

WOMEN LEADERSHIP VIRTUAL EXCHANGE (WLVE) DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT

Finances and the Feminine: Managing Success in a Man's World.

Text by KSU Student, Matthew Hossner and photos by Jennifer Perri.

In 2004, Jennifer Perri first set foot in the financial advisory world working as an executive assistant for multiple advisory firms. Though she networked with different firms, Ms. Perri said in the firms where she worked leadership positions were primarily dominated by men. However, this would all soon change for her, as in 2005 she co-founded Calandra Financial acting as the Chief Operations Officer with a focus on financial advising for women. This new position skyrocketed her visibility in the financial advising world and set her on the path to networking with other influential advisors in her field. Her journey had just begun.

When asked why she wanted to focus on assisting women, Jennifer said she once walked into a bookstore and saw there were many financial self-help books for women, yet none specifically for men. It was as if men knew instinctively how to handle finances, and women needed their hand held. She wanted to change that perception and cement women as equal financial players. Utilizing her position as a newly independent advisor, things would only get more difficult for Jennifer though. The majority of her peers were men, and in her own words, "The biggest obstacle I have ever ran up against is the male ego." As Jennifer began to appear on major news channels such as Fox, ABC, and MSNBC as a financial consultant, men would see her as competition rather than celebrating her newfound success. Nonetheless, networking was an ever-integral part of her career, and every day brought more opportunities to grow.

Being a woman in her position certainly came with its own challenges, but Jennifer always took inspiration from other women in power. She thinks of their journey to reach those positions and the

obstacles unique to women, things like having a family, societal norms around what girls should study, paradigms associated with women entrepreneurs, all of these have made the road bumpier for a lot of women. Reflecting on this, Jennifer says "If you look at societal issues as a limiter versus something to be overcome, you will fall into a victim mindset and I patently refuse to do that. Never, ever give up. That's what people are waiting for. Also, define yourself, and do not let others define you. Do not accept limitations imposed by others on what you can become."



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Today, there are more women in the financial industry than when she started and Jennifer feels she has made an indelible mark on her field, paving the way for gender equality amongst leaders. Success has long been a companion of Jennifer, as she recalls one of the highlights of her career in 2013 when she worked alongside Jack Canfield of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series and co-wrote *Dare to Succeed*. Jennifer also started her own financial advisory firm, Swan Financial, a company specifically focused on aiding women entrepreneurs, and has a show on the Success Network, *The Smart Money Gal*. Another piece of advice she has for women trying to make a name for themselves in a male dominated industry is “to knock over whatever barrier is there and don’t fixate on fair or unfair. Knocking down barriers makes you a force. Worrying about fair and unfair makes you a victim.”

Recently, she met with and interviewed Dick Vitale while on set for his upcoming documentary *Never Lose Sight* to discuss the trials and successes in his career in basketball. When asked about her thoughts on success, Jennifer replied “success to me is being the best version of yourself. Work, home life, relationships, all the aspects of our life must be taken into account. However, as I learn and grow, my best version of me moves up the scale.”

Success therefore is not a state of being, but a constant effort. Who knows what the future yet holds for Jennifer, but I can confidently say she will meet it head on, unfaltering and ever driven by her passion to succeed and see others do the same.



Matthew Hossner is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in international affairs with a minor in Korean. Matthew discovered his passion for working internationally after his 5 years in the Army saw him deploy to Kuwait, Iraq, and South Korea. As well as being a full-time student, Matthew also serves in the Army reserves as a Cryptologic Linguist. His career goal is to continue working as a federal employee in the nation’s Intelligence Community.