

FINDING YOUR WORTH IN THE WORKPLACE: TÚ VALUES, TÚ PUEDES



As we celebrate [Hispanic Heritage Month](#), and the achievements of members of our community, I think about my own path to success, and the many challenges along the way, but my perseverance has paid off. Faith, hope, and gratitude have been the three major driving forces to achieving success in my personal life and my career. Mind you, success is just like beauty; it is in the eyes of the beholder. You define your own success.

I am the oldest of nine kids and the daughter of immigrant parents who came to the United States from a small town in Mexico seeking a better life for us. At the age of 17, I immigrated to California, where my family worked as laborers in agriculture.

Although my dad didn't have much education, he was very wise, and always believed that his children, and especially women, needed to be educated. He wanted his daughters to be strong and prepared for whatever life was going to bring to them. In his simple ways, he always made us self-confident.

He used to say, "Tú values, tú puedes," which means "You are worth it and you can do it." As a young girl, each time I faced a big test in school or a big challenge, my dad would always tell me that I could do whatever I set my mind to.

Before I left Mexico, I had finished high school and two years of college and was already studying business administration. Once I was in California, I joined my family in the fields. After the first day of picking peaches, I thought there had to be a better way to earn a living. I knew I had to learn English and find a way to get myself back into school.

For about six months, after work, my dad would drive me to the library to take English as a Second Language courses. I also learned that my education in Mexico qualified me to go to the community college, where I enrolled in classes that I had already taken in Mexico. My thinking was that I already knew the subject matter, so now I would learn how to use the language to understand how people communicate and further my skill set.

Within two years, I got a scholarship and was able to transition to Sacramento State University and stay close to my parents. I also got a job as a library assistant, which helped cover housing and food. My parents helped with gas and gave me an old car to drive. In the summers, I'd go back and work in the fields and the cannery to save money for the upcoming school year. When I got my bachelor's degree in business administration and accounting, it was such a proud moment for my parents and me. It re-affirmed my dad's mantra, "Tú vales, tu puedes." I was worth it and I could do it!

I entered the workforce as an accountant at a small engineering firm and after a year, while still working, I started the MBA program at the San Francisco Golden Gate University extension program offered at the U.S. Air Force base in Sacramento. I attended classes alongside many pilots who were also pursuing their master's degrees. I was one of the youngest people in the program, and I benefited greatly from my classmates' experiences and their way of overcoming challenges.

After graduating from the MBA program, I was recruited by a defense contractor to be a financial analyst supporting the engineering group. In that role, I learned that trust and networking were essential to developing partnerships. I realized I could break through and gain the trust of my peers and customers—and make them see me as a team member—by playing soccer with them at lunch time.

Back then, the engineering and tech fields were very male-dominated. There were not many women, and especially not many Hispanics in the field. Often, in my early job assignments, I was the only Hispanic working as a professional. The other Hispanics in the company were either line workers or the people who cleaned the offices. With the help of managers who advocated for me, I found my footing and became more assertive, and more successful.

Through social networking, I met a group of Hispanic engineers who were also trying to find their way at the different high-tech companies in the area. At that time, formal employee resource groups like the one that we have now at BMC were a very new concept. Together with other Hispanic engineers, we formed a group where our charter was to further employee development and perform community service, which included working with high schools in the San Jose area.

The group organized youth leadership conferences and through that, I became a motivational speaker. I would tell young Latinos and young women that it doesn't matter how you look, how you sound, or where you're coming from. What matters is that you are worth it, and, "Yes, you can do it"—"Sí, se puede."

Over the next several years, I got to wear a lot of hats, with increasing management responsibilities at various local high-tech companies, until I was promoted to a controller's position serving a Latin America sales organization, which was very comfortable for me. After a few years of working in a senior management role and obtaining the Six Sigma certification, I started re-thinking my career and looked for other work opportunities that would make me happier and give me the flexibility to help with the care of my mom when she became ill and had a stroke.

I was then recruited to join BMC in a revenue recognition role to support the Latin America sales region. I've been here almost eight years, and I have met very strong allies who have been a gold

mine helping me navigate all of the information and the intricacies of the company.

People have treated me with a lot of respect, and I have been given the opportunity to work across the business. I have learned that by helping team members, I also help myself, and that you don't have to be a manager to mentor people. You can mentor people in an indirect way, just by helping them to be successful. That makes your job a lot easier, too.

Looking back, I appreciate the opportunities I have been given, and I've welcomed the unexpected trials in my life as they also became opportunities. Without them, I wouldn't have the experience I have now. As I've gotten older, I've recognized that it's important to be flexible. Life can change course, and you need to be able to reset your goals and manage expectations.

In the Latin culture, the human connection is very important. We talk about family and the weather first and then get down to business. You have to slow down, learn about the people you're working with, and then go forward. The human connection is the biggest asset of any company. It doesn't matter what your job is.

You can make your job fun by looking for opportunities for personal and professional growth and ways to contribute to others. Always seek information, ask questions, and understand what has been assigned to you. And don't be afraid to ask for help from people who are in a position to help you advance your career.

Your attitude is the key to winning or losing. If I'd felt sorry for myself when I came to the United States, I wouldn't be who I am now, and I wouldn't have been driven to get an education and to learn English. I'm still learning, and I will never stop learning. I use my accent as an asset because I learned that when you have an accent, people do listen.

Support groups like the BMC LatinE employee resource group are very helpful for networking with allies, sharing our expectations and challenges, and asking for help. Just like my dad's saying, "You are worth it. You can do it. Tú values, tú puedes." It's a mantra that I still practice to this day. I always seek to improve myself, gain new perspectives, and challenge my attitude and the attitude of others.

All of our life experiences make us who we are. Remember your values, remember where you're from, and know where you're going. It's an important reminder not just for Hispanic Heritage Month, but every day. I hope you'll join BMC and me in celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month as we support these global organizations.

- [LGBTI Social Alliance of Antioquia](#) is a youth, social, and community-based organization that promotes actions and develops strategies aimed at the recognition of diversity as a common heritage of humanity.
- [AFESU](#) in Brazil promotes human dignity through the citizen, educational, and professional formation of socially vulnerable women from childhood to adulthood.
- [Gerando Falcoes](#) is an organization dedicated to transforming the lives of children, young people, leaders, and favela residents through education and access to work and technologies in Brazil.
- [Tarjimly](#) is a crowdsourced translation app staffed by volunteer translators. Our blog post on the organization is [here](#).
- [Nutre a un Nino](#) is a non-profit working with poor rural communities in Mexico to foster social, economic, and environmental development in favor of child nutrition.
- [HeForShe](#) is a global non-profit mobilizing for gender equality.