

## Marty Stewart



She's the friendly face clients see each week as they meet with advisors, helping them connect and get scheduled for upcoming meetings. But Marty Stewart is also an advisor who works with clients looking for Human Resources help at the SBDC in Pasadena.

Marty has done it all. After graduating from Azusa Pacific University with a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership (MAOL), she worked as a hotel manager for 16 years. She then joined a computer tech Internet hardware and software startup from Caltech in 1996. She was their 11th hire.

"Eight people were founders, engineering types, then they added shipping and receiving people, and I joined them to put in an accounting system and keep their

taxes current."

The company sold the software and hardware pieces individually in 2013 and Marty went to work for the business that bought the software side. She helped them open up their Pasadena office where they stayed for 3 years before Marty helped them relocate to Massachusetts. After that she worked in various places including 5 Acres, the Pasadena-based family behavioral health organization as their accountant.

During this time Marty showcased her skills helping business owners throughout the country with their organizational structure, from starting their company to shutting it down, providing consulting and accounting services and working in biotech and tech sales. She also joined the board of directors for a clinic in El Monte.

In 2015 Salvatrice Cummo, Director of SBDC hosted by Pasadena City College asked Marty to come aboard. With her background in accounting, human resources and facilities management, she was the perfect fit to keep the SBDC's records in order and up to date, but to also provide guidance in the same areas for small business owners.

"I'm Salvatrice's assistant. I research grants, set up processes for audits, take on office operations, order supplies, schedule consultations, and set up webinars and seminars," Marty said. "This frees up Salvatrice to do her job, which includes being out in the public and connecting with different funding sources."

Marty took on the role of Advisor within a couple of months of joining the SBDC. She worked with small businesses who needed more knowledge in areas of compliance, payroll, human resource administration and more.

"I give them the resources. I don't want anyone to go out and say Marty said to use the new I-9 form.

No, Marty gave you the I-9 form," she quipped.

She works closely with clients to make sure even hiring becomes a painless process. "If we have a client getting ready to hire their first employee, I go through the hiring process with them," she said. "Many don't know what questions they can't ask, so I pull the forms, I give them something they can take home that they can read and touch."

She's tough about proper paperwork for good reason. "It's not Marty-ism's, it's the law, regulatory compliance," she said. "I know where to find the information. I'll direct them to places like the Cal Chamber of Commerce or the San Gabriel Employers Advisory Council. The business owners are able to get posters, or attend seminars, get HR alerts on changes to regulatory compliance, or even gain access to a free hotline for help from an attorney."

Marty also guides clients to helpful websites.

"I give them resources so they have access to the ever-changing field of employer responsibilities. I've seen many clients who have worked in the management and leadership role, and they are aware that there are penalties, but sometimes they'll tell me 'I had no idea my field of work is so closely regulated with so many forms.' For example, the I-9 form itself is only 4 pages, but it has 90 pages of instructions."

Marty tells clients that besides filling out necessary forms employers also have deadlines for filling out and sending those forms. For many, the work becomes overwhelming. "There is always astonishment as small business owners wonder how an employer can do all these things," Marty said. "It looks good and easy when they are an employee, and they think they can do it on their own as an employer, but then they discover there is so much more to running a business than just opening the doors."

Marty counts every client that comes to the SBDC as a success story because they leave knowing more than they knew coming in the door. She's also sympathetic to their plight because she is an entrepreneur herself, running her own consultant business.

"The biggest challenge for me starting out as a one person operation, was saying no, because I took on more than one person could handle. I couldn't do everything. Now I see clients facing the same big challenge. They're wearing multiple hats, instead of understanding what their area is and doing it well."

For Marty, watching clients grow in confidence makes her time at the SBDC rewarding. "It is so exciting to watch somebody come in with an idea and not have much confidence in the idea, and 6 to 8 months later or a year later, they're launching. The most exciting and rewarding part of working with SBDC, is being part of the success of someone else's dream."