



Speaking your customer's languageSM



Orlando

By Erica Gomez/ Photos courtesy of Disney

Orlando City photo: Orlando/Orange County Convention and Visitors Bureau

"I do not like the word 'minority,' because minority implies there is something minor about me," said Annette Taddeo. "There is nothing minor about me."

Women are, in fact, the majority, continued Taddeo, president and CEO of LanguageSpeak, and keynote speaker at the Orlando installment of the LATINA Style Business Series. According to statistics, women in general are the leaders in the small business world. And being a woman and Hispanic gives Latinas an edge in entrepreneurship. Statistics are indeed promising: Latinas are starting businesses at three times that of the national rate.

Statistics such as these supported the Business Series' overwhelming theme of Latina empowerment. Over 150 Latinas attended the event, which was held Oct. 30 at Disney's Yacht and Beach Club Resort. Honorable Buddy Dyer, mayor of Orlando, gave the welcoming remarks for the Series, encouraging

Latinas to start businesses in the Orlando area. According to the statistics he presented, there are 1.4 million Hispanic-owned businesses in Florida, and Hispanic women are leading the nation in small business start-ups.

Robert Chavarria from the U.S. Small Business Administration, in his talk about the SBA Loan Programs, asked the audience why women are twice as successful as men in running small businesses. One audience member jokingly replied, "We look better!" Chavarria went on to explain that statistics indicate that, while men and women go through the same business training, the women are more likely to implement what they've learned.

When men get lost, he added with a smile, they don't ask for directions.

In addition to sharing inspirational statistics and encouraging stories of success, the various presentations at the Series also offered Latina attendees the tools and practical knowledge to help them realize their dreams. Lillian Cosio of New York Life urged the women to take control of their financial issues instead of relying on their husbands to take care of things for them. She reminded them of important financial issues that the women might not have considered yet, such as writing their wills. Many women find themselves in financial trouble after their spouses die, Cosio warned, because they never took their financial matters into their own hands.

Millie Quinley, executive officer for the Atlanta region for the U.S. General Services Administration, addressed procurement opportunities within the GSA. The GSA has begun a Hispanic Recruitment Initiative program to help Hispanic-owned businesses. According to Quinley, GSA buys almost everything for the federal government, affecting billions of dollars in transactions. Frances Lopez of GSA's Small Business Utilization encouraged women to do business with the federal government, stating that every 20 seconds the government awards a contract to a business.

Roy Miranda of Principal Financial Group gave a talk entitled "Getting Down to Business: Building your Enterprise," in which he warned the audience about the hardships of running a business. "It takes a strong person to go through the highs and lows of a business," he said. "This is not a business for cowards."



Keynote speaker Annette Taddeo



John Esslinger, M.D., of Aetna

Keynote speaker Taddeo knows firsthand the difficulties and obstacles in starting a business. During her company's infancy she was taken advantage of because she was a young, inexperienced woman, she said. Today LanguageSpeak is one of the largest language translation companies in the United States. The secrets to her success, she said, was believing in herself, building relationships with customers, focusing on her natural strengths, and being proud of herself.

Aspiring Latina entrepreneurs and current business owners seeking solutions can check out the LATINA Style website for information about the next Business Series seminar.



France Lopez of GSA advises an audience member.



Lillian Cosio, agent for NY Life



Mayor of Orlando Buddy Dyer



Nancy Alvarez, Reporter, WKMG Local 6



Office Depot team with Annette Taddeo