



TEXAS EXECUTIVE WOMEN – JOURNEY AND CIRCUNSTANCES
WOMEN ON THE MOVE 2019 – 20190501

I had my first business in Ecuador when I was 15 years old, making and selling 3,000 cookies each afternoon. This began because I wanted to watch Dynasty, and my Dad said, “When you can pay for your own T.V., you can watch whatever you want.” Out of my determination to watch the popular show, I found a way to make money and buy my T.V. When I set a goal, I work as hard as it takes to achieve it. This is the common denominator across all my life’s journey and circumstances: *with persistence, anything is achievable.*

During high school I was on a pre-medicine track, but when it came to applying for college, I decided to switch to business and engineering. This was a big risk because you cannot just declare your major. All the applicants for each major have to take one introductory course, and only the top scoring students get to continue studying on that track. Without having taken the preparatory classes, I was starting out at a disadvantage. But, out of 1,200 applicants, I was one of only 120 who made the cut.

That was only the first part of the battle. Then, I had to figure out how to pay for university, because they are private in Ecuador, and there was no financial aid. I did not have job, so I had to find one. There was very high unemployment, and instead of just applying where there is a “For hire” sign, most jobs were gotten by word-of-mouth.

My mother is from Ecuador, but my father was Swiss, and we would attend events at the Swiss Embassy. I was at an event there, and I gathered the courage to ask the consulate for help finding a job. I was only 17 years old, and to be so bold as to ask a powerful man for help was very risky because he might not take me seriously. But, it paid off, and I got my first job as the assistant to the Swiss consulate. I was a full-time student, employee, and party girl.

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By my third year of college, I was a bank manager and a model college student. But, my life was turned upside down. My father died from complications of mental illness. To compound the sadness I felt, without my father, I was the only person in my family that was working. My salary was good for a single student living at home, but it was not enough for a breadwinner in a family. I spoke with the President of the bank and applied for a second job with them. I offered to do both jobs for half the value of the second position, which meant I would do double the work for 3/4 what it should cost them. This boost of income gave my family time to find jobs to support themselves.

After I finished my engineering degree at Universidad Catolica de Santiago de Guayaquil, I wanted a new life where I would not be judged or pitied because of my father's mental illness. Such a life awaited me in America. I thought, "This is my life, and I'm going to do what makes me happy, because when you just do what makes other people happy, you're not fulfilled. Happiness is a decision I make." This mindset helps me see clearly what is important and not important. I grew into a determined, powerful woman.

I chose to come to America, in part because I had studied English, but I arrived with very little idea of how the university system works here. I had thought you just paid and attended university, so I was disappointed to find out that there was application process, and I did not have any letters of recommendation. I took a day and looked at all the universities in Houston, and I really liked St. Thomas. So, I went to the admissions office. It was July, and I wanted to start in August. I gathered my courage and asked the receptionist, "Where do I register?"

I was told to apply and wait a semester, and I said, "I want to start now."

"That's not how it works. You have to have GMAT and TOEFL scores." I persisted, and finally, she realized I was not going to leave. So, she told me to fill out the form, and if someone dropped out of

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admissions, she would submit my request to the board. A spot opened up, so they gave me conditional admittance and three months to finish those admissions tests.

I had studied the English language, but never studied other subjects in English, so I began by taking only one class the first semester. I had to read with the dictionary beside me and learned the credit hours and grading system, because I did not know what a GPA was at first. I had also never seen multiple choice exams and did not know how to take them at first. But, I kept learning, and after four years, I graduated with my MBA in International Business from University of St. Thomas in Houston, TX.

I entered corporate America because of the opportunities I found through my scholarships from Danzas and was with them for almost 20 years. As a rising star with Danzas, DHL Global Forwarding and Deutsche Post DHL Supply Chain, I began as a Controller Houston and South West USA. I was told that my leadership and excellent people skills lead them to promote me to Controller of Industrial Projects and later Controller of Sales; it was beyond my wildest dreams to be in leadership across the entire USA.

The constant in my career path has been creating meaningful analysis, while remaining approachable, which suited me in the role of Director Controlling of Human Resources for all the Americas. That position allowed me to shine as a bilingual, multicultural business strategist. I later put my enthusiasm and velocity for change into action by spearheading DHL's Global HR strategy as Global Director of Strategy, Performance, and Metrics, based out of Bonn, Germany. What a great height a determined, nerdy girl from Ecuador had risen to!

One key element of my longevity with DHL is to make the uncertainty of mergers into a positive, instead of negative. I embraced the uncertainty and stayed, while others left when they did not like the new systems or changes in management. This was partly because of my culture. In Ecuador, there are fewer opportunities everywhere. You hold your position with your life, because if you lose your job,

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there may be nothing else for you. So, leaving the company was not an option I entertained for a long time.

Finally, in 2015 I decided to return to entrepreneurship, but not to bake more cookies. I launched my financial consulting firm, Soledad Tanner Consulting, LLC I started my financial services business with the faith that other need my knowledge and experience. It is also important to me to empower my employees and impact their lives, as well as serving my clients. My business is a vehicle for my truth about how education leads to knowledge and experience, which can open you up to lead a life of adventure and growth. Particularly, for me this is about the financial sector and how when we are educated about how our money works, we can make better decisions about how to grow it.

We help entrepreneurs and small business owners become financially literate, increasing profit & productivity, and staying competitive in the marketplace. Many entrepreneurs struggle because they know their trade, but they don't have the time, experience, or expertise to be business-savvy. You have to look at your numbers, even if you don't like them today.

Having a business gives you a sense of pride, when you see that you are growing and having an impact. Getting a good sense of your numbers is how you can tell that story. I love watching my clients get excited when they can track their progress through the financials reports.

No matter how challenging a client's problem is, we stay consistent, dedicated, and persistent until the issue is resolved. By not getting overwhelmed, but instead rolling up our sleeves and getting busy, we always find the root cause problem and detect an area of improvement that allows us to raise the profitability and productivity of the businesses.

I am also very involved in the business community and with several nonprofits because I want to pay forward all the opportunities that have benefited me. I am the Finance Chair on the Advisory Board for Power on Heels, a Latina-lead nonprofit that provides leadership and professional development to

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women who want to unlock their power and lift each other up. Another nonprofit, Beautiful Purpose, appointed me as CFO, and my financial strategy and profit plan is enabling their mission to help women live purposefully and connect to their passion. In the past, I also served as Vice President for HGSCA Houston Guayaquil Sister City Association and received an award from Houston's Mayor Turner; and mentored college students with the Insight Alumni program at St. Thomas University (UST).

Later this month, I will be recognized as Outstanding International Consultant by the Houston IPBC at their 6th Annual Global G-7 Awards. I am deeply honored and humbled to have risen to this level of visibility so quickly after launching Soledad Tanner Consulting. It's important to use this spotlight to showcase the guiding principle that has always lead me to growth: *with persistence, anything is achievable*. No matter who you are, where you are, what you started with, or how high the climb might be, you can create the life of your dreams.

