

Linda Minde's Story

Written by Angela Newman

“When my husband got out of the service, we had no money and no job. We had no choice but to live in a tent for three months with our 6-week-old baby and our 4-year-old son.” Certainly a situation no one would want to be in with or without children, but what led up to this point in Linda Minde's life?

Linda grew up in a family as the oldest of four girls. She loved playing church and school and being the eldest child she was always the one in charge by playing the role of teacher. It seemed like such a natural and logical choice for her and her parents when it came time to decide what her focus would be in college; a teaching degree. Although her parents never attended college, they encouraged their children to seek higher education to achieve their goals but for Linda it represented 'freedom'. She had a scholarship to Southeast Missouri State Teachers College but when her father's employment transferred him to Chicago, Illinois her life-long best friend and college roommate to be was no longer in her future. Instead she enrolled at Northern Illinois University, still a teacher's college, but what a shock it was to Linda. There were 20,000 strangers wandering around campus and she didn't know a single soul. But she was determined to stay in school no matter what; after all, *“the alternative would be to live at home with my dysfunctional family.”*

After two years of college, life changing events began to take place. She met a guy on a double date in her freshman year and continued to date him while attending school. While in her junior year she found out she was pregnant so they agreed the best thing to do was to elope and do it quickly. Two days later her husband was drafted into the Army. After her junior year she joined her husband in Maryland and gave birth to their son, Jeffrey. Shortly thereafter, her husband was sent to Officer training school in Virginia; a lot of major changes for Linda in such a short period of time. Approximately two years later after more moving around and Army training - her husband was deployed to Vietnam. While he was there she was determined to make the best of the situation and returned to Illinois to finish her college degree. *“I would have much rather stayed in Arizona than Illinois, because when I took my husband to the*

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airport to leave it was 25 degrees below and snow was a foot high.” But Linda was committed to finishing what she had started.

Linda’s husband returned from Vietnam and life went on as usual. But it was when he left the Army, that they found themselves without a home or a job. Struggling through homelessness while raising two boys as a stay home mom was not in their plans. Linda eventually got a divorce and needed to find employment in order to support her and the children so she found a job doing “office” type tasks like shorthand and typing. *“It was only six months later that I was recommended for a job in Human Resources at that same company.”* During the interview the president of the company informed her they were looking for someone with a college degree; what a sigh of relief for Linda! It was then she realized her perseverance paid off. She was now on the road to a ten year career in human resources.

Linda eventually married the new love in her life; a guy who owned his own masonry construction company. Ten years later they decided it was time for her to join the management team. The only thing she knew about construction was - well nothing really; after all her background in human resources was in the banking and electronics manufacturing industries. She knew she had quite a learning curve ahead but was up to the challenge. Compared to the other hurdles in her life, this one would probably be easier to conquer than some of the others. She was also aware of the challenges that lay ahead simply because the construction industry has a reputation for doing shoddy work and having unethical business practices. She knew this was not true for her husband’s company and wanted to make sure their company had the reputation of honesty, ethical practices, jobs completed on time and client satisfaction. Linda says, *“As an over-achiever and putting in over time, I transformed the small masonry company into a design/build residential remodeling company where I am now operating as President and General Manager.”*

The construction industry has long been male dominated, but that is beginning to change thanks to women like Linda who take an interest in the business. *“Women-owned construction companies in general are more successful as they are focused on customer service and are much more business savvy.”* Because Linda has played an integral role in the success of her business, she shares her knowledge with others so they too can do the same. She mentors

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other women that are starting or growing their businesses and helps many of their trade contractors to become successful business owners. The satisfaction this brings to her is immeasurable.

Linda's success is not attributed only to her attention to customer service and perseverance, but to her belief in Jesus, honesty and integrity. She says success is definitely due in part to goal setting. In fact, she involves the entire team in the company's strategic planning and believes that in order to achieve success it's important to engage everyone in setting goals.

It's no surprise that Linda wants to involve employees in the goal setting of the company because she loves helping others. She's a mentor for women in the National Association for Women Business Owners (NAWBO) and has been for several years. Through this organization she has met many women of whom she has remained friends. She loves networking in general and meeting new people. *"This (networking) is something that was non-existent in the construction industry for many years. I have made valuable and lasting trade partnerships and received referral business in addition to leads as a direct result of getting out in the community and developing personal connections."* In addition to networking she currently sits on two boards: Save the Family Foundation and Women's Enterprise Foundation both of which are near and dear to her heart.

When asked what advice she would give to women climbing their career ladder to help them reach their goals she said, *"Keep your 'vision board' in plain sight; treat your clients, employees and trade partners like royalty; maintain well-defined priorities; make honest and ethical decisions; create strong, meaningful relationships including a mentor; and build value and trust"*.

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Linda Minde can be reached at Tri-Lite Builders in Arizona where she and her husband are co-owners of the business. You can learn more about her business and philosophy by visiting www.trilitebuilders.com