as having conversations on starting up the business.

But yeah, I think that throughout the years, learning the different aspects of the business as well as the network that I had, not only individuals within the PrideStaff system, but individuals that I had met prior really set the foundation for me when I went into this opening up my office.

Brad Smith: Now, talking about opening up an office. When anybody launches a new business, there's a few different paths, right? You can look to start from scratch. So, start a business from the ground up. You can look to acquire or purchase a business.

You took the path of buying a franchise, and buying a franchise with PrideStaff. Why did you go that route?

Blanca Covarrubias: Again, it was about helping people. This industry, when I decided to do my business plan during my master's program. Again, I knew where I was at in my career. I really loved it. I really enjoyed working with people. And the next step for me was opening up a franchise.

I think that prior to completing my business plan, I didn't really know it, but it's very interesting because George Rogers, he kind of already knew. There were

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conversations that he had had prior with individuals that he felt that there was going to be the point where I was going to become a strategic partner, yet I never knew it myself.

So, I do feel that, again, the passion for it ... We don't go around, or I wasn't going around saying, "Oh, one day I'm going to own my own business. One day I'm going to own my own business."

But I do remember in my master's program, the graduate director said, "There's a lot of individuals that will create a business plan, and then they will file it in their filing cabinet. There's a very small percentage of individuals that will actually implement their business plan." He said, "Who will you be?"

And I think to me, when I did figure out that I wanted to open up a franchise, I was going to build a business plan. Obviously, a lot of the modeling was already set in place through PrideStaff. But those words, I do remember that it was clear, I didn't want to just file with my business plan in a filing cabinet. I wanted to make sure that I executed this business plan, and the execution came fairly easy because I did have the support both professionally and personally, but also because of the passion that I have for this industry and helping people.

Brad Smith: That's a great combination. So that passion obviously is essential. And then looking at the support and structure of a franchise system and the back-office operations-

Blanca Covarrubias: Yes.

Brad Smith: ... the arts' strong reputation, the support at every step, I think is probably very influential. But without that drive, without that passion, it doesn't matter.

Blanca Covarrubias: Correct.

Brad Smith: Building off that a little bit, talk to me about some of the most rewarding parts of launching and owning your own business through PrideStaff.

Blanca Covarrubias: Well, I think that for the most part, as a business owner, you do have the flexibility. I feel that in this industry, it can be very challenging. There's a lot of forks along the road.

But having that flexibility to help, whether it's your internal team, help the associates that we put out on assignment, as well as having that flexibility to spend time with our immediate family is all well worth it. So definitely, I think that there's a combination of both professionally and personally, but success is definitely how it impacts others more than it does oneself. I believe that.

Brad Smith: I think you're dead on, and I love that.

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Now, talk to me a little bit about the significance of women in the staffing industry. This episode is all about women in leadership. Women in the staffing industry have been very influential. And if you don't mind, discuss that a little bit more. What does the significance or role of women in the staffing industry and role in business growth mean to you?

Blanca Covarrubias: Okay. Yeah. So, the staffing industry actually shows that there's been an increase in women joining this industry. I do believe that women help create a more diverse and inclusive working environment. We bring a unique perspective and skill set to the table that I actually believe has a positive impact in business growth. Business growth, but also as well as building stronger and better client relationships. Now, not to downplay the men or anything, but that's just my perspective of what I believe women bring to the table in this industry and helps increase the business growth.

Brad Smith: Now, building on that a little bit, you're a Latina woman. So, talk to me a little bit about your experience as a Latina business owner and what that journey has really meant to you.

Blanca Covarrubias: I am actually a first-generation graduate, and the Latina business actually makes, the last reading I had read on that was about 45% of all Latino businesses. And it actually feels good to be a part of that small percentage of Latina entrepreneurs. This journey, actually owning my own franchise, has definitely impacted, again, not only myself, but those around me and having the opportunity to help others, especially other Latina women or just women in general.

Just like in any business, we definitely cannot fear failure. There's always a lesson in failure. But for the most part, I feel that just the passion about this industry and knowing that you can have an impact, you can inspire and you can contribute to somebody's business growth is definitely very powerful, and at the same time, a humbling experience.

Brad Smith: I'm sure it can be. And I like that point about not fearing failure. And as you mentioned earlier, leaning into that excitement, leading into that drive to be successful will ensure your success in the long run.

So, Blanca, thank you so much for your time today. We really appreciate you sharing your amazing journey with us. For those that are listening or watching today that may aspire to start their own business, do you have any closing words of wisdom for them?

Blanca Covarrubias: So, there is a quote that comes to mind. It's more of a general quote, but that really is a quote that comes to mind, especially when you're looking to jump into a career and open up your own business is, "The most successful people endure some of the greatest pain."

So, I think that that, going into anybody who's going to open up a business, whether if it's a woman opening up their own business, I think that you have to go into it knowing that there's going to be challenges. There's going to be that fear. But it's very, very rewarding to know what's on the other side of fear.

So, I just feel that if you're a woman wanting to open up a business, go for it. If you feel scared, if you feel nervous, if you feel that it's something that is going to be rewarding, but yet you're kind of feeling a little bit not wanting to push yourself, I say just push yourself. Push yourself, jump into the opportunity of owning your own business, because it is very rewarding, very rewarding, especially when you have an impact on others.

Brad Smith: I couldn't agree more. And run towards that fear, but also realize that you don't have to run alone. There's an entire support team there to help you, especially when you're looking at a franchise model like PrideStaff. There's that support structure behind you. There's a proven process to help get you along on your way to success. So don't feel like you have to do it alone.

Blanca Covarrubias: Yes, yes, most definitely. I feel that the support system as a franchise system, having the support from operations, just from all the different departments, HR, marketing, you have your accounting, sales, all of that just, it really does help when you're going into opening up your franchise business, because you do have the support of individuals where you can ask questions and be able to get some guidance. So definitely great resources.

Brad Smith: Blanca, thank you again for your time today. We really appreciate it and really enjoyed hearing your story. So, thank you.

Blanca Covarrubias: Thank you very much.

Brad Smith: Take care, everyone.

Closing: Thank you for listening to Strategic Insights brought to you by PrideStaff. Whether you're looking for high-level workforce consulting or staffing help to meet demands, PrideStaff is here to help.