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Showing young Latinas it can be done

KELLY MULLANEY • GUEST ESSAYIST • OCTOBER 12, 2008

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Like many people who start their own businesses, I took that leap after I was laid off from a local company where I worked as a media producer.

I then discovered that I did not know that many people besides co-workers and family friends. So I joined several organizations to network, and that opened a new world for me. I was exposed to the rich community of consultants and small business owners in Rochester.

In my search, I did not find one job that satisfied me, but I did notice that there was a demand for my skills in Web design. So I started to play with the idea of working on my own — and I took that step in 2004.

Four years later, Working Art Media offers multimedia Web site design and Internet marketing to small businesses and nonprofit organizations. We collaborate with local copywriters, graphic designers and marketing professionals. And during the past two years we have also brought on board local students whom I mentor, sharing with them the "secrets" of the business, including design, interacting with clients and applying best practices and standards.

I could say that as a small business owner, I face the same challenges as any entrepreneur trying to run a business and keep up with the changes in the market and the economy. As a woman, I also have to show that I can do as good a job, with as much value or more, as anybody. But being a Latina woman in business is an even greater motivation to do better, because there is much more at stake. There is the social responsibility to future generations, all the young Latinas who need to learn that they can achieve anything they want and work for.

I feel fortunate that I have the support of my family, and I found people who have helped me along the way. I think it is so important to have a support network. Although I am still learning and growing as a business person, I also feel compelled to do as much as I can to participate in the community. The more I get involved in Latinas Unidas and the Rochester Hispanic Business Association, and the more I talk with other Latinas in business and learn about their stories and challenges, the more I think we need more role models and mentors for young people.

I still have a long path ahead to learn and grow as a business person. In the process, I have to work on keeping a balance between my family, my business and my community. It's a balance that sometimes is not easy to maintain, but if you make mistakes, you learn from them, try to correct them and continue going with perseverance to achieve your goals.

Mullaney is president, Working Art Media.

ABOUT THIS ESSAY

To mark Hispanic Heritage Month, Sept. 15 through Oct. 15, essayists take a look at Hispanic businessmen and businesswomen in greater Rochester — their progress and the obstacles in their way.

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Mailing Address: 55 Exchange Boulevard | Rochester, New York 14614 | (585) 232-7100

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