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“My dad would always say, ‘If you want money, you’re supposed to work, not play.’”



WHEN I was 6, my dad worked as a janitor at a doctor’s office. My mom had passed away, so we’d often go along and help him out. At first, we worked for free. Then we realized that kids our age got an allowance. So we started asking for money. He’d laugh and say, “Here’s your money. Now go away!” Even though we were supposed to be cleaning, sometimes we’d play. Whenever my dad caught us, he’d say, “If you want money, you’re supposed to work, not play.” Maya Angelou also inspired me. In her book *Heart of a Woman*, she writes, “Life loved the person who dared to live it.” Because of that line, at 19, I left Oklahoma and moved to Chicago. In my new city, I got involved in martial arts and danced for the Chicago Bulls. Two years ago, I moved to Dallas to be closer to my boyfriend. Now I own a fitness company that fuses martial arts such as capoeira, tae kwon do and tai chi into one class. None of this would have happened if I hadn’t listened to my dad and to Maya.

—Micaela Gutierrez-Brigida, 30, CEO of Orizon, Dallas

“There is no such thing as failure when you launch your own business. I will have learned so much about life.”

WHILE STUDYING fashion at the Pratt Institute in New York, I worked for a woman who owned a vintage-clothing boutique called Olives in Brooklyn. She opened her shop when she was in her early 30s. She often told me that she wished she hadn’t waited so long and had done it earlier. That got me thinking: “What am I waiting for?” I opened my own store just one month after my 23rd birthday. In order to do it, I took some not-for-credit business classes and followed the instructors’ advice: I researched loans and grants for minority groups, wrote a business plan and secured a bank loan. People couldn’t believe that I opened the store when I was as young as I was. But I’m glad that I did. There is no such thing as failure when you launch your own business. Even if it doesn’t survive, I will have learned so much about life, retail and myself—and that’s an education that can’t be bought.

—Malena Martinez, 26, owner of Malena’s Unique Boutique, West Chester, Pennsylvania



For more advice from successful Latinas, go to [latina.com](http://latina.com).

**LOS CONSEJOS MÁS VALIOSOS.** Cuatro latinas exitosas recuerdan palabras sabias que las impulsó a salir adelante.

**Sonia Manzano, actriz, Ciudad de Nueva York:** Me encantó el consejo que dio John Leguizamo cuando recibió un premio: “Si no encuentras el trabajo que deseas, créalo tú”. Hice eso mismo de adolescente cuando trabajaba en *Jack in the Box*: como estaba aburrida de tomar ordenes, convencí a mi jefe de que me dejara vestir de payaso para entretener a los niños. Y continué recibiendo consejos de mentores. Hace unos años, aprendí de un productor de Sesame Street que siempre hay que hacer más de lo que tu jefe espera de ti.

**Irene Bustamante, 37, directora de relaciones multiculturales, MGM Mirage, Las Vegas:** “Tienes que tener un plan; necesitas conocer a tu oponente y aprovecharte de sus debilidades”. Ésta es una cita del libro *The Art of War* de Sun Tzu que el entrenador del equipo de fútbol americano de California State University, donde estudié y fui su asistente, siempre mencionaba y utilizaba para planificar sus estrategias para cada juego. Yo aplico esos mismos

principios en mi trabajo actual, en el que manejo 55 proyectos diferentes.

**Micaela Gutiérrez-Brigida, 30, presidenta de Orizon, Dallas:** “Si quieres dinero, ponte a trabajar en vez de jugar”, me dijo mi padre cuando yo tenía seis años de edad y lo acompañaba a su trabajo donde limpiaba oficinas. De adolescente, me impactó el libro de Maya Angelou, *Heart of a Woman*, que dice: “La vida ama a los que se atreven a vivirla”. A los 19 años me independicé. Estudié artes marciales y bailé para el equipo de los Bulls de Chicago. Ahora soy coreógrafa y dueña de un gimnasio que combina ejercicios y artes marciales.

**Malena Martínez, 26, propietaria de Malena’s Unique Boutique, West Chester, Pennsylvania:** “Desearía no haber esperado tanto para establecer mi negocio”, se quejaba a menudo la dueña de una tienda de ropa donde trabajé. Eso me empujó a abrir mi propio negocio al mes de cumplir los 23 años. Tomé clases de administración empresarial, investigué sobre financiación y subvenciones para minorías, desarrollé un plan y conseguí un préstamo. Aprendí mucho sobre la vida, sobre el secreto de las ventas y sobre mí misma.