

Elinor Stutz's Story

Written by Angela Newman

Elinor Stutz was expected to attend college after high school. She knew she wanted to be in business and having a four year degree would be necessary. However, back in the 60's there weren't as many options for creative majors as there are today so Elinor, not particularly fond of school, decided to pursue a degree in anthropology. *"It was best for me because I always had a love for travel, meeting new people and learning about new cultures. My favorite classes were Cave Art, Culture of the Eskimos, and Quechua - language of the Incas."* She adds *"My parents were very good sports!"*

"While I knew business was where I wanted to be, I had no idea what that might look like. I was in the work world only for a few years and the work available for females was unsatisfactory so a college friend and I began a business called Details Details. We planned parties for others and did jobs which companies did not have time to do." Then the economy took a turn for the worse and companies were no longer spending money on elaborate parties (very similar to the 2009 economy), so Elinor decided to work in the advertising industry where she learned to write for the masses.

After she married, her husband convinced her to go to work in the aerospace industry because they were under pressure to hire women. *"At last the paycheck would be a wee bit higher. The only job available was to become a computer operator. In those years computers took up the entire room and I had no idea what a computer even looked like. The manager-to-be called to say he was saving the position for a man. He continued that if I insisted on applying anyway, he would require me to take a pay cut from what was being advertised. I actually screamed at this manager-to-be over the phone asking if he knew the prices of rent, milk, bread etc.! In spite of that horrific conversation, the job became mine. I built relationships with everyone at Hughes Aircraft and became their favorite computer operator. Two years later, I left to begin our family."*

For the next 15 years Elinor ended up staying home and raising her children. Eight of the fifteen years, she worked from home which provided a flexible schedule around her family.

When the youngest children reached their teens she wanted to get back into the business world but she also didn't want to go back to school. One night her husband came home from work and said, *"I've got it, you have the personality of a salesperson!"* Elinor looked at him in horror and asked him, *"Is that a compliment or an insult?"*

Well, needless to say, she took her husband's advice and got a job as a salesperson. Since she did not have any previous sales experience the only job she could get was selling an unknown brand of copier door-to-door. Elinor recalls, *"The manager was so upset the Director hired me, he told all of the salesmen to give me the silent treatment, and together they would force me out. Additionally, there was no training; I knew nothing about selling or the technology I was supposed to sell, about business or even how to go about doing my job. I was so green I did not even know there was a sales cycle."*

Elinor decided to ask the secretary how she was supposed to do her job because she wasn't getting any help from the manager or her peers and she said, *"I think you knock on every door in your territory."* So that's exactly what she did and whoever would give her the opportunity to come in she would ask them personal questions since she didn't know anything about the product she was selling. In so doing she made a lot of friends and within three months Elinor was hearing comments such as 'You are a breath of fresh air.'

"To my Manager's dismay, I became the top producer by the 4th month! When it was apparent I was going to be the top producer once again the 5th month, the Manager decided to treat the men to a lingerie fashion show on the bad side of town. It became a battle of will and yours truly won!" Elinor's skills, talent and persistence paid off in the end because she remained the top producer for 11 years even though she was still given a lower salary and treated with very little respect by the men in her industry. What she did find was respect among her clients; Fortune 100 and 500, high-tech startups in Silicon Valley and Government accounts and she won most of the company awards and bonuses making up for the low base salaries she had become accustomed to.

"The last straw came in 2001 when I made it to high tech and considered myself lucky to have finally landed a man's salary plus commission. It came to my attention that the company was highly unethical waiting for me to collect money from the top advertising agencies in the country but without promise of putting the actual service in place that I was

selling. The moment that became clear, I quit. I announced to my husband that I would live in the wilderness before going to yet one more company. I had had it.”

Since that time Elinor has moved from the corporate world to running her own business, Smooth Sale, LLC; a sales training company. She also decided to write and self publish a book. Then one day a man made a very rude remark stating that if her book was so good, why didn't a publisher pick it up? The remark was mean spirited, but Elinor thought about his comment and decided to hire Randy Peyser who represents authors to publishers to assist her in getting her book published. *“I hired her on the spot to promote my book at the BEA fair in New York. Randy returned with a list of 11 potentially interested publishers. The very first one I called (of course using my selling skills) said “Yes!” Sourcebooks helped make the book more fun to read and repackaged it as “Nice Girls DO Get the Sale: Relationship Building that Gets Results”. Her book was featured in TIME Magazine, translated into multiple languages, and continues to sell worldwide.*

Elinor's future plans include speaking internationally and continuing to write books on business topics. She is also very involved in community service but her reason is different from most. As Elinor tells the story; *“Community Service is of utmost importance. My story is very unique. I found myself on a stretcher with a broken neck at Stanford Hospital. While the staff was telling my family I would be paralyzed, I had a near-death experience where my life flashed in front of my eyes in the form of a report card. On the left hand side I had very high marks. However, on the right hand side there was a blank page entitled “Community Service.” That moment, I made a promise to myself and the great beyond that if I were to survive the accident, I would begin giving of myself in whatever manner I could.”*

“Then with clarity, it came to me I would become a sales trainer. I would help others grow their business with the sales skills I learned in corporate. It was on the stretcher where I first laid out my business plan. The next morning I was heavily medicated and told I would only have 1.5 minutes to speak to the surgeon before succumbing to the drugs. Upon meeting the surgeon, I heard him tell me with a very serious look on his face and tone in his voice, ‘When you wake up Mrs. Stutz, most likely you will be paralyzed’.”

“I could not move but instantly went into sales mode. With nothing to lose, and remembering my promise the night before to help communities at large, I mirrored his demeanor and retorted, ‘When I wake up, I fully expect to be well!’ The last thing I

remember before falling asleep was the surgeon jumping backward. No one in their right mind would speak back to a surgeon who was about to cut them open! Four days later, I walked out of the hospital and remembered my promise.”

Today Elinor devotes her time and energy to the community at large and encourages all women to do the following through their journey of career climbing.

- Commitment to lifetime learning
- Believe in your capabilities and do not quit but find a better way
- Give back to communities at large

It doesn't matter where in life you are or your age; your goals are attainable as long as you put the energy, excitement and passion into accomplishing them. Elinor says, *“I am in my 6th decade accomplishing things I never imagined and am having the time of my life!”*



Elinor Stutz can be reached at Smooth Sale, LLC (www.smoothsale.net)

