



SPOTLIGHT ON GREAT IMPACT



From left, RBAZ CEO Brian Ruisinger, RBAZ clients Teresa Ornelas and Cassandra Rodriguez, and RBAZ Banker Karen Vitkovich.

CREATING BRAND MAGIC EVERY DAY

After leaving corporate life to be home with her four children, Republic Bank of Arizona client Teresa Ornelas discovered the stay-at-home lifestyle wasn't a good fit for her. So, she decided to do something she's always wanted to do, start her own business.

That was 24 years ago. Today, Teresa's woman-owned business, Great Impact, is a thriving promotional products and apparel company on the cutting edge of technology and service. "Our company not only survived but thrived during the crash of 2008 and now again with the pandemic of 2020," says Teresa, president and CEO. She attributes that success to the company's culture, and the ability to foresee market trends and quickly adapt.

She proudly points to several innovations Great Impact has been able to implement. In 2008, the business launched company-branded virtual stores where clients can order customized items and apparel online in a variety of styles, sizes, and colors. This was a revolutionary concept at the time and allowed organizations to order one-off, customized items to meet their individual needs.

ALWAYS MOVING FORWARD

While 2020 brought a different set of challenges, Teresa and her team continued to pivot the company's production and distribution strategy to meet the changing needs of her client base. Specifically, the company greatly expanded its distribution channels to accommodate the work-from-home environment many companies across the U.S. adopted during the pandemic.

"With more employees working from home, companies needed to keep in touch and connect with their employees by sending products to their homes," says Teresa. The next major improvement was expanding the options for adding logos and messages to their products, what they call "self-decoration" in the promo biz. Great Impact does a wide range of self-decoration in-house which opens a world of benefits to both the company and its clients.

"What drew me to Republic Bank of Arizona is their involvement in the business community. When PPP came out and I was scrambling for information, my bank would not help me. That was the last straw for me. I decided to move my accounts over ASAP and I have not looked back since."

Teresa Ornelas

Teresa's Top 3 Tips
FOR NEW BUSINESS OWNERS

Trust the numbers. Before you dive in, make sure the numbers make sense. Know what it's going to take to be successful. For example, how many calls you need to make in a day to make one sale or acquire one new project. The more you know going in, the more successful you will be.

Find 3 options for every problem. Once you come up with a solution to a problem, make yourself think of two more. Mistakes are an opportunity to shine. To make things better. You just have to be innovative and creative. The first option may be the best, but there may be another better solution.

Stay strong. There are going to be hard times, without a doubt. But you can get through them. Ask for help. Seek support from your suppliers, banker, colleagues, and others. You might be surprised how supportive your community can be.

Bringing laser, heat press, sublimation, and sand carving options in-house allows Great Impact to make small runs at lower costs than if it outsourced the work, helping clients maximize their budgets. "By doing the self-decoration in-house, we can offer items on the virtual stores without holding as much inventory," explains Teresa. "It gives us the ability to control the quality of the products and decoration to meet the high standards our customers expect from us."

TERESA'S SECRET SAUCE: A STRONG COMPANY CULTURE

Teresa believes a great company is defined by the company culture. "At Great Impact, we value achievement, teamwork, innovation, and building relationships while not forgetting to have fun in the process," says Teresa.

"Our customers tell us that we are different because we always make it right. I make sure all my employees are trained that it is ok to make a mistake as long as we learn from it but the client comes first. This truly makes a difference when every employee acts this way no matter who the client is working with. We encourage innovation and out-of-the-box ideas so we can constantly keep up with the ever-changing market."

SWITCHING TO A TRUE COMMUNITY BANK

When her bank of 24 years turned its back on her, Teresa went looking for a better option. "What drew me to Republic Bank of Arizona is their involvement in the business community," says Teresa. "When PPP came out and I was scrambling for information, my bank would not help me. That was the last straw for me and I decided to look for another bank.

"I called RBAZ and the next day Karen Vitkovich came to our office and talked to us about our needs and what makes RBAZ different from other banks. After spending time with her I decided to move my accounts over ASAP and I have not looked back since. In the short time that I have been at this bank, I have met personally with President Brian Ruisinger, VP and Portfolio Manager Todd Grady, and VP of Operations Frank Smith and they all have the same dedication and commitment to helping businesses here in Arizona.

"I like working with a bank that shares the same business values as my own, and that a real live person is just a call away," says Teresa. "We are thrilled to have Teresa and Great Impact move over to Republic Bank of Arizona for their business banking needs," says President and CEO Brian Ruisinger. "Teresa is a very talented business person and knows how to run a successful business. She exemplifies the grit and determination we experience firsthand from many of the community's business owners, and we are very proud to support our local businesses. It's what community banking is all about."

