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ANNA MARIA ARIAS MEMORIAL BUSINESS FUND

Passion to Create Business

Starting my own public relations firm was the best thing I could have done for my career and for myself. Providing PR services to companies of all sizes really challenges you to sharpen and build upon your skills. I feel more connected to my community because it gives me the opportunity to experience new people and new situations every day.

After working as a successful public relations professional in corporate America for over 17 years, I was faced with searching for a similar corporate PR job or starting my own business. I contemplated starting my own business throughout my career, but the security of corporate America kept me on a corporate path, even though my gut told me to utilize my talents under my own name.

I did not have a single contract when I started, but I knew this was the time to take that chance. I knew I had the right skills, creativity, business savvy and day-to-day knowledge in the PR world, but starting from the bottom was the ultimate challenge and weighed on my mind. I knew I had the right stuff, but earning the trust of new clients and signing those clients would pose the toughest challenge.

In January 2005, I launched Aguilar Public Relations, LLC, providing strategic branding and public relations services to businesses of all sizes. Starting with a strategic business plan, I began networking in various business, community and professional circles. I also increased my involvement in the community with a renewed freedom – working on community projects that were personally important to me - projects in the Latino community and with education. I signed my first client within a month of opening, providing strategic branding support to McDonald's USA. Later that year I signed small business clients, and my client-base continued to grow each year.

This year Aguilar Public Relations celebrates its five year anniversary. I look back and think, "Wow, I cannot believe that I have been in business this long!" I think of the projects I have worked on with customers like AT&T, State Farm and McDonald's and never imagined that these would be my clients – respected brands with fantastic reputations. I value the relationships and trust I have built in the community, and my personal community commitments have really helped me to ground my business.

In 2009, I created a business plan that included re-investing in my own brand at a time when the economy was tight. Marketing 101 tells you to invest in your company during a downturn, but it is easier said than done. Part of that plan was to invest in training and skills to grow the business, though such an investment is a tough decision for a small business.

I had waited several years for my company to be old enough to apply for the Anna Maria Arias Memorial Business Fund Award. I heard about it after attending the Denver LATINA Style event, which gave me the support I needed as a new business and connected me to others. As a business owner, I had reached some of my goals earlier than expected, yet I knew I needed help getting to the next level. I knew I had a great chance to win it someday, and my hopes were fulfilled sooner than expected.

An education at one of the premiere business schools in the country with other savvy business women is one of the greatest rewards that I could ever receive for my business! Yet, what makes it most gratifying is that the award recognizes all of the components that have shaped my business— a passion to create a business under my OWN name, the passion to serve others in my community and a passion to work hard to not only succeed, but to help others along the way.

This award exemplifies what leadership is all about and to be recognized for those same values means I must be doing something right — that I am already on the right path to success.

By Timi Aguilar

[This article has been edited for www.latinastyle.com. For the full version, check out the January/February issue of LATINA Style.] SEND THIS ARTICLE TO A FRIEND

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Timi Aguilar is the president & CEO of Aguilar Public Relations, LLC and a 2009 Anna Maria Arias Memorial Business Fund recipient. For more information about her services contact timiaguilar@aguilarpr.com or 303-488-9469..