Dana Nelson Has Made Friends and Helped Family, Thanks to Our Town America



Dana Nelson's tale is a familiar one. If you talk to enough successful franchise owners of Our Town America, patterns begin emerging. For instance, it's a "people person" business, and it helps to have a driven personality and a knack for sales.

On all counts, Nelson fits the bill.

For most of her career, Nelson was in wholesale account management. She oversaw a five-state territory for a business in the custom-made home furnishings industry. Nelson trained staff on the products and how to sell them. Additionally, she coordinated marketing programs with accounts. She often talked to business owners, of both large and small companies, learning what their frustrations were. She pretty much did it all.



Dana Nelson, Our Town America of Little Canada Franchise Owner

And then one day, she, along with a slew of other coworkers, was downsized during what's often called the Great Recession. That was one big life event that helped steer Nelson toward Our Town America, but that wasn't the only event. She had something else going on in her life — her parents were both aging and having trouble living on their own.

"They were still in their own home, and they needed in-home health care," Nelson says. "My mom had dementia; and my dad, as far as he was concerned, was going out of the house in a pine box."

They were 170 miles away, and Nelson began thinking that instead of trying to make it work as an employee, maybe she would have more flexibility to go check in on her parents and spend time with them if she could make her own hours.

Nelson tried the interior design field for a while, a career that had been hers before she worked at the custom-made home furnishings company. "But it had changed so much," she says. "And it wasn't as lucrative."

From there, Nelson started working with a franchise broker to find out what her options were. She knew she didn't want to be tied down to a brick and mortar business, one that would come with employees and a lease. That option would likely prevent her from spending more time with her parents. Ultimately, the broker recommended Our Town America.

Nelson liked what she heard about the New Mover Marketing company. She loved the attractive, oversized Welcome Package that was sent to those new movers and felt it would be contributing to her community. She began having that internal

dialogue we all have when thinking about a big decision. “The timing seems good. The business seems like a good fit. Do it now, or don’t do it,” Nelson told herself.

She did it.

In the waning months of 2013, about two years after the lay-off, Nelson became the owner of Our Town America of Little Canada Minnesota. She has done well since then, and for those looking for inspiration for their own businesses, there are about four reasons why Nelson has thrived.

The flexibility factor. It’s hard to work when you’re worried about loved ones, and because she had a job that allowed her to make her own hours, Nelson was able to help her parents get that in-home care they needed. Her mother passed away a couple of years later, and her father passed several years ago, on his 93rd birthday. But in the midst of all of that, Nelson was able to continue to work on building her business clientele. After convincing her father to move into a nursing home, Nelson and her siblings had the time to properly clean out their parents’ home, renovate it and ultimately keep the cherished property.

“If I hadn’t that time with my parents, I would not have been a happy daughter,” Nelson says.

The experience factor. It helped Nelson that she was comfortable in the world of sales. Still, she says her personality isn’t one where she is comfortable doing “the hard sell”. She sees her job as more of an educator and a listener.

“Don’t tell anyone you can help them until you understand what their needs are,” she advises. “If you get them talking, they’re going to tell you what they need, and then you’ll be able to show them how the product will help them achieve their goals.”

The bounce back factor. “The best advice I can give anyone is to stay focused. You are going to get no’s and rejections. If you’re patient, you will eventually get positive results that are going to boost you back up,” Nelson says. “You might meet with people several times, and then a year or two later, you end up working with them because the timing is right. Timing and persistence are important.”

The “people person” factor. As noted, Nelson likes people. That’s helped her business grow quite a bit. She doesn’t want to waste time pitching business owners who aren’t going to be receptive to her message, so she is selective about whom

she approaches. For instance, she might go into a store, look around and buy something and *then* later, contact the owner. If she gets the sense that the business isn't interested in good customer service, she won't contact them. That practice has served her well.



Dana Nelson with Family

For example, she cites one of her first customers, a liquor store, as a good example of a store that cares about customer service. Upon learning Nelson was a first-time customer, the Owner of the store offered to take her on a little tour of his business, having no idea she was going to pitch him her services. She could tell by this experience that he cared about his business and his customers. He quickly became an Our Town America partnered Sponsor business, and he still is to this day!

Now, let's jump ahead to more recent times. Nelson was recently at a local Papa John's talking with the new franchise owners and discussing Our Town America. The owners, a husband-and-wife team, were worried about landing new customers. But, while they saw the wisdom of marketing to new movers, they weren't sure if they wanted to work with Nelson.

Nelson offered to purchase a pizza to be delivered to the liquor store (i.e. one of her very first customers). Upon delivery, she suggested the pizza franchisees ask the liquor store Owner what he thought of Our Town America of Little Canada Minnesota. After some discussion, one of the pizza owners said she would make the delivery. Nelson paid for the pizza and left, pleased that she had given a loyal partnered business a free pizza — and that she had helped out a new business by making an order. If nothing else, she made those business owners a little happier

that day. But Nelson’s reward would come later.

“I signed the Papa John’s up for our New Mover program last week,” Nelson says.

It’s little triumphs like this that can add up to a successful career. For your chance to make a difference in your community, contact us today.