

Tina Hyland

Improvise, Adapt, Overcome

Tina attributes her military efficiency to growing up on naval bases and moving around the country following her father's successful military career. She was born in Patuxent River, Maryland and shortly thereafter, moved to Sunnyvale, California, outside San Francisco. "Well, now you call it Silicon Valley," Tina laughs. "If only we had known that then!"

In Sunnyvale, the family lived on a base in Navy housing in a tight-knit community. Her father specialized in anti-submarine warfare and was often gone for up to six months out of the year. Tina remembers that whoever's dad was in the neighborhood would dress up as Santa Claus or the Easter bunny during the holidays, which were always a special time. "If you needed something, there was always someone right there to help you," she recalls gratefully. "If somebody moved in, you went over to welcome them. It was just that kind of environment."

Both parents were positive influences. Her father modeled hard work; she remembers he never once missed a day of work during his 27 years in the Navy. Her mother had a strong work ethic in her own right, working three jobs before meeting Tina's father. As a housewife, she brought a similar commitment to running the household efficiently. "She's old school and taught me to take pride in your appearance and always look presentable," smiles Tina. "Every day she would get up, do her hair and make-up, and put on a nice outfit whether she was going someplace or not."

Tina was the youngest of three, with a brother and sister 11 and 12 years older, respectively. Although there was a large age gap, Tina was particularly close with her older brother, Gary, who she lovingly called "Bud". He often brought her along to his baseball games and other sporting events. Her mom was a stay at home

mom, and her memories of childhood are happy ones. The family had an organ, and Tina remembers she and her father playing *Silent Night* before bed or him reading her a Dr. Seuss book.

When Tina was eight years old, her world changed drastically. The family was moved to Hawaii at the same time her brother and sister graduated high school and moved out of the house. Her brother married right out of high school and joined the Army; her sister, too, married shortly thereafter. Tina and her parents headed to unfamiliar Oahu, and she spent the rest of her childhood growing up as an only child. She and her parents began calling themselves, "the three musketeers."

The move was the first of several that occurred every three years from then on. But Hawaii was an easy place to fall in love with. Despite having to make new friends and attend a new school, all while her father was travelling in Japan and the Philippines, Tina quickly adjusted to her new home.

The family was still in military housing, making it easy for them to fit in with other oft-relocated families. At school, Tina loved learning about Hawaiian culture and music in the DoD school. She rode her bike to school and befriended all her teachers, enjoying clapping erasers for them and helping them before class. "It was probably one of my favorite times in school," Tina reminisces. "I never wanted to miss a day!"

The next move was a bit tougher. At the age of 11, Tina had to adjust to life in a new place—Virginia Beach—once more. She had more difficulty blending in, as the other kids had existing friendships, and she often felt marked out by her presence in the advanced sections of classes. However, as time went by, she began to find her footing. "In 7th grade, I went on to the junior high and all the schools were merging," she recalls. "My friends and I tried out for debate team and student



government. I immersed myself in school and started taking a foreign language—Spanish. It was one of the best times of my life.”

In Virginia, Tina joined the student government and the pep club. She was planning to try out for cheerleading in her ninth-grade year. That year was particularly exciting for Tina; the junior high was a 7th through 9th grade school, and 9th grade was like being the “seniors of middle school.”

But fate intervened; her father was again reassigned, this time to Pensacola, Florida. Now 14 and heading into high school, Tina was once again starting over. This time, she was missing out on experiences she had been sorely anticipating. Already a teenager with interests and activities, this move was by far the most difficult.

“People there had a different view of school,” Tina remembers. “It was the opposite of what I had just left. If you were in a non-athletic extra-curricular activity, you were considered a geek. There wasn’t the same school spirit and activities were looked down upon. In addition to that, all the advanced courses I’d been in weren’t even offered until 10th grade, even though I’d already taken them. I had to once again make new friends; I started to get discouraged and lost my love for school.”

Although Tina continued to study hard, she never became invested in her school in Florida the way she had in Virginia. She did well, but she’d lost her passion. After high school, she enrolled in a college in Florida, but that summer, her father had a heart attack. Needing to help take care of her father, Tina returned home to be with her family. He ended up having to retire early and as he recovered, Tina enrolled in a local community college. Over the next several years, she balanced coursework and a full-time job. At a young age, she moved up the ranks in retail, first working in the cosmetics department and later being promoted to counter manager of the fragrance department. She was making good money, and proudly purchased her first car on her own with cash she had saved.

Needing more flexibility with her school schedule, she went on to work at McGuire’s Irish Pub. Tina had already spent some time in Italy before she met her first husband, an Italian Navy pilot then living in the States for three years. The pub was the favored haunt of the local military pilots, and it was only a matter of time before the

two met.

About a year and half later the couple was engaged and Tina decided to join her fiancé in his move back to Italy. She had recently begun working as a flight attendant for Continental, a job she loved but had been swept off her feet by the dashing young pilot. “Your first time in love, you think it’s going to be your Cinderella story,” Tina laughs. “He had a ten year commitment with the Navy, so we knew we’d be in Italy for at least ten years. The plan was, I’d move over there, learn the language, get settled, and fly for a major airline, either British Airlines or Alitalia.”

