

Nely Galan

More than an Emmy Award-winning producer, successful self-made mogul, and dedicated mother, Nely Galan is the voice of a grassroots movement to empower Latinas everywhere. She talks about her involvement with the inspiring Adelante Movement and her journey to success.

NAWRB: From executive producer of *The Swan* to the first Latina president of Telemundo, you have extensive experience in media and entertainment. As a self-made mogul, how did you break into the industry and what challenges did you face?

Nely Galan: I broke into the industry as a teenage girl. I was working for *Seventeen Magazine* after I had written an article for them. I learned that there was a television show that was about to happen; it was a teenage version of 60 Minutes. I applied for a job as a researcher and got the job in Austin, Texas. I moved to Texas at the age of 17. That was bad because my parents didn't want me to go and I said that I would escape if they didn't let me. So, I went, sat with the producer, and watched all of the interviews and auditions of the reporters they were trying to hire. I really watched what she was looking for in a reporter and asked her if I could audition at the very end. I auditioned based on all the notes I heard her say about people over three days. I got the job! That's how I got into television.

NAWRB: It is very exciting that at such a young age, you were able to grasp everything and have the maturity to go with it. What I think is so important, is there are no set of rules on how old you have to be. Rather, engagement is the key. Whether you're 17 or 30, you have to say, "Do I want to be in business?" and "Where do I want to be in my career?"

Nely Galan: To be fair, I was an immigrant. Immigrants think a little differently. It would be beneficial for people to think like immigrants. When you're an immigrant, you have lost everything. Your family has lost everything. You are very patriotic and grateful to be living in

this country and you understand what most of us forget, which is there is no other place in the world that creates an American Dream for women than this country. Women can grow up to be self-reliant and self-made. When you come from another country, you understand this at a young age. You're really grateful for the opportunity to be a free woman with freedom of speech and the ability to make money. That's a mindset. You've been taught a work ethic where you have to work for everything. In this country, I see that mentality in the kids that are the dreamers, the kids whose parents brought them here. They don't have green cards and yet they're number one in their class because they have that same work ethic. I think many people have lost that feeling that I always had as a little kid. I had to help my parents and it was my number one priority. It makes you responsible and makes you work harder. You really map out possibilities for yourself.

NAWRB: You also have quite a bit of experience in the housing economy with your own real estate development company, Santa Clara. What interested you in starting your own real estate company in addition to your already thriving career in media and entertainment?

Nely Galan: The only reason I even got into real estate is because of one of my bosses who is now a billionaire. He said to me, "When you make money, you need to make money while you sleep." I had no idea what he was talking about. He said, "When you make money, don't do what a lot of people do which is buy really expensive cars and expensive houses. They put themselves into a bad situation. Go buy commercial real estate first and buy your house last. Rent a house for as long as you can because commercial real estate will get you rent right

away. You want your money to generate income as soon as possible. It'll generate more income with commercial property than with personal property where people will be calling and bugging you every minute of the day."

So, I started buying buildings, commercial buildings. I was lucky because I had the opportunity to use the first couple of buildings for my own business. I also started buying the buildings around my buildings because I realized I was making the neighborhood better. I actually bought my own house last like he told me to do. I figured I saw somebody that was smarter than me. I copied what he did and it worked for me.

NAWRB: You not only purchased a couple of buildings, you purchased the whole block. You can appreciate saying "I made a complex" and then, by taking care of your neighbors and bringing them better neighbors, you're going to elevate the entire neighborhood. You're going to really improve the values around you because they're going to attract the ma and pa stores to go with it.

Nely Galan: Not to take credit for that either, I have a real estate mentor, Elaine Spierer, who is a real estate developer in Venice that I became friends with.

