

Lori Williams



Lori Williams has worked for herself most of her adult life. She brings that wealth of entrepreneurial experience to her role as an Advisor for the SBDC Hosted by Pasadena City College.

Her first business focused on consulting in advertising and marketing. After looking for a change of pace she worked for a few years at Canon copiers, then decided to get a banking background. She went into strategy and turnaround and became known as a guru of finance during her time working for a regional bank in California.

"Desperation, not inspiration caused me to go work in corporate America," Lori said. "When I was in Texas, life was different. There was much less support for employees than you find now. One company kept my

paycheck for a month, and I lived paycheck to paycheck for a while."

She wasn't able to work for others very long. The constant anxiety was taxing. Finally, Lori decided that money did not make her happy. She decided she was more afraid of working for someone else, than relying on herself for a paycheck. Now Lori says as a strategy and turnaround consultant, she makes her own pathway and does not live according to what the world considers "normal."

She faced some problems at first as an entrepreneur. "It was challenging to consult in high finance in L.A. and not be supported by a large company, competing with large companies' old networks and old money and making sure you had enough clients at all times," Lori said. "It was emotionally challenging. As every business owner knows when you are self employed, you go to bed, and you wake up in the morning thinking about where you're going to get clients and will you be profitable."

She decided she would downsize and help small businesses. She connected directly with her target market, cold calling, knocking on doors, and public speaking, so that people could sample her main product: her intellect. "In banking you go to network meetings and spend time with influencers, you never go to the end user," Lori said. "I tried that approach, but it was useless to me, I didn't fit the mold."

Her in-person marketing events led to a constant stream of small business clients. When USC contacted her to be an adjunct professor Lori started wondering what other opportunities might be available for her. During this time Lori's former Pepperdine University professor introduced her to Salvatrice Cummo, Director of the SBDC at Pasadena City College, and Lori decided this would be the perfect opportunity to help even more small businesses.

At this time she had also decided that she no longer wanted to live in Los Angeles, and that instead she'd like to live in a van and rock climb. So she outfitted the vehicle for herself and her beloved cat

Natika, learned how to fix the van herself and started traveling all over the country rock climbing. She still makes a living consulting, and helping businesses turn themselves around financially through the SBDC, but now she's living life on her own terms.

"What's fascinating to me is that SBDC became one of the most beautiful relationships. It wasn't planned," Lori said. "My ability to take the immense expertise I had gathered to small businesses was challenging when I first starting consulting on my own, because small businesses couldn't afford it. Now I can take that wealth of experience and give it to small businesses for free."

She gives her SBDC clients advice including the "Lori-ism" of intelligence, time, and effort = success. "It's letting them know that you can be an active person, but you need intelligence, and that you can be the most intelligent book-read person, but if you don't get off the couch you won't succeed," Lori said. She also tells them to stop, analyze, and strategize, see if you're getting results, then make changes or change the desired outcome if you're not seeing results you want."

Lori said she essentially becomes her clients' Chief Financial Officer. "Not too often do these small businesses get CFO financials. They're often using personal funding, and they don't always understand what kind of financials they really need," Lori said. "I take them through a process that helps them to really, really understand their financials. They build the models with me so they fully understand it."

The reaction Lori receives from clients at the SBDC is heartfelt. "Never have I had e-mails like these, saying 'thank you for the financial knowledge and emotional support you give me,'" Lori said.

She also says that working with her SBDC clients helps her too. "I'm able to do good for the community and live on what I can afford. This is perfect for my lifestyle, and I can work with people virtually," Lori said.

Lori has written 4 books and created 3 financial models available on Amazon and on her website

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