



## VOYAGES HOUSTON MAGAZINE

### **“Meet an entrepreneur who never gives up” - 20180709**

#### **1. What challenges did you face when you arrived from Ecuador to attend graduate school?**

I was already an engineer in Ecuador, and I wanted an MBA from the U.S. When I arrived, I had very little idea of how the university system works here. I was surprised to find out that there was long application process, a longer list of requirements, and I did not have any letters of recommendation. It is funny, but even with all those cards stacked against me, I still knew I would start classes as soon as possible.

I took a day off from work and visited all the universities in Houston, and I really liked St. Thomas University. So, I went to the admissions office and thought all I would have to do was to register. It was July, and I wanted to start in August. I asked the receptionist, “Where do I register?”

I was told to apply and wait, 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 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 started classes the following week.

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. But, I kept learning, and after four years, I graduated with my MBA in International Business.

I earned 2 scholarships through Danzas (later became Deutsche Post DHL) a Global Logistic company and these funds allowed me to achieve my dream of higher education. Working full time and studying was exhausting but I was determined to obtain the Master degree.

#### **2. How did you stay with one company for almost 20 years, through big buyouts and mergers?**

After 1 year working in the USA, I was “laid off.” I did not know what “laid off” was until it happened. Fortunately, I stayed in touch with my manager and she introduced to key people who gave me the opportunity to work for them. I stayed with this Corporation for almost 20 years and like most large corporations, we went through a lot of mergers, which always brought cultural changes.

One element of my long career was to embrace change and use to create opportunities. I saw change as a positive scenario, instead of negative. I embraced the uncertainty and stayed, while others left when they did not like the new systems or changes in management. Because of that migration, the majority of positions became open. With every merger, I would apply for a new position and moved up the corporate ladder.

This was partly because of my culture. In Ecuador, there are limited opportunities in a Corporate environment. You defend your work, because if you lose your job, there may be few opportunities, and it took a long time for me to consider that this might not be the case in the U.S.

I also always see the positive, even in moments that could seem negative, because it could be a moment of growth.

### **3. How did your understanding of cultural difference help you succeed?**

Working in a global company, I started studying the decision-making processes of different cultures. When I participated in a meeting with someone from a new country, I researched their ways of doing business, how decisions are made in that culture, etc. and behaved accordingly.

Then, I started traveling internationally, and I was in love—especially with Germany and India.

In Bonn, Germany, I spent a lot of time at the headquarters of Deutsche Post DHL. I admired the structure and precision of their operations and the depth of the German working habits. I also noticed that people biked to work and ate very healthy food. Even when there was a public transportation strike, everyone in the office just got up earlier and walked to work. It was amazing.

I also loved Chennai, India. There, I worked beside a lot of first-generation Indians who were the first generation graduated from college. They were representing their families and had to go through inconveniences because they lived in small, neighboring towns. They biked to a bus stop at 5 a.m. to change to another bus and arrived at work by 8:00 a.m. They brought their food, too, and I saw that their whole families supported those young professionals. It was very encouraging. I admired the desire to learn, lack of sense of entitlement, and hard work. They were a new generation of dreamers.

This opened my eyes that the Western world has to continue pushing forward to compete globally.

### **4. What challenges have you overcome since starting your business?**

At first, I tried to be everything to everyone. I started out offering financial services that were too widely defined. I also offered the financial services to a wide variety of clients. That confused potential clients because they only wanted to know what I could do for a business just their size, not the full extent of my abilities. So, I learned to narrow down my audience so I can speak to one niche set of problems that I solve.

My audience has turned out to be small businesses, usually medical practices, construction or service companies. These are very busy businesses with little to no time to review, analyze and strategize their financial results. This happens more often than you would think. The challenges are various: from high costs, unnecessary expenses, leaking revenue, outdated processes, lack of budget, few controls on the cash and many more challenges that eat away their bottom line.

By carving out my space as an authority on giving small business owners a birds-eye view of their profit and losses, I am doing a better job to attract the clients who need what I do best.

### **5. What are you most proud of about your company?**

I help my clients become financially literate and support them in their journey to financial success. Many entrepreneurs and professionals struggle because they know their trade, but they do not have the time or expertise to be financially savvy. There is no shortcut around the fact that you must understand your numbers, even if you do not like thinking about finances. By diving into the numbers, I help clients find strategies that help them improve their businesses and become more efficient and profitable.

Soledad Tanner Consulting offers Business Consulting and Financial Management Solutions to businesses, professionals and corporations interested in maximizing their PROFIT & PRODUCTIVITY.

Getting a good sense of your numbers allows you to tell the story of your growth. I love watching my clients get excited when they can track their progress through the profit and losses reports. We create yearly budgets that plan their success, so they can open a second or third location or bring a new product to market. They find ideas they could not otherwise see and find ways to take advantage of opportunities that come up because they have a command of their cash flow and expenses.

No matter how challenging a client's financials are, 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 that missing link or detect an area to increase revenue and profit margins.

## **6. What have you done to set yourself apart?**

I share my knowledge. Instead of just sending a statement every month, I educate my clients to read their financial statements, to think strategically and bring my 27 years of corporate experience to bear so they grow thriving businesses.

I also have integrity and do the right thing when no one is looking. When someone asks me about incorrect hiring practices or unethical behaviors, I leave the conversation. I choose to work with businesses whose values and mission I share.

I am very flexible in my approach and don't try to fit everyone into my box with a one-size-fits-all plan. I look at each individual company and share the business owner's ideas and visions.

My business is also very efficient. I provide practical solutions that are easy to implement and am always looking for places to decrease costs or improve production. It is in my DNA.

## **7. What was it like for you growing up?**

I loved the ocean and puzzles.

We spent three months of summer at my grandparent's house in a fishing town in Ecuador. My brothers and I rode our bikes, ran in the sand, and were carefree. I could see the water meet the sky and always wondered what else was there, beyond the horizon? That was my travel bug. I also read all of Jules Verne's books, and my parents would take me to the airport so I could watch the planes depart.

I was bored by dolls, but I loved puzzles. After school, I spent long hours doing puzzles every day. I classified the pieces and organized them according to color and then shape and put them together meticulously.

I started wearing glasses when I was 2 years old, so I am a natural nerd. I loved school and set my mind to become a good student, exceling in math and English. When I was 8 years old, my mother took me to English classes every Saturday. English & math did not come naturally to me. I practiced, practiced, and practiced over and over again for hours. Over time, I became very fast resolving math equations and speaking good English. My classmates reached out to me to show how to resolve math problems and how to complete the English homework, and this was my first experience with learning topics well enough to teach the information to others.

**8. What else should we know about you?**

I had my first business when I 15 years old, and I would bake up to 3,000 cookies each afternoon and sold them at my school cafeteria. I wanted to watch a TV program that my parents considered not age appropriate. My Dad said, "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 my T.V.

When I set a goal, I work as hard as it takes to achieve it. With persistence, anything is achievable.