She said to me, "With your properties, buy them next to each other because then you'll have flexibility." I own my house and I own the two houses next to me. I own my buildings and I own the buildings next to my buildings. Because, if you own your house and later in life want to downsize, you can live in the guest house and rent the rest of it. Maybe a movie star wants to buy all three houses because they want a compound. You'll have the flexibility to downsize or upgrade. I really listened to her and I have to say, her strategy has really paid off for me.

NAWRB: Whether it is real estate or media, you have

achieved incredible success as a strong Latina entrepreneur. Minority women-owned firms are the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs in the United States yet there is still a gap between the average gross receipts between them and other women-owned firms. As a successful Latina business owner, what is one way we can remedy this issue and bring awareness, access, and opportunities to minority women?

Nely Galan: The reason I do Adelante is because minority women are the fastest growing entrepreneurs but we don't necessarily have the information. The way that many of us are raised, we don't even know where to get it! We feel like somebody has to invite us in for opportunities. What I decided to do with Adelante is really teach Latinas and other minority women how to work smart and not hard. That means really understanding that

we're out there starting businesses but we're doing it the old fashioned way, which is working like dogs and figuring it out. We're not thinking very logically like, "How do I do this in a smarter way?" I think it's important to invite women and show them how they can partner with other women who have already done it. Right now, if you're Latina and you know the way the United



The Adelante Movement: Wisdom of Legends event at Hispanicize 2013 in Miami. (From left to right:) Charo, Rita Moreno, Nely Galan, and Maria Elena Torano.

States works, earmarked opportunities come in based on population growth. If you're very logical about it, the most government contracts and the most small business loans will be earmarked for Latinas right now. Many of them don't even apply for them nor are they ready to actually take them on if they do apply. It's a great opportunity for non-Latinas, other women, to partner with Latinas and bring that population in because in the next 30 years, if you want any business to make money, you have to be an emerging business in an emerging market. It's about going after emerging businesses. For instance, I got into television at a moment when television was

an emerging business for many people to make money in. I would never tell anybody to go into television right now. It's not a business to make money in. The internet is a business to make money in. Real estate is

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an ever-growing business to make money in. You should go after emerging businesses but then, take those businesses and sell to emerging markets. If you want to make money in the business world right now, you better know the Latino market because it is the emerging market in the country. My job is to show these women what the emerging businesses are and how to partner with other people because they want to get into your market. That's the job we have right now. We really teach women emerging businesses, working smart and not hard, emerging markets, and how to partner with each other so that the mainstream women get into these emerging markets.

NAWRB: You said at the California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce Convention, "Dream big and sacrifice." I think you hit those right on the button saying that instead of working like dogs and repeatedly completing the mundane tasks, we need to look at the big picture.

Nely Galan: Yes, you can't work hard without a plan. We all have to work hard and sacrifice for a period of time but what's the end plan? You have to be the architect of your life. You have to design the plan for your life and know what is important to you. Every day, take baby steps towards those goals.

NAWRB: Speaking of the Adelante Movement, NAWRB had the opportunity to hear you speak about the Adelante Movement at a hearing held by the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship in Washington, D.C. What inspired you to create this growing movement?

Nely Galan: The Adelante Movement is about timing in life. I was at a point in my life where I had taken a sabbatical and went back to school. I realized there was something I had to offer my community. That realization has grown into appearing at Senate hearings. I was there with Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP) as well as other entrepreneur groups. It's exciting to get more training, more earmarked opportunities with the federal government. I think I was invited because people want Latinas at the table. I guess nobody had talked about Latinas. I was there to be the voice of Latinas and talk about where they're at with entrepreneurship and how they want to be part of the game. They want to eat at the table. I was there to bring Latinas to the table, which numerically, are the number one emerging market in this country for entrepreneurship.

NAWRB: The climate for women has changed in nearly every facet of the housing economy. Most notably, technology has rapidly evolved to provide more ease (and headaches) to some. Earlier this year, Adelante hosted a technology workshop. How can women integrate technology into their business models and what can women do to keep up with its evolving nature?

