

Tina Sealey, Success Story

By Lorrie DeFrank



A little more than halfway through the year-long ATHENA PowerLink program offered through the Jacksonville Women's Business Center, Tina Sealey values the support of her panel of mentors. No stranger to JWBC and its programs to help women business owners at every stage of their careers, she first became involved 12 years ago as a mentor herself. Then in investment banking, she agreed to guide Financial Matters participants in boosting their bottom lines.

Since becoming president of Tech X Services, which specializes in restaurant and commercial kitchens, in 2010 she has depended on JWBC's help. "When you have your own company you realize that all of a sudden you are the lawyer, the copier repair person, everything ...," she said. "As I was looking for resources I reached back out to JWBC and attended Marketing Matters and other programs, and now ATHENA. It's an invaluable resource when you are trying to find your way and take on new challenges."

Sealey, who grew up in Atlantic Beach, has extensive work experience as a financial analyst and a chief administrator, including for a national theme park company. When her brother Shawn Feagle asked her to join him in a kitchen business he had an opportunity to acquire, she put her heart and her life savings into the endeavor—despite her lack of knowledge of the product and a national recession.

"You have to figure out how to make money and who your customer truly is," Sealey said of starting most businesses. "Not knowing the industry did not bother me as much as closing the deal, and finding warehouse and office space. Now it all seems part of my skill set. I love that we help other businesses create their dreams."

As Sealey ran the business on Jacksonville's Westside, Feagle continued his long career in kitchen sales. When the company expanded to Tampa, he relocated there. Tech X, which has grown from 13 to 40 employees, partnered with other businesses, including a national competitor, to become a respected designer, manufacturer and installer of kitchen equipment across the country. Local clients include the Baseball Grounds of Jacksonville, home of the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp; Cowford Chophouse in downtown; River & Post in Riverside; Town Hall in San Marco; Duval County Public Schools and various nursing homes and commercial kitchens.

"If there is a kitchen, we do it," Sealey said, conceding that they didn't do it alone.

She and her management team signed up for JWBC's Marketing Matters program. "As a result, we were able to define who we were," Sealey said. "We do a lot of things and everybody had a

different idea of how customers should think of us and what we were there to do. We came up with our motto, *We make kitchens happen!* Marketing Matters really gave us our definition.”

As the owner with no one to report to, Sealey turned to ATHENAPowerLink—which provides expert advisers and mentors selected to meet each business owner’s needs—for discipline. “I enjoy going before our panel and having them pick apart everything we are doing. Sometimes it’s difficult to hear, but they are so supportive,” she said. “It’s amazing to think that all these people are taking time from their busy schedules to be there for us. We’ve made so many changes to our ways of thinking and our business.”

Nan Kreamer, president and CEO of Avenue CFO Services and one of Sealey’s ATHENA panelists, praised her enthusiasm and accomplishments. “She made huge changes in her marketing, sales approach, financial record keeping, banking relationships and tax reporting, and she was able to do some hiring,” Kreamer said. “We are all very interested in seeing her succeed.” Sealey said she frequently refers other women to JWBC. “You never stop learning,” she said. “I will go through Marketing Matters again and probably will be on the other side of Financial Matters—now the mentee, not the mentor. I will use them as long as I can.”

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