

Meet Soledad Tanner of Soledad Tanner Consulting



Soledad Tanner

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Today
we'd
like
to
introduce
you
to
Soledad
Tanner

So, before we jump into specific questions about the practice, why don't you give our readers a few quick bullet points about you and your story.

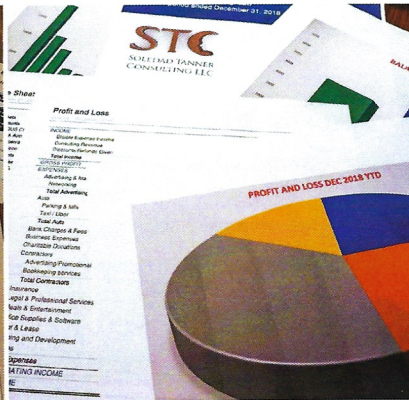
I grew up in Ecuador and loved the ocean and puzzles. My brothers and I spent three months of summer at my grandparent's home in a fishing town. We rode our bikes, ran in the sand and were a carefree lot. I could see that water meet the sky and always wondered what else was there beyond the horizon. My parents took me to the airport so that I could watch the planes take-off and land. I wonder if that was the start of my travel bug. I spent long hours doing puzzles every day. I classified the pieces, organized them according to color and shape and then, meticulously, put them together. I started to wear glasses when I was two years old, so this might explain why I am analytically oriented? In all seriousness, I loved school and was good in math and English. I practiced for hours and became proficient in resolving math equations and speaking English. This proficiency and a pleasure in helping others established the value of being educated and educating others. I would say, my early life fostered creativity, discovery and learning.

We're always bombarded by how great it is to pursue your passion, etc – but we've spoken with enough people to know that it's not always easy. Overall, would you say things have been easy for you?

There were several challenges facing me upon my arrival to the United States. They included my not being familiar with the university system; language skills, and financial challenges:

a. I had been trained as an engineer in Ecuador and wanted an MBA. My interests lie within international studies. Upon arriving, I had limited knowledge of how the university system worked here. The requirements of an extensive application process, letters of recommendation, and entrance exams all posed challenges for me. To tackle these, I took a day off from work, in July, and visited universities throughout Houston. St. Thomas University resonated with me and, in mind, I was ready to register and begin studies in August. It was then that I discovered there was an extensive process around registration and acceptance. Part of registration was taking the GMAT and TOEFL exams. This was frustrating because I wanted to start immediately. Through some persistence, I was granted conditional acceptance and given three months to complete the examinations. The testing in of itself was a challenge because I had never taken multiple-choice examinations.

b. I had studied English but had not studied other subjects in English. I began my studies with one class that first semester





and a helpful dictionary! Taking things one semester at a time, I was able to complete my degree.

c. Determination and hard work helped me. I earned two scholarships through Danzas (a company which later became Deutsche Post DHL), a Global Logistic Company). These funds along with working full time allowed me to complete my degree.

Why did you stay with one company for almost 20 years including through big buyouts and mergers?

The changes inherent in large companies, including a great deal of Merger & Acquisitions activity, bring with them necessary adaptations to a new culture, professional opportunity, and creativity:

a. The culture where I was from influenced my response to change. In Ecuador, there are limited corporate opportunities. One is likely to defend their work environment, because if you were to lose your job, another may not come along for some time. It did not occur to me that this might not be the case in the United States. As a result, I embraced and still do, cultural change. I adopt because I view these shifts as positive, even in moments when they seem negative. This type of change represents growth in my mind.

b. Uncertainty represents a professional opportunity. Change is a positive scenario in my mind and enabled me to apply for new positions and move up the corporate ladder while others chose to leave the organization.

c. Change results in creativity if leveraged effectively. Creativity is a professional hallmark of mine applied now in both the corporate setting and one that is more entrepreneurially oriented.

How did your understanding of cultural difference help you to succeed personally and professionally?

Working for a large global company helped me to understand differences in decision making, values, work ethic, and lifestyles. These types of differences continue to keep me curious about how the people side of the business works. Living and working around the world was another learning opportunity. Looking back there are two examples that left an impression on me:

a. The first was during my time in Bonn, Germany, the headquarters of Deutsche Post DHL where I spent a lot of time. I admired the structure and precision of their operations and the depth of German working habits. I also noticed that people biked to work and ate health food. Even when there was a public transportation strike, people just got up earlier and walked to work. It was amazing!

b. The second impression was gained through my love of Chennai, India. Here I worked beside Indians who were the first generation in their family to graduate from college. They were proud to represent their families and had to go through many logistical inconveniences associating with their living in small neighboring towns. For instance, they would bike to the bus stop at 5 AM, change to another bus and arrive at work by 8 AM. They brought their food too and it fascinating how their whole family supported them as professionals. I admired their desire to learn, lack of entitlement and willingness to work hard. They were a new generation of dreamers.

Transitioning now, what are some of the challenges you have had to overcome starting your own business?

The two biggest challenges were defining what I had to offer and to who. I naturally wanted to be everything to everyone. My service offerings and variety of clientele were too diverse. This confused potential clients who were looking for a demonstrated track record in my ability to provide a service to a business just like theirs. Today, I have focused my work on:

a. Small businesses such as medical practices, construction or service companies.

b. Businesses that do not have time to review, analyze and strategize their financial results.

c. Businesses that need help taking out costs, unnecessary expense, enhancing revenue, updating operational processes, budgeting, and cash flow. Soledad Tanner Consulting exists to help small business owners become more profitable.

What are you most proud of about Soledad Tanner Consulting?

We are most proud of helping clients become financially literate. This work can take a consistent, disciplined and persistent approach including:

a. Our first developing an understanding of what clients hope to achieve with their business. In other words, their mission and objectives.

b. We then help them gain an understanding of the financial elements of the business and how these elements can help them accomplish this mission. In other words, the numbers.

c. We then work together to maximize profits and productivity on a daily basis. This work begins to create a story around the growth of a business which may include new locations, new market and/or new products.

d. This is a generative process around profit and productivity where success breeds new ideas because the business has a command of their cash flow and expenses.

What differentiates your firm?

a. We use a consultative approach. First, that means we must have a desire to understand and believe in the work of the business.

b. Instead of just sending a statement every month, our goal is to educate clients to read their financial statements, to think strategically, operate efficiently, and eventually, not need us!

c. We bring 27 years of corporate experience as well as a methodology for understanding the cultural differences inherent in any business.

d. Finally, we customize an approach that will work differently for anyone we serve.

What advice might you have for us?

I had my first business when I 15 years old and would bake up to 3,000 cookies each afternoon and sold them in the school cafeteria. I wanted to watch a TV program that my parents considered not age appropriate. My father said to me, "When you can pay for your own T.V., you can watch whatever you want." So, I found a way to make money and buy myself a T.V. My advice might be, "When you set a goal, work as hard as you can to achieve it. With perseverance, anything is achievable."