

Julissa Carielo



Position: President, Tejas Premier Builders
Age: 38
Family: Husband, Oscar; two sons.
Education: B.B.A. in accounting, St. Mary's University
Words that best describes you: Honest, dependable, easy going.
Passionate causes: Helping develop minority-owned small businesses
Word of advice: Admit when you're wrong and look for ways to fix it the right away. Always say what you're going to do.
Mentors: Michael Hoover, Rene Garcia and Doug Nunnelly.
Wheels: Chevy Tahoe
Book you'd recommend: "Playing with Boys" by Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez
Influential trip: A leadership training in Jackson Hole, Wyo.
Most embarrassing CD you own: My kids' "High School Musical" CDs
Stressbuster: Laugh. When I am going through something stressful, I think I'm going to laugh about it tomorrow, so I just start today.

BY CAROL SCHLIESINGER

Growing up the only daughter among four brothers accustomed Julissa Carielo to being around men. So when she started her own construction company three years ago, working in the male-dominated industry was second nature.

Carielo partly credits her family for her current business success. Her father, an entrepreneur, had his own transmission shop and assigned her accounting tasks for the business since she was 6 years old. "I would count all the cash he brought home every evening," she recalls.

Years later, she went on to pursue an accounting degree in college. After holding several accounting and comptroller jobs with companies in the construction industry, she ventured out to start her own, Tejas Premier Building Contractor. Since its inception in 2006, the start-up grew from two employees to 26 today, reporting \$5 million in revenues and forecasting to reach \$8 million next year.

When asked to explain her business' boom, she says, "There's no question I've been blessed," adding that she made smart choices along the way, such as pursuing certification as a minority-owned business. Later she sought and obtained 8a certification, which allows her to pursue projects with the federal government and opened up a whole other category of opportunities. Today, 50 percent of her business comes from the federal government.

Carielo adds that being conservative about spending always helps. "As an accountant we watch every dime," she says.

Besides the colossal task of leading a construction company, Carielo finds the time to give back and help others. Together with a team from the Associated General Contractors and Bexar County executives, she developed the Basics Training program to help minority or women-owned small businesses develop and grow in the San Antonio market.

"She holds a lot of promise for our community and also for the construction industry, being a leader," says Rene Garcia, director of billing at Zachry Construction, who mentors Carielo professionally.

Another mentor and fellow general contractor, Doug Nunnelly, of FA Nunnelly Co., says he's never afraid of competition, so long as it's competition like Carielo.

"She's done remarkably well for a young company in these times and that speaks to the level of professionalism that she has insisted upon," adds Nunnelly.

Carielo agrees. The biggest obstacle she overcame: being the new kid on the block, which makes her most proud. To have subcontractors believe in her as a general contractor took building relationships. But once the trust was built, word of mouth spread and people now come to her wanting to introduce themselves. "Once (subcontractors) saw my money was as good as the other general contractors' money, they believed in me," she says.

The achievement is not limited to vendors. After only two years in business, all her clients have been coming back to her with more business. "That is an amazing feeling, knowing you are doing something right," she adds.