

Vicky Zelen – Success Story



Vicky Zelen had a dream. While in high school in Milwaukee, Vicky started working at an insurance agency while she was in high school. She gained a good amount of experience working for the world's largest insurance agency for almost six years. But it was after working at local agencies in Jacksonville for years, and having a hard time finding the opportunity to move into sales that Vicky started her own insurance agency. She was determined to sell insurance and at the age of 34, Zelen Risk Solutions, Inc. was established.

Although Vicky did not have any clients or contracts with insurance companies, her determination to sell insurance propelled her into success. That was in 2003 – and now she has been in business almost 15 years loving every minute of entrepreneurship. Vicky's favorite part of her job is meeting other business owners and hearing their stories of how they got started in business. She lights up when she talks about how her agency has grown from sole owner to five full-time employees with over 1,000 business owner clients. Many of them have been clients since they started their own businesses and continue to renew annually with Zelen Risk Solutions. Zelen Risk Solutions, Inc. is an Independent Agency, working with various different insurance companies – writing Property & Casualty Insurance for business owners and individuals.

Owning a business can be daunting and Vicky admits that “there are so many decisions to make that it gets overwhelming, who to hire, who to fire, how to grow, balance life and work, and on and on - it's great to have mentors at JWBC to bounce ideas off of and get feedback.”

Vicky was at the grand opening ceremony for the Jacksonville Women's Business Center (JWBC) and has participated in almost every program thus far.

“The ATHENA Powerlink mentoring program helped me at a time in my business when I really needed support because of tough challenges I had never dealt with before. The mentors encouraged me to fly to Tulsa, Oklahoma and meet with the President of an insurance company there to get a direct contract to write business insurance with them. Not only did I fly there, but I successfully got appointed to write business with them and flew home the next day to get back to work.”, says Vicky.

“I currently serve on the JWBC Advisory Board and I'm excited to be able to give back and sponsor the JWBC for 2017 – 2018 so that others can benefit from the programs. I'm also excited to be part of the ATHENA Affiliate Community. The JWBC has connected me to some very important people that have mentored me, encouraged me, showed me the way by example, and have truly made a difference in my life and career.

I've also had the opportunity to encourage other women – younger or newer in business.”, Vicky beams. “I'll never forget the time I was sitting next to a young lady that just opened a gourmet cupcake bakery in Jacksonville when they were very new to the area and she was worried about competition because there was another business like hers in the area. I asked her - do you have any idea how many insurance agencies there are? There's definitely room in the market for YOU – she couldn't believe her ears – someone encouraged her and her dream! It felt great to be the positive, can-do person she probably needed to hear from.”, exclaims Vicky.

“The Jacksonville Business Community is definitely better because we have the Jacksonville Women's Business Center. It's been a pleasure to work with Ellen Sullivan who continues to take the JWBC organization to the next level. I most recently participated in the Venture Leadership Program and made changes to the way I communicate goals with employees. We've already enhanced our client experience after walking through the customer journey canvas.”, says Vicky.

Zelen Risk Solutions, Inc. is an Independent Agency, working with various different insurance companies – writing Property & Casualty Insurance for business owners and individuals. We write Commercial Property, General Liability, Professional Liability, Commercial Auto, Directors' & Officers' Liability, Cyber Liability, Employment Practices Liability, Pollution Liability and Homeowners, Boat, RV, Motorcycle and Golf Cart/ATV insurance. We differentiate ourselves by getting to know our clients and custom tailoring an insurance and/or risk management program to meet their needs. We explain the insurance in easy-to-understand language. We answer our telephone – you will NOT get voicemail or an automated answering system when you call our agency Monday – Friday from 8am – 5pm – you'll get an agent answering the phone. If you call evenings or weekends because you just purchased a car/truck and need insurance NOW – we answer our cell phone and help you. If you have a claim at 11pm because you're working in a shopping mall after they close – we answer our phone.