

Interview with Stefani Sesler-Ruiz, Custom Incentives



WiBN: Tell us about your business (what product or service you provide and who your target audience is)

Stefani: We work with companies to help improve employee productivity, drive sales, generate on-going referrals in a down market, increase teamwork, and reward meeting goals through specialty gifts. Our target market is any business small or large who is looking to do any of the above.

WiBN: -What or who has been your greatest influence in business and why?

Stefani: Joe Pici with Pici & Pici. He is my executive coach and has taught me how to own a business and think like a business owner. He has taught me the language of sales, which is human behavior, and has taught me that sales is not about selling something but rather about meeting needs and developing relationships.

Leah Hawthorn with ABI for challenging me to go after large corporations. I upgraded my suit wardrobe and bought my first pair of heels after meeting Leah. After all, image is everything. You can't do business with large multibillion dollar corporations if you don't know how to dress the dress and walk the walk.

WiBN: What would you say is your greatest professional accomplishment to date?

Stefani: There are two: Setting up a malaria laboratory in Sierra Leone, West Africa. We had a malaria control project in the Liberian refugee camps in Sierra Leone in 03-04. Secondly, graduating from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Just getting admitted was a dream come true, and being surrounded by globe trotters and world changers was the most amazing experience. Hopkins changed my life because I was inspired by the amazing, amazing accomplishments of my fellow classmates, and it pushed me to the next level of professional excellence. It pushed me to want to be excellent, excel more, and accomplish world changing feats. I am still on my way, and WiBN is helping me do that!

WiBN: What's the best advice you have received as a business woman that you wish to pass on to our readers?

Stefani: Everything is about relationships. Nothing is about selling. And because it's about relationships, it's about serving the needs of others first.

WiBN: What has been the most effective marketing initiatives or programs you have used to promote your business?

Stefani: **Personal relationships and word of mouth**

WiBN: What do you do for fun/relaxation?

Stefani: **Read books about leadership, communication, team building, influence, etc. I've learned that leaders are readers, and one way to challenge our minds to thinking differently is through books. To get something we've never received before, we have to do something we've never done before. Through books I see what others have done and get inspired about what I can do too.**

WiBN: What is Number One Business Goal you plan to accomplish over the next year?

Stefani: **To expand into the West Coast market.**

WiBN: Is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?

Stefani: **That all things are possible; that 1 person can change the world, even if it's the world of the person right in front of you.**

WiBN: In addition to your website, how else can our readers connect with you online?
(list your blog and social networking links here)

Stefani: **I connect with people through personal relationships, and the best way for me to do that is by sharing a cup of coffee together. We can be reached at customincentives@yahoo.com or www.custom-incentives.com**

WiBN: What networking tips would you want to share? How has networking helped your business?

Stefani: **When in a large network meeting, the goal is not to meet every person and give your business card to everyone. The goal is to connect with 2-3 people and have good conversations with each of them. Business is not done on the first contact. Relationship is done on the first contact. Business is done after relationship has been established.**

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