

## **Break the Glass Ceiling: A Conversation with Nely Galan**

By Dr. Vrunda Davé

Nely Galan is literally a breath of fresh air in the often staged and practiced-to-perfection world of media. As the former President of the Telemundo Network, Nely is a trailblazer in Latino programming worldwide. With her irresistible enthusiasm, passion, and humor Nely was so successful in the male dominated world of television that she was asked to appear on Donald Trump's *Celebrity Apprentice*. Now, Nely is determined to give back and make an even bigger contribution to women in entrepreneurship. She's started the Adelante Movement whose mission is to empower Latina women in the United States to build successful businesses.

**When you were a teenager, you submitted an article to *Seventeen Magazine* which was so impressive that they asked you to be a guest editor. What was that article about? Why did they love it so much? What did that experience teach you?**

My article was called "Why you should not send your daughter to an all-girl Catholic High School." It was irreverent so they published it. The article and its Publishing caused me to be expelled from the school. I fought back under the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment and the nuns took me back, graduated me early and I was able to do the guest editorship at *Seventeen Magazine*. It taught me that authority isn't always right and it doesn't pay to be a wimp and take it. You have to fight back and sometimes you will win!

That was a life changing experience because I lived in New Jersey and going into NY into the city and then to work at *Seventeen Magazine*, was like a Cinderella story. It was definitely a magical experience, for about a day. On the second day my boss ask me to book a beauty shoot with models, and I asked her how do you do that, and she told me that if she had to explain it to me that she'd rather fire me. So I opened the drawers and read what other people had done before me and I figured it out. Harsh reality!

**At the age of 22, you became our nation's youngest station manager for WNJU TV Channel 47 in New York. How did you do that? What did you have at such a young age that others did not? What is your best advice for young people with big goals?**

I was working for CBS in Boston in the Producer/ correspondent training department and I interviewed the owner of the TV station for a report. He offered me the job, which was a lot less glamorous than working at CBS, be he explained to me that running a little TV station in the long haul would be more important than becoming a reporter. He basically said "do you want to report what other people do or do you want to do what other people report about." I bought it and went to work for him. The transition was brutal but he was right and I have never looked back. That was the right decision for my life and career.

At that point in my life I used to write letters to everyone I read about in magazine. I wrote to Steven Jobs and he wrote me back, I wrote to women I wanted to become my mentors. I focused on people I wanted to work with rather than jobs. I think a career is all about finding people that believe in you because your first prove to them that you are indispensable and hard working. That come across in the first letter (today in an email or a twitter) you write. You have to stand out from the crowd. I would always stay late in jobs and talk to the boss. I wanted face time. It is all about making that extra effort, really wanting it. As an immigrant kid with poor parents, I guess I really wanted it.

**Nely, you are a pioneer in Latino media and a role model for women around the world. Tell us about your journey to becoming so successful in an industry dominated by men.**

I think like an immigrant and like an entrepreneur. I understand the privilege of being a woman in the US. Even with all of our complaints there is no other country in the world where a Nely Galan could grow up to be me- a self-made woman. I just started at the bottom and was the best, most tireless worker and my hard work paid off. I became so indispensable to my bosses and later my clients that I kept getting the business. No big secret just no entitlement, no victim mentality, hard work and gratitude. If I had stopped to think that my being a woman or a Latina would get in my way, I just could not have done it.

I think the trait that was most useful to me in that journey was to persevere, to not take no for an answer and to observe, to watch those around me and notice the behavior of very successful people.

In the end in any company the people that stand out are the ones that make money for a company or save money for a company. There are plenty of people who come up with great ideas but they can never execute them. A successful career is about people knowing you can complete what you begin.

**Tell us why you started the Adelante Movement. What is your mission?**

Latinas are the emerging market in America. There is a women's movement brewing in the Latino market and it's about entrepreneurship and economic empowerment. They are the fastest growing entrepreneurs. Latinas are natural born entrepreneurs.

I felt that it was time to give back to my community and inspire and train these women into the abundance they deserve for themselves and their families. They are ready! I am just helping what is already happening along.

**As a motivational speaker, you tell women, “don’t buy shoes, buy buildings.” How can women in America take a leadership role with their own finances? What is the relationship between women and wealth?**

I think most don’t women know that wealth comes from taking the money you make, putting half of it away (instead of buying shoes, etc.) and investing in things like real estate, stocks and other investments that grow while you sleep. That is what we all need to do to get to the point that we work because we want to and not because we have to.

We are such a consumerist society that we make money and then buy and buy. We like to show what we have bought. It makes us feel good enough. I want to change that. I believe in making money with intention, the Intention to buy a house and pay off your house, to send your child to college, to send yourself back to school, or to be able to retire.

Money does not buy you happiness but it can buy you freedom to work because you want to not because you have to. It can also buy you the peace of mind that when things happen and they will, that a financial problem does not have to be the end of the world. I want women to strive for total financial independence and a vision for a long life and the importance of creating wealth over a lifetime with intention.

**What advice do you have for women business owners? What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from founding Galan Entertainment and being the President of Telemundo?**

You cannot give up. It is not an easy road but it ultimately is a better road than any other and most women give up when the going gets tough. I did not make one penny the first 4 years of my business and I did not give up. I believed! It was not easy but it paid off. You do get rewarded for sacrificing and hanging in there.

In what corporation could I work next door to my house (I bought the house next door and turned it into my office). The goal as an entrepreneur is to be the architect of your own life- doesn’t mean it’s easy, nothing is, but it’s a great way to go.

If tomorrow there was a World War and I had to move to another country and start all over (like my parents did), I would know how to start all over and create a great life again. Money and possessions can be taken away from you but what you have learned and the skills you have mastered over time are your greatest asset. No one can ever take those away from you.

## **Why entrepreneurship now, Nely?**

I say to ladies, Go get your own Chips! Never has there been a time in history, with a better opportunity to become an owner. The digital age has destroyed the barriers to entry to start businesses easily. From your home, while you have the job working for others you can start an EBay store or an Amazon store, run it anonymously as a family owned business and sell the junk out of your garage. There are no excuses to get started at whatever level you are ready to do so. I say Now. Here. Go!!!!!! Adelante! (Which in Spanish means- go- move it now!

**CLICK HERE** to join the Adelante Movement and learn more about Nely.

**Click on the Image to Listen to Vrunda's Interview with Nely Galan.**

**Don't miss it! It's full of fun, laughter, no holds barred questions and a LOT of juicy answers! Nely's honesty and generosity will amaze you!**

