

Good afternoon, I'm Angela Swarts, owner of Spherion Staffing in Augusta and I'm honored to be here with you today. As a woman entrepreneur, our topic is one that resonates with me personally on many different levels. For those who are considering business ownership or are just starting out, I would like to share some key insights I learned along the way that led me to where I am today.

The right business opportunity might just find you. Everyone has unique gifts and talents. If you want to do something that is fulfilling, pay attention to the things you already know and love. As a staffing provider, this is something I say to candidates every day. Never choose a career path on the basis of money alone—you might have more in your bank account but your career satisfaction account will be empty. In the entrepreneurial world, you have a rare opportunity to do the thing you love and make a good living doing it. So, pursue a business that plays to your personality, interests and values. It makes all the difference at the end of the day—especially those longer than usual, difficult days. The will to get up and do it again is strong because it's your own business and it's something you are passionate about. In my case, I just needed a job. That's how I stumbled upon the staffing industry. But, it was my love for people, affinity for sales, drive to achieve and strong work ethic that led me to become the owner of a staffing business. Everything aligned with who I was and where I was headed. So, it was a no-brainer when the opportunity presented itself.

Face business challenges without fear (and always look for the silver lining). Owning a business is an exciting adventure that comes with great rewards, but it's not without its challenges. The best approach is to plan for those challenges and don't let them keep you from achieving your goals. Case in point: If you are young and lack business experience, don't let that define you or limit you in any way. Instead, make it your mission to work hard and learn as you go. What you lack in experience you can make up for in determination and passion. The best way to swim is to dive in the deep end and start paddling. It might feel like you're barely keeping your head above water at times, but in the process, you'll build the kind of endurance and confidence you need to overcome obstacles without fear and emerge as a refined business leader. It's the hard stuff that makes you stronger.

Oh, and remember that silver lining I mentioned, it's always there in some form, so look for it and when you find it, use it to your advantage. If being young is one of your challenges, just remember, time is on your side. Those unyielding decision makers will not always be there to turn you down. Sometimes you just have to wait them out—and trust me, I did. I call that the silver lining of being a young business owner!

Starting a business requires sacrifice, but once you're established you'll reap the benefits. If you want to lay a strong foundation for your business, you have to be 'all in' right from the start. Oftentimes, that means long hours and less time for you. You might find you have to put other plans and desires on hold in order to establish your business. For me, that meant waiting a few years before having children. For you the sacrifices might look very different. Just know, whatever they are, it's not going to stay that way forever. Once you have a solid footing in your business, it's easier to add more things to the equation without worrying about the impact it could have on your business. While there are sacrifices in the beginning, it will eventually balance out and you'll start reaping the amazing benefits that come with business ownership.

As a staffing company, I can tell you that a big part of building a successful business is having the right people in place to support it. Whether you are just starting out or you've been at it for many years, Spherion can help you build a workforce that gets results. Our hiring expertise, flexible staffing solutions and workforce research give businesses a competitive edge in their talent initiatives. What's more, you'll have an industry leader with deep local ties partnering with you to achieve your workforce goals. And, as a fellow woman business leader, I would love to be a part of helping you build a strong and successful business!

Thank you for the opportunity to share some of the valuable lessons I learned along the way that made me a stronger business owner. I hope you are inspired to achieve your own entrepreneurial goals. Without further ado, it's my pleasure to announce our guest panel of speakers: Rebecca Best, Owner of Emineo Marketing; Kat McCall, Owner of Kat McCall Papers; Stacy Roberts, Owner of SMR Leadership Solutions and myself, Angela Swarts, Owner of Spherion Staffing.