When Her Department Was Suddenly Sold, She Decided to Build Her Own Business — And the Customers Followed. Here's Her Advice for Making Things Happen for Yourself.

In this ongoing series, we are sharing advice, tips and insights from real entrepreneurs who are out there doing business battle on a daily basis. (Answers have been edited and condensed for clarity.)

Tell us about yourself and your business.

My name is Livia Anne Guarnieri, founder of TROIKA360. I am an SME (subject matter expert) and a proprietary strategic consultant in the OEM (original equipment manufacturing) space. I work with vehicle manufacturers at a corporate level. If an OEM wants to know what type of service providers are out there and if they offer viable solutions, I will help them find one that best fits their needs.

Alternatively, I may build them a boutique solution so they aren't tied to something that doesn't serve them long-term. I also help service providers of all types understand how an OEM works internally so they can create better products and services. It's very niche, but the need is very real.

What inspired you to launch your own business?

Becoming an entrepreneur wasn't what inspired me to create my business. My business was created out of necessity when I felt I had no other options. I worked for a well-known company in a forgotten department that had been in the red for quite some time. By building relationships with customers, I could take

that departmental deficit and turn it into a multi-million dollar asset. Looking back, I believe they took me on as an employee to create credibility in the department, raise the valuation, and then sell it. And this is exactly what ended up happening. The only problem with the company's plan is that these customers weren't *their* customers; they were my customers. I had long-standing relationships with all of them, and these customers asked me to find them an alternative solution.

Some people experience an "Aha!" moment that results in starting their business. For me, it was less of an "Aha!" moment and more of an "Oh shit!" moment. I was completely blindsided, but I knew I had to make it happen because it felt like it was now or never, and I was not about to let my customers down.

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What has been the most challenging part of growing your business?

One of the most challenging moments was when I had to re-pitch my request for a proposal response to the same people I pitched to just a few weeks before against the same candidates. It felt like the longest day of my career. But what I proved that day, above all else, was my unique systems, unique methods and lifelong expertise. None of those things were in any way attached to any of the other solutions out there; they were distinctly my solutions. So, I was able to build a completely boutique system without the backing of a larger corporation. However, it also meant I had to find the partnerships that fit this boutique system. My only requirement was that it had to provide value to the OEM first, not to the service providers I was bringing in.

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What is something you think many aspiring entrepreneurs think they need but actually don’t?

I think many aspiring business owners feel pressure to do it all right at this second. Although you should always strike while the iron is hot, doing it just to do it won’t help. You don’t need an immediate office, a fully built-out website or a brand-new computer. What you need is passion and persistence. Building your business should feel like something you were born to do. You have to wake up every day, look at yourself in the mirror, believe with your whole heart and tell yourself out loud, “This is going to work out because this is what I was meant to do.”

I truly believe that your belief in yourself is what makes others believe in you as well. With my business, I had to put it together very quickly, but if I wasn’t truly passionate about doing it for the greater good of the industry versus the greater good of myself, I don’t believe I could have achieved my success. I also never allowed myself to speak negatively into the universe because the universe is always listening.

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Was there a moment when you saw this business was going to be a success?

In the end, when my industry saw that I was working towards rising the tide instead of just my boat, customers began to seek me out instead of me seeking them out. My business built itself because I stayed humble. Even when achieving things far beyond my expectations, I stayed humble and grateful. I did the work instead of basking in the glory. I believe that is what it means to be an entrepreneur. Find your niche, make sure your work is distinctively yours and be true to yourself and not your ego.

Any advice for entrepreneurs looking to carve out their own behind-the-scenes niche business?

The best advice I can give budding entrepreneurs wanting to do this work is that strategic consulting happens in silence, in the wings and shadows and out of the spotlight. When you move in silence, your competition has no idea you're even in the game, and you can use that underestimation to your benefit.

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