

ASK A VENDOR

This column shares the thoughts and opinions of the diverse group of people who make up the Denver VOICE vendor pool. Have a question for VOICE vendors? See below for information on how to submit it.



REA BROWN (CREDIT: GILES CLASEN)

WHAT IS YOUR BEST TIP FOR SUCCESS TO ANYONE INTERESTED IN STARTING HIS OR HER OWN MICRO-BUSINESS AS A DENVER VOICE VENDOR?

REA BROWN

Don't get high off your own supply
Whatever you do, try to never run out of sky
Don't let a "no" stop your growth
Or make you feel like you want to die
Or die
Or find a lesser way to survive
When people pass, say "hi,"
When they talk to you, "do you" but look them in their eyes.
In other words, be wise
And hold on to a few of those old guys
Your wants will tell you lies,
Your feelings will definitely try,
But your business will never thrive
If you take your mind off the prize

PENNY SANDOVAL

1. Be friendly, smile
2. Stay consistent so they get to know you
3. I'm not pushy

MARVIN GNAD

Treat it like a real job. People will believe you're serious about what you're doing. Even when it's cold. Be polite, don't be over-aggressive. ■

Help us continue the dialogue by submitting your questions to editor@denvervoice.org.



DETONIA GOODEN IN HER OFFICE AT ADVANCED SAFETY CONSULTING. GOODEN STARTED WORKING WITH THE COMPANY AFTER GRADUATING FROM THE WORKNOW PROGRAM IN JULY 2018. (CREDIT: SARAH FORD)

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Just a year ago, DeTonia Gooden was working as a part-time retail employee. Now, she works as Director of Operations at a safety consultancy company. How ambition, and some help, changed her career and her life in just 10 months.

BY SARAH FORD

DETONIA GOODEN'S OFFICE sits in the upper floors of a large plaza building off East Evans Avenue, the corner office in the three-room suite reserved for Advanced Safety Consulting. Though the space is small, it welcomes guests with a light blue carpet and unique wall hangings decorating the space, colored in streaming natural light.

The comfort in the space reflects just how at home Gooden has made herself with this company — and in this field — less than a year after entering the world of construction for the first time.

In February 2018, Gooden turned on the TV to a

commercial for WorkNow, a job training and employment platform for those looking to enter the field of construction.

Ever-curious and with an insatiable desire for education, Gooden picked up the phone.

"It was like, 'OK, let's give it a try,'" said Gooden. "It was something new, something different, a new industry to learn, and I'm always one for learning. I made that commitment to myself to not miss a class, come on time, and I learned so much."

It's an entirely different path than Gooden could have

imagined for herself at 17, when she was expelled from her Chicago high school due to absenteeism.

“From a young age, I was one of those bright people, very intelligent and gifted,” said Gooden. “Throughout middle school, I was always in gifted programs. In high school it was honors classes. But then, high school became a chore. I got bored and stopped going.”

That was just fine, for a while. Gooden got a license to work as a nail technician and made the most of her freedom. Then she found out she was pregnant with her son, SaVon.

“I didn’t want him to be embarrassed, and I wanted him to be proud of me,” she said. “I believe that with anyone, education is your way out of whatever situation that you may be in. Whether it’s not formal education or some type of learning, the ability to get things done, the ability to broaden your mind ... is a way out of any situation.”

That’s the path Gooden took. She returned to community college for her GED and didn’t stop there. She went on to eventually receive an MBA.

When she saw the commercial for WorkNow, she was living in Thornton holding down two jobs between working at the GAP and a local phone bank.

Though she loved her role at the GAP, where she worked as a leader of corporate training, she knew she could transfer those leadership skills to an industry where she saw the value of immediate demand.

“This was hands-on, it was here, it was now,” said Gooden. “It was relevant, and that’s what I wanted. It was something to ... I call it ‘putting it into my arsenal.’ I have a really great arsenal and I needed those hands-on training experiences in construction to be relevant here in Denver right now.”

