

# “That’s it. It’s over.”

I think back to an evening in March 2003. My home was torn apart, going through a remodel. Unexpectedly the phone rang. It was my boss. I knew it wasn’t a “social” call. I answered with a shocked greeting and continued with “what’s wrong?” With an uncomfortable confidence, the reply...

“There will be an audit in 30 days.” “Ok? An audit of....”

We went back and forth for about 15 minutes.

It turns out there were “issues” with reporting figures to our workers compensation carrier. Classifications of temp staff didn’t coincide with our clients coding. My boss requested everyone’s help to get the information to the auditor. We had 30 days to comply. I quickly stepped up and said, “I’m here. What can I do?” I worked all day and night trying to make sense of the numbers. Unfortunately, two and two were not adding up to four. It was a long 30 days. Our firm’s structure was a bit inflexible with an element of “cookie cutter.” Tools like spreadsheets were decision makers. Simply enter a dollar amount here and a percentage there and “wa la”; cell K35 is the cost of service to our client. The raw information that supported the spreadsheet’s formulas and calculation path were unknown to all of us. We quickly discovered there were severe errors in classifying and calculating the rates to charge clients. It was clear. Only a miracle could prevent us from losing our jobs.

# “Sometimes it’s not what you know, it’s who you know.”

I dear client of mine introduced me to a firm. I knew nothing about them and they knew nothing about me. Kind words spoken gave me confidence to open a new door. I interviewed twice with key stakeholders, was offered a job and took a giant leap of faith. A new team was born.

The 9/11 aftermath still left questions. Businesses were uncertain about their financials and future. Employers were hesitant to hire just incase the economy takes a turn for the worst. Fortunately the economy’s uncertainty didn’t keep me from doing what I was hired to do. I continued to knock on the doors of local businesses, just like nothing had happened. Shortly into my new role, I learned that there was a specific plan for me. Moving away from my heavy industrial clients (my expertise), I got an opportunity to learn the in and out’s of other industries. The light industrial, assembly, accounting, administrative, and finance arena were my new prospects. I had know idea what I was up against? Besides having 20 competitors within 3 blocks of each other, our bill rate was the highest throughout the County. My work was cut out for me. I spent the next several months learning an entirely different business model and bringing the company to a new level. I was the face, the voice and the “go to” person while the leaders stepped back to watch me “rock n role”. I had no other option than to succeed. Within two years, slightly surprising myself, my persistence had a positive impact to the firm. I was able to implement direct placement opportunities, a complete change in clientele and annual revenue that doubled from what the norm was for the firm and industry. I turned a battleship and was on top of the world.

# 2008: “The Great Recession”

During 2006 and 2007 everything seemed great. It wasn't until 2008 when it was confirmed that the United States has entered a global recession. Companies were going through lay-offs by the thousands. Six thousand jobs lost in our county, as we felt a “double whammy” as two major employers of Ventura County closed their doors. The unemployment rates quickly skyrocketed to well over 11% in our backyard. 2008 surprisingly, was by far one of the best years for our firm. Business was great. Go figure; I certainly wasn't complaining nor was I concerned. It wasn't until the 1st quarter of 2009 that we felt the hit! The competition lowered their profit margin and produced rate quotes that we thought we would never see. It became a bidding war over one percent and clients were making the switch for the one percent savings. It made my skin crawl! Our firm went into survival mode and made changes, including reductions.

We remained one of the top firms of our industry; ultimately we expanded our business model to include additional revenue sources. This carried us for 10 months and we began to see a small budge in employers hiring. Like most companies during this time, we united together, wore as many hats as needed and operated lean for about a year. We explored other avenues of cutbacks, fortunately keeping our jobs.

# “Big Big Big Changes”

My mentor retired. The management team of two was asked to hang in there and work together with a seasoned leader who had been with the firm for several years. No problem. Our new leader took on a much different role. The transition to ownership gave our new leader a new perspective. Change is usually tough for all of us. We all worked together and got through the adjustments and eventually things kicked into high gear again. We were ready to reach goals and revenues the firm had never experienced. While the competition was still sorting through “getting back to normal”, we focused on our vision. We stood out above the rest. Recruiting great candidates and delivering a high level of service, we felt the loyalty of our clients to us. Believing in relationships, being fair to your customers and your employees became something of worth. This was more than a model. It became a passion with purpose.

# “what’s next?”

Both personally and professionally I was ready for a challenge, a new level of responsibility. I tossed around several ideas. I considered everything from expansion to a new marketing strategy. The list never seemed to end. As a small company, growth plans were not considered. There was a comfort level that we were all very accustomed to. I needed more. Through out my professional career, I maintained a client base that was loyal and worked with a team that was seasoned and reliable. I still just needed more. I ended up focusing my energy into Executive Placements and was extremely fortunate to have a knack for it. My itch to grow was finally curbed just a bit, now having a new satisfaction and revenue builder. I was able to place candidates in high-level positions within several industries. CFO’s, Engineers, Nurse Practitioners, all found new light with a new partnership – the outcome of me needing more. The interpersonal satisfaction that I felt is indescribable. As time went on, I reverted back to my original thoughts of more. I learned it

was not a need. I WANTED more! I continued tossing around ideas, including ownership. Nothing was changeable in the eyes of the beholder. The future remained comfortable – except I knew, deep down inside, I should be doing more. Something bigger?

*“But What?”*

# 10 Years in the Making

After celebrating my 10-year employment anniversary in March of 2013, I again suggested growing towards new challenges and opportunities. With the same response of “no”, I knew I wouldn’t be “ok” with *comfortable* defining my career.

**“Why? You have it made!”** I get this every day. Colleagues, family and friends all ask, “Why would you leave this? – You have it made!” Steady income, paid vacation, benefits and a great position with work/life balance - all elements of the “great career” without the “more.” Events aside, everything happens for a reason. Smart women take risks.

Now in April, feeling the emotional toll of ending of a 10 year commitment to not only my team and employer; but to my clients – that loyal relationship that was part of my purpose, I now knew I had my challenge. Figuring out that *“but what”* that has been lingering inside me.

I went to a colleague, I’d like to call a friend who has known me for years, watching me grow and mature. As an Entrepreneur, he had never investigated the staffing industry. I truly believe he thought it would be too big of a headache and had no interest. I was fortunate to ask him some silly questions like; “What do you know about owning a franchise?” One silly question at the time, led into many long conversations, all-leading to a vision. Several versions of excel spreadsheets and multiple drafts of a business plan, led us into talks with a portfolio manager to the result of, “Let’s give this a shot!”

# “The ink isn’t dry”

The future is still unknown; contracts not drawn up, accounts not funded, no signatures – no guarantees, not quite a commitment yet, I realized that time doesn’t stop for anything, including uncertainty. I interviewed with Corporate America... The experience was eye opening. For a few months my brain would periodically riddle to me, “I made a huge mistake.” Even if I listened to my brain, I knew something was still missing. I needed to be busier. I wanted to own my own company. I wanted to make a difference. Faith was the only thing getting me through several months of planning, and implementation. I continued to receive offers from several corporate companies. My brain said to settle while my gut told me to keep the vision and not lose momentum. I didn’t have time for fear or guessing games. Motivated... I followed my dream and built a door of opportunity that is now OnDemand Employment Group LLC.