Nely Galan: The event was to tell everyone that never has it been easier to become an entrepreneur than in this era. We have to start with baby steps. You can start with an eBay store that is so easy to do with the junk in your garage. I started an Amazon bookstore with my son. I taught him how to run a business. We have to not be

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afraid and start with the most basic thing, just create a store with whatever name you want. The whole family engages with an entrepreneur life online in a simple way that involves everyone. It can be as simple as your own

flea market online from your house. If you don't know how to do it, you can ask your kids to help you. It's about engaging the entrepreneur muscle in the family all the time. It doesn't mean we're all going to be entrepreneurs. Many of us will take corporate jobs. But the day you get laid off, it won't be so scary to go off and start your own business. I think if you never experiment with it, it's overwhelming. To me, you don't have to make it some big, crazy thing. You can think, "What's the junk in our house we want to sell?" and get your kids to help you do it. It's so easy. They make it so simple for you. You just need to engage the muscle. The easiest way to get started is to sell stuff online.

NAWRB: That's an excellent idea. I also noticed your involvement with the not-for-profit organization, Count Me In. In addition to being a third-party certifier, NAWRB has the non-profit NAWRB Foundation which helps connect women-owned business with the necessary tools, resources, and awareness to grow a successful business. Your involvement with Count Me In as a board member works towards the same goal as the NAWRB Foundation. Can you provide more details about Count Me In and how you became involved?

Nely Galan: First of all, the woman who started Count Me In, Nell Merlino, is one of my main mentors in life. She devoted herself to helping women entrepreneurs. Count Me In is a little different than Adelante. Adelante is more the starting point and Count Me In is where you go once you have a business up and running. Count Me In teaches women with small businesses, because most women in America have businesses under a million dollars in revenue, how to take themselves over the million dollar hump and think big, step by step. I got involved quite a few years ago; I also spoke to their constituency. Count Me In was the place where I first saw the need for teaching women

about entrepreneurship and Nell really inspired me to do it for my own community.

NAWRB: There's a huge need for organizations such as the Adelante Movement, Count Me In, and the NAWRB Foundation. Many of these women entrepreneurs that we focus on are also working mothers. Since NAWRB advocates and promotes women in the housing economy, a large portion of our readers are working

mothers as well. You have built an impressive business empire all while being a dedicated mother. Can you provide our readers with any advice about balancing your home and professional life?

Nely Galan: I think that being an entrepreneur has allowed me to really take care of my child versus if I worked at a corporation. I bought the house next door to mine and I turned it into my office. Every day when my kid comes home from school, I'm here right next door. He can do homework there; he can come over. I'm physically there. I think that makes a big difference. I truly involve my son in my entrepreneurial life. I take him to my Adelante events; I make him work at my events. I do the Amazon bookstore with him too. I feel like when they're little, you should teach them about entrepreneurship and get them excited. I did a



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camp for him and his friends for three summers starting when he was nine years old. It was called "money camp." I was on *The Apprentice* and it was like *The Apprentice* for kids. It taught them money and entrepreneurship where they had to invent a business and run it. I make my life, which is about entrepreneurship, fun like it's a game. When we go to restaurants, I say to him, "So, what do you think? How much do you think this restaurant makes?" We do the math. I taught him how to do the math of what the average is that people make. I ask

him, "What do you think makes a good restaurant?" It's location, food, the service... we analyze every restaurant. We drive around and I ask him, "What do you think, is this good real estate?" I engage him like he's a grown up. Sometimes, to be honest, he has better answers than I do.

He said to me one day, "Mom, you should invest in a bowling alley. Have you noticed that bowling alleys are 24 hours a day?" We talk like that. Sometimes, he'll say, "Mom, you need to invest in skateboarding." He tells me what he thinks are the hot new things coming out. We analyze it, and do the math. You see that your kids are smart and they notice these things. It's about passing on to these kids what we know. 🏠👨👩



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