So she started attending classes, taking the bus every day from Thornton to Denver while also balancing two jobs. Her answer to how she juggled so much her answer is simple:

“You just do it,” said Gooden. “You have to make that commitment to yourself to finish, because that’s important, and you have to be studious about it.”

She had support from the WorkNow program, which not only provides free classes in the construction field for students but also connects them to career counseling, resources, and job placements after completion of the program. Through its partnership with Construction Careers Now, WorkNow has assisted over 300 program participants in job placements.

“Anything free is worth having that commitment, is worth being serious about,” said Gooden.

“It’s not just taking the construction class. It’s making

sure you finish, it’s making sure you’re employable, it’s the resume-writing, it’s the interviewing skills. There’s a lot of resources that WorkNow has.”

Through her classes, Gooden found that not only is the field of construction a practical shift in Denver’s market, but that she personally had a passion for the work.

“It’s been absolutely fun because I do have the business side of it, I have the educational side of it, and [now] I have the real-world, practical experience. I’ve worked in a lot of industries, so I am able to handle myself well, but ... construction is fun! It’s really fun.”

But it wasn’t just the career development where Gooden found her personal growth.

“I was always of the mind that there was a man for that, whether it be washing my car or pumping my gas,” she said. “But after the class, I was taking pictures of things like ‘I helped build that!’ I went and got a dresser for myself from WalMart and I put it together and it was like ‘Oh my God, I did it by myself!’”

She is still using her background in business and leadership in her current role as Director of Operations and Business Development with Advanced Safety Consulting, a role she was promoted to from office management in the eight months she has worked with the company.

For that, she has her confidence and assertiveness to thank. Gooden received three raises in 90 days, which she attributes to valuing herself and being willing to ask. She is now using her insight as a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field to guide other women.

“As women, we have to ask, you know? Ask for the raise, ask for more responsibility, ask for more duties, and you’ll find more often than not that you’ll get it,” Gooden said.

Even in the new position, Gooden’s desire for education continues just as strong as it’s always been. She is now pursuing further education in welding, which she found she particularly enjoys, and hopes to one day have her own welding business. Along with the Director of Operations position, Gooden is pursuing scholarships to further her education in welding and still working part-time at the GAP.

“I didn’t think I was a welder, but it was just so much fun and I found out that I’m good at it,” said Gooden. “It was having a skill that was kind of innate, but I want to develop it now, I want to learn more about it, and that’s where the formal education in it comes from.”

At the end of the day, she can call her son, now 24, and tell him of every new milestone, and know she has what she always wanted: his pride for her accomplishments.

“He is my motivation. I want him to be proud of me,” said Gooden. “In my everyday life, he is the one who keeps me grounded, and he is the kind of person I strive to be like.” ■

DENVER

VOICE

SPRING WISH LIST
DENVERVOICE.ORG/VENDOR-NEEDS

NEW ITEMS NEEDED:

- Socks
- Bottled water,
- non-perishable snacks
- Toothpaste, deodorant,
- chapstick
- Paper products for the office

GENTLY-USED ITEMS NEEDED:

- Jackets
- Winter hats
- Scarves
- Gloves

Drop-offs are accepted
Monday–Friday, 9–12 p.m. or email
program@denvervoice.org
to schedule a drop-off.

Human Services Network of Colorado
March Training Event



Human Services Resource and Career Fair
10am-1:30pm • March 5
Tivoli Student Union Turnhalle
Auraria Campus

Since 2009, The Network’s Human Services Resource and Career Fair has been a tremendous asset to service providers and supervisors at human service agencies, students and faculty, plus many others in the human services community. At our last Fair, over 400 students and faculty along with staff from human service agencies across the Metro Denver Region, attended the Fair. The event serves both students in their search for internships and jobs and human services organizations seeking interns and employees. There will also be opportunities aplenty for networking and resource sharing. This is a great chance to tout your latest initiatives and find out what others in the field are doing.



FREE for attendees.
Exhibitor Registration starts at \$25 for Network members.

To learn more or register, call 720-252-3628 or visit www.thenetwork-co.org

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