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ENTREPRENEUR PROFILE

BELINDA GUADARRAMA

Name: Belinda Guadarrama.

Company: Novato-based GC Micro, a reseller of hardware and software and peripherals to Fortune 1000 companies. Has revenues of \$23 million to \$25 million.

Employees: 24.

Founded: 1986

Source of startup capital: \$20,000 from the sale of her house in Texas and retirement fund money.

Background: Has worked as the director of personnel and training for the Attorney General's office of Texas and as the operations manager for a mail-order software company in Marin County.

Age: 40.

Residence: Petaluma.



Big Picture

Reason for starting the business: The mail-order company I was working for closed down from one day to the next. The owners were going through a divorce and one day there was a sign on the door saying it was officially closed. As I stood in the parking lot that day, I was at a turning point in my life. I liked working in the computer field, so I could either start my own business doing that or look for a job in San Francisco. I decided to start my own company.

Hardest part of decision: Deciding to take all of the money from the sale of my house and also from my retirement fund with the state of Texas and invest it into my business. I was basically risking everything I had.

Biggest plus of ownership: The opportunity to meet so many different people—women entrepreneurs, Hispanic entrepreneurs, small business owners and the Fortune 1000 companies that are our customers.

Biggest misconception: In the back of your mind, you assume that when you start your own business, you can do anything that you want. The reality of the marketplace, the customers' demands and what

your team members want to do starts to come into play and it becomes less clear cut.

Greatest strength: I'm extremely good at paying attention to details.

Biggest weakness: Finding enough time to spend with my salespeople, particularly when I'm traveling from May to October with trade fairs and with the Hispanic and small business organizations I'm involved in.

Smartest move: Moving to our current location. We used to be in a downtown Novato retail setting and now we are in an office park.

Biggest mistake: Hopefully I haven't made any big mistakes. I've been very careful to have controlled growth.

Biggest worry: Because we're in the computer field, how to manage all the changes in technology and still grow the business at the same time. It's time-consuming to keep my sales managers up-to-date on all the latest technology.

Top sources of inspiration: My team members.

Daily Routine

Most challenging task: Trying to keep up

with the changing technology.

Favorite task: Going out and meeting with new customers.

Least favorite task: All the paperwork that is waiting for me when I return from trips.

Greatest frustration: Not having enough time to do all the things I'd like to do.

Source of support or advice: I've got a really good network of people through all the Hispanic chambers of commerce that I turn to. I also know a lot of entrepreneurs.

Essential business tool: My telephone and my cell phone.

Dreams

Goal yet to be achieved: I'd like to grow the business to somewhere between \$50 million and \$100 million. I'd also like to try to balance my personal life with growing the company. I've been spending much more time on the work side.

First move with capital windfall: I'd invest in the infrastructure of the company. We'd expand the location and put more people on staff. I'd also take everyone on a trip to celebrate.

Five-year vision: We'll be selling into foreign markets, namely Latin America.

Inducement to sell: I'm enjoying it too much right now. After 13 years, I feel like we're still at the beginning.

First choice for new career or venture: I'm so busy with my current venture and evolving with it that I'm not really looking at anything else.

Personals

Most-admired entrepreneur: Katherine Graham of The Washington Post.

Most interested in meeting: Katherine Hepburn. Again, she's a strong woman.

Favorite pastime: Getting together with friends and talking politics.

Stress reducer: Exercise.

Last vacation: Las Vegas. It's fast to get there and there's so much to do. I'm not a big gambler, but I love the shows. I go about every three months.

Favorite film: "West Side Story."

Favorite book: "How to Win Friends and Influence People," by Dale Carnegie.

Automobile: White BMW.