

WOMEN

In Business

PRESENTING SPONSOR:



Robin Montero

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN YOUR LINE OF WORK AND WHAT GOT *you* STARTED?

“Like most folks I've had several careers. As a young girl in high school, I began working in restaurants. This progressed through two different professions as well as becoming a partner in Maggie's on The Prom & White Cap Catering. I worked for Seattle's largest electrical sign company - a career that began when I was barely a teenager in 1972 and retired from in 2006. Three months after retiring I had the good fortune of being recruited as a staff member in the Seattle Fifth Avenue Theater costume shop to eventually re-retire after 12 years at the end of the 2018 season. Meanwhile, I was co-owner of Montero Sisters Fabrics & Creative Inspiration here in Seaside for five years.

My mom was a single parent and remarried when I was 13. My stepdad was working at the west coast premiere electrical sign company in downtown Seattle building big electrical signs like those you see on a stadium, grocery stores, literally everywhere.

My sisters and I would tag along during his “rounds” and were trained at a young age to spot “outages” (where a portion of the internal/external light source is not functioning). We learned sign types such as single face, double face, pylon, blade sign, graphics, etc. and the associated crafts such as sign design, manufacturing, installation, and so on. Little did I know this early knowledge would come in handy later.

Newly married and fresh out of college I worked for a Seattle recruiter connecting clerical job applicants to employers. The purpose behind my job was rewarding, but the office personnel field was not. I had an intuitive manager who asked if I would be interested in heading up a newly established department for recruiting specialty trade fields including electrical, construction, plumbing - all predominately male positions. I agreed and was eager to learn all about the work. I was the first person, let alone woman, to head up the department and found the contractor trade fields to be very interesting....



Robin & her husband, Bill Montero

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN YOUR LINE OF WORK AND WHAT GOT *you* STARTED? CONT.

“I returned to Seattle after a year in San Jose where my husband, Bill, had been transferred. He secured a teaching position, and I was hired at the same sign company my where stepdad was still working. Already familiar with the creative industry, I began at the bottom of the ladder in the Accounting office. I learned everything you would want to know about A/P, A/R, billing, cost accounting, personal property taxes, etc. and as “exciting” as accounting could be, I transferred up to the all-male Service department. While working with technicians & manufacturing plant personnel, I constantly asked the “why’s” and “how’s”. It was a good fit for me. You’ll never know everything, but the more you learn about your business and industry from your co-workers, you will find it makes for lasting client relationships down the road. When our art department evolved from colored pencils to sophisticated graphics computer programs, I wanted to learn that, too - just in case.

The next rung in the sign industry took me into ales & national/international sign project management for the world's largest coffee retailer as well as other well-known national clients. Taking a pro-active approach, including national City Permitting Code research, literally made everything happen. Personally, I also think having a deep voice was to my benefit in working in this arena generally held by men. I have a few good eye-rolling stories from this time.

After my first retirement, who couldn’t be convinced to work side-by-side with multi-E Emmy award winning and internationally known costume designers Bob Mackie and Greg Barnes?! Or Tony award winner James Monroe Iglehart (twice!) best known as the Genie in the Broadway musical Aladdin? The nationally recognized 5th Avenue Musical Theatre is a professional beam of light attracting the best in the Broadway world and known for cultivating local talent by launching many theatrical careers. I have a personal background in costume design and being a part of the renowned 5th Avenue costume shop team was the cherry on top of my last official career. Fun stories of Eric Idle and Hugh Jackman...”

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU WOULD TELL OTHER WOMEN GOING INTO BUSINESS?

“Know your competition – they know you. Be up front with your clients, customers, and yourself. Be prepared. If not, you may be opening doors for mistakes. And those mistakes will be noticed by your competition as well.

If you're bored, change your field or your outlook. You may end up going down a different road than what you thought, but who knows, maybe you're supposed to go down that different path. Maintain your integrity.

“Word of mouth” is the most powerful way to gain a reputation. It's up to you to take responsibility for your reputation. By doing your best and being comfortable in your own skin at whatever you're doing, you'll gain confidence. Seek mentors. Educate yourself and be a sponge! Don't burn your bridges. Be kind. Use your brain. Smile. And, most importantly, listen.”

Robin



Robin (age 1), sister (Age 5) & Mother (age 23)

HOW DID YOU MANAGE POWER STRUCTURES & IMPOSTER SYNDROME EARLY IN YOUR CAREER VS. LATER IN *your* CAREER?

“Who hasn’t been nervous in their careers? Working with primarily men early on had its challenges, but I decided long ago it was not going to be a factor. Being a planner in both my personal and professional life continues to help me to keep the insecurities at bay.”



Robin & her dad, Bob Labadie

TELL US A PROJECT OR ACCOMPLISHMENT IN YOUR CAREER *you* ARE MOST PROUD OF?

"There are so many wonderful things that have happened in my life, and I am beyond grateful to family, friends, and mentors. No one does it alone without support whether it's encouragement or constructive criticism.

It's a personal aspiration to go to bed smiling - did I do the best I could today? If not, what can I do differently tomorrow?

Funny side note: I got myself to amateur bodybuilder status twice in my life. What the hell for?
I don't know, just a personal challenge.

Really, it's the people around you and how you let them in. You have no idea how your presence affects somebody else, but I do know how somebody else's presence in my life affects me. And I am very appreciative. Truly."



WHAT DO *you* WANT TO ACHEIVE NEXT?

"When you're 21, you don't realize how the skills you're learning will come into play later down your road. Although I'm retired from the active workforce, I volunteer with the Seaside Planning Commission - drawing from my PM background. I also volunteer at the Seaside Museum Butterfield Cottage. I love history and find at the BC I can put my graphics, restaurant, visual display, and theatrical experiences all to good use.

One of my favorite places in the Universe, besides the Columbia River Maritime Museum, is our library. Endless learning opportunities!

Odds are that I'm not going to win the Mega-Millions, but I really think we won the lottery by moving here. Seaside has so much to offer in its natural beauty, history, and endless community involvement opportunities. And that's pretty rich when you look at it. 😊



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PRESENTING SPONSOR:



LUM'S
AUTO CENTER

"Advice for women? Go for it. Do your thing. Don't hold back" - Lori Lum

"Be strong, yet willing to take chances" - Julie Lum