

A Conversation with a Latino Innovator

By: Veronica Cool ⌚ March 31, 2017



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People are sometimes surprised to learn I'm Hispanic, that English is my second language and that I'm an entrepreneur. The prevailing assumption is Latinos entrepreneurs are all landscapers, cleaners or caterers. This was the genesis for the Latino Innovators Pitch competition, to showcase the innovation and diversity found within the Hispanic business community and to begin to dispel some of these misconceptions.

The winner of the 2016 Latino Innovator competition was Glenda Sierra-Schulz, owner and founder of Xios Events, which specializes in creating customized events with an emphasis on cultural relevance. I recently chatted with Glenda to learn more about her and her business.

How did you get started?

Created in 2015 as a part-time event planning business, Xio's Events grew out of my passion for helping others, my love for celebrations and skills with crafts. From throwing the best birthday parties in the neighborhood, friends and family began to ask me to create parties and celebrations. I'm now a small business owner, creating custom decorations and plans for all type of events – this is what I enjoy!

What does Xio's Events do?

Xios Events creates unique and memorable events in a culturally sensitive manner. We offer retail event services and planning that include all components, including dresses and tuxes, gifts and floral arrangements. Additionally, we handle corporate events such as celebrations, team building, awards sessions, conferences and even intimate dinners. Our niche is catering to the growing Hispanic population and organizing quinceañeras and proms, as well as first communion and baptisms, including all the associated attire and gifts.

What is a quinceañera?

It's the Latino version of the sweet sixteen, where a girl's transition into womanhood is celebrated amongst her family and friends. After the religious celebrations, this is one of the biggest rites of passage for a Latino family, with a serious investment of time and funds. This is another reason I launched the company – I saw so many families struggling with celebrating their customs here in the U.S. They couldn't find the dresses, the venue, even the cake! I'm so thrilled to see the joy on the young lady's face when she steps out in her gown, holding court with the proud parents witnessing this precious rite of passage.

How are you an innovator? What makes you different?

We are creators. We know people. We know what matters to them. Whether it's the quinceañera dress, the right musical ensemble, the right ambiance – we know. We cater to a growing population and we provide innovative solutions tied to blending the American and Hispanic cultures and customs.

There are a lot Pinterest fans out there, and many people think event planning and decorating is simple. What's your advice to them?

Of course, people have the option of highlighting their creativity and that's absolutely encouraged! We often partner with our clients to tease out their visions and dreams and incorporate them into the event.

But, it's been my experience that events take a life of their own, impeding full enjoyment... and it always takes more time than expected. With our years of experience, and our network of service partners we create a unique and memorable event, relieving our client from running around and focusing on all of the details. As a "one-stop shop" with a complete range of dresses and tuxes to limos and tents, we'll do all the work – and our clients simply relax and enjoy their special day.

What's the biggest entrepreneurial lesson you've learned?

I'm blessed to have access to the mentors of the Latino Innovators Pitch and the Latino Economic Development Corporation, to help me stay focused and organized.

I think the best piece of advice is that I can always be working IN the business but I have to be working ON it. I need to look ahead and figure out what the business is going to look like in the future and prepare for it.

What's your goal? And where will you be in 10 years?

Right now, I have two locations, a small office and a showroom in Annapolis, but I envision having a full-service, brick-and-mortar store with a thriving online business, with a good balance of social events and corporate events.

Bigger than that is to show the regular person, not just Latinos, that they can create a fantastic moment, whether their child's baptism or sweet sixteen, but a gorgeous memorable wedding. As for our corporate clients, we enjoy offering creative and warm functions to enhance their experience.

Glenda is truly an innovator, finding a gap in the market and marketing to that gap, while also serving the mainstream corporate client, she's creative and very focused on the client experience. She can be reached at XiosEvents.com.

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