

Women Turn Vegas into a New Frontier**Date:** Saturday, October 28 @ 22:14:06 CDT**Topic:** Articles

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When most people think of women in Las Vegas, they think of 7 foot tall show girls married to their plastic surgeons, strippers and of course, prostitutes. But, in one of the fastest growing cities in America, women's business acumen is changing the face of Vegas and the way we think about women in America.

Honoree Corpron was just getting ready for a flight back to Vegas from a business trip when she got the call. "Mommy, I'm sick. Mommy, I'm sick," her daughter lamented over the phone. "You know that's not what I want to hear," Honoree said. "I want to hear you say, "I am getting better every minute." Two days later, her daughter was perfectly well.

At first, Las Vegas based business coach and strategist, Honoree Corpron, might sound like Mommy Dearest. But this change in speech pattern strategy used on her daughter is the essence of the same strategy she uses on CEO's and Presidents. "I'm not interested in the story about why you can't make something happen. I want to hear the ways you can make things happen."

In Las Vegas, Honoree is one of 1000s of women making Las Vegas "happen" as one of fastest growing cities for women-owned and co-owned privately held firms.

According to the Center for Women's Business Research in Washington, D.C., as of 2004, out of an estimated 89,501 privately held firms in Nevada, women-owned firms account for a whopping 53.8% of all privately held firms in the state. The statistic is drawn from 6 years of reports across a spectrum of 50 MSA's (Metropolitan Statistical Areas). Even more poignantly (from the website), "Nevada ranks 1st in the growth in the number of privately-held, 50% or more women-owned firms between 1997 and 2004, 13th in employment growth, and 1st in sales growth among the states and Washington, DC."

As of 2003, according to the Census Bureau, North Las Vegas ranked 2nd and Henderson—a suburb of Vegas—ranked 8th in the Top 10 fastest growing city category, lagging behind Gilbert, Ariz., south of Phoenix. Statistics aside, by most accounts, Vegas is one of the fastest growing cities in America, and women are not only drawn to that growth but are also

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one of the main reasons for such growth.

Banks like Wells Fargo, targeting Las Vegas women's businesses in the 2-20 million in revenue range, are acknowledging LV women's businesses growth rate by providing loan assistance, education, relationship building and guidance with other problems. Wells Fargo Southern Nevada Business Banking Manager, Cyndi Compan, and Natalie Mitchell, VP/Nevada Corporate Communications, both agree some of the reasons for growth in women's businesses in LV are due to "tax advantages, LV's overall growth in population and corporations and a lower cost in housing."

Ms. Compan cites growth across a wide range of businesses other than the usual Vegas hospitality and convention markets, from fast food to construction, from auto supply to government services. Other banks are forming relationships with groups like the National Association for Women's Business Owners (NAWBO).

Honoree is starting to travel more and doing more corporate training, but most of her business is conducted one-to-one via phone out of her home. As a mother, her one pre-school daughter is enough for now. "One goes to Harvard. Three go to community college," Honoree says jokingly. She has a pet peeve about whining, from daughters to CEO's. When her daughter starts to get pouty, she'll take her outside and point to the "No Whining" sign.

She's arranged an adopted family arrangement with her good friend Gina-Robinson-Billups. Gina is Founder and President of The Moms in Business Network (MIBN), based out of Vegas. To their kids, Honoree is known as auntie Fabulous and Gina is known as Auntie Gorgeous, an obvious attempt to leave some kind of legacy. Allegedly there is an auntie Goddess but Honoree didn't give a name.

Honoree met Gina at a monthly Southern Nevada Chapter of NAWBO meeting through a mutual friend and current President of NAWBO, Betty Mahalik. NAWBO is a national organization that educates, empowers and promotes women business owners.

NAWBO in Vegas held its seventh annual Women of Distinction Awards in March 2005. There were several winners. NAWBO head of communications, Carolyn Stephens, says, "The reasons for the phenomenal growth in women-owned businesses in the Las Vegas area are a combination of the two factors: The growth of our economy and the nationwide growth of women owned businesses in general."

Dr. Sharon G. Hadary, Director of the Women's Business Research, says it's the "newer economy that lowers the barrier to entry" for women's businesses in LV. A newer economy means new opportunities. "It's not just the tourist industry," Dr. Hadary says. "Growth is largely in business to business across a wide range of sectors: financial, health, wholesale distribution, engineering, public utilities, transportation, and construction. These women-owned and co-owned businesses are hiring employees at an equally rapid rate, and its job

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creation that drives our economy,” Dr. Hadary adds.

Gina Robison-Billups reveals, successfully mom-run businesses in LV really destroy the woman-as-object glamour stereotype. She jokes how she experiences this stereotype firsthand. When she travels outside of Vegas, “Nine times out of ten, people won’t even ask what I do for a living. I’m tall, blond and from Vegas. They assume I’m a hooker.”

MIBN is a national member network with the mission to “...help all women create balance between work, family, and their personal lives.” MIBN develops partnerships with national and local companies, and provides such benefits as health insurance, medical savings accounts, tax assistance, business planning consulting, banking and lending consulting, free advertising and more.

Gina personally represents her organization in terms of the fortitude, bravery, courage and the sacrifice it takes to be a mom in business. She knows what its like to live on two hours of sleep, up at 5am, kids off to school, work till 3pm, then pick the kids up and take them to soccer practice. When it comes to the two hours of sleep per night, “I’d never recommend that to anybody.” She adds, “You’re married to your business. It can be all-consuming.”

Single mom and married mom business owners each have their own challenges. Moms encounter a double-guilt dilemma: guilty you have to leave work to attend to kids; guilty you might be neglecting the kids in focusing on business matters. Some husbands are very supportive like quitting a job or taking out loans. Gina sites an example of a woman business owner who, along with her husband, fulfilled orders while their kids slept in the back of the warehouse. “Kids can deliver flyers, clean, and perform all sorts of tasks. It teaches them responsibility,” she adds.

She discovered women were hungry for such an organization like MIBN, not just in Nevada but also at the national level...women who understand women. “We should be proud,” she says, while citing that women have a tendency to undervalue themselves and their products and services. Possible causes are low self-esteem and the natural inclination for women to be nurturing caregivers.

But the attributes of nurturing and intuition just may be the secret to success for women’s businesses thriving not just in Las Vegas, but all across the country. Honoree’s coaching strategies include the personal. “Social skills affect business skills,” she says.

Honoree started her coaching business in the late 90s in Honolulu (originally from Ohio). She’s been in Vegas for close to 3 years. “A friend told me about the opportunities in Las Vegas.” After investigating several cities, she concluded her friend was right. “There was no one like me operating in Vegas.” Honoree, being a member of the Rotary Club (a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders providing humanitarian service), felt

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welcomed by the LV Chapter. She adds, "I was attracted by the growth of the city, the climate, the energy of Vegas...and low taxes." She doesn't claim to be a life coach, but has found that many business problems are often due to personal problems, which she addresses as well. She says she is results oriented but still has heart.

Women like Honoree Corpron and Gina-Robinson Billips, along with organizations like NAWBO and other support-based organizations, have turned LV into a new frontier where women can thrive and prosper like no other time in the history of Vegas, or America. Honoree offers another strategic tidbit to positive thinking: "Learn to associate enjoying to whatever you're doing." When Honoree's daughter wakes up in the morning, Honoree greets her with a big "Good morning," and let's her know how happy she is to see her.

Note: This article was originally written in 2005, so some of the statistics have changed.

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