But over their first few years of marriage, things changed. Her husband was no longer interested in her plans to go back to work with an airline and instead insisted she should be thinking about staying at home and having children. A short time later as Tina continued to express a wish to return to work, he became verbally abusive.

“That entire experience was filled with defining moments for me,” she reflects. “I had willingly made so many sacrifices, had left my family, my friends, and my country, and had to learn a new language and culture at such an early age. We made an agreement and now he was changing the rules. I felt so betrayed.”

Finally, in July of 1996, after five years in Italy, Tina took back control and decided she was ready to live her life on her terms again. She flew home to the States with little but her beloved six month old puppy Maxine and what she could fit in two suitcases. She headed straight to her brother’s home in Boston, dropped off Maxine in his care, and then went directly on to training with United Airlines in Chicago.

Tina launched herself in her new career, where she quickly tapped her potential for leadership and became an admired flight attendant. Within two years, she was selected for Purser training, a lead flight attendant program. “I was the youngest flight attendant to complete the training,” recalls Tina. “In addition to special wings and a certificate, it elevated your seniority and what trips you can hold. The majority of the people in my training class had been flying for 20+ years. I’d been flying for just two. It was a big deal and one of my proudest moments.”

Soon, she was managing teams of other flight attendants, assigning work positions, and conducting appraisals. From there, she caught the

eye of higher ups before being recruited by the White House Press Charter. Often, she would join the Administration on multi-week trips abroad conducting state business overseas. She calls her time with the charters the “best four years of her professional career.” She loved flying for myriad reasons: the opportunity to travel, the excitement, the service mentality and honoring her father who also flew during his career.

A few years after Tina returned from Italy, she dealt with personal tragedy when her beloved brother passed away. He was diagnosed with lung cancer at only 45, and it quickly progressed to brain cancer. During the last two weeks of his life, she and her parents moved and lived with him in Boston, holding his hand as he passed away. “I was the only one he would take morphine from,” Tina recalls. It was a life changing moment and she promised him she would take care of their parents.

But her nine-year career with the airlines came to an end shortly after 9/11. Unfortunately, the tragedy meant industry wide cutbacks, furloughs, and substantial pay decreases. Within five years, Tina had to resign. She returned to the corporate world and once again proved she had the ability to climb the corporate ladder and successfully assume managerial positions in each industry she tried her hand at.

Tragedy struck again in 2009, her father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and passed away within weeks of the diagnosis. Once again, Tina was by his side holding his hand and promising to care for her mother, who had recently been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s.

Tina’s next move in the corporate world found her as part of the leadership team for a national chain of day spas where she further honed her skills in staff training, corporate development, organizational expansion, and strategic guidance.

She also found herself now happily remarried to a loving, caring partner, Robert, whom she met in 2012 via eHarmony. “Online dating was out of my comfort zone, but it was great how their algorithms worked. Before we could even email each other, we had to go through several layers and list our non-negotiables, our interests, and our values,” Tina explains. “By the time we got to our first date, we connected on a much higher level. It took a long time to find the right person and to know exactly what I wanted, but I’m glad I waited. It was worth every minute. He gives me a whole new dimension to my life.

He’s my best friend and my biggest supporter. When you’re a little girl, you picture your Prince Charming. I can say, he encompasses all that, and things I never even thought to ask for.”

Her personal life now settled and secured and having had a proven track record for turning around organizations and leading teams, she now wanted to see how far she could go on her own. “I was in management consulting at this point, and, as with a lot of people working in the corporate world, you hit a ceiling,” says Tina. “Either you can’t grow as an individual, or the work you’re trying to accomplish can’t flourish because of how they do business, or they’re not wanting to implement anything new. I began feeling frustrated, not feeling valued, and not being able to make the impact I knew I was capable of making. It was also exceedingly difficult working a corporate schedule while needing flexibility to care for my mother.”

Thus, True Clarity Coaching was born. Initially founded as a life coaching organization in 2014, Tina missed the business side of things and became a certified business coach. She began to reach out to people in her network whom she knew might be interested in her skill set. By 2017 she was solely focused on business clients, particularly small business owners. Generally, she says her clients have up to 30 employees, although that can vary widely. “They are generally generating low to mid six-figures trying to grow and scale their business. What got them to where they are, isn’t getting them to the next level. They were in growth mode, now they need to shift to CEO mode, which is a completely different skillset, and they struggle with that transition.”

About 75% of those clients are women. “I coach men as well,” she explains, “but because I focus on self-worth and mindset, I attract a lot more women entrepreneurs. My experience has been that many women in business struggle with what to charge. They’re often afraid of charging too much, apologize for their fees, or are uncomfortable talking about money and hesitate to ask for the sale. This is often why they can’t sustain or grow their business, so we do a lot of work around pricing, selling with confidence, and authenticity.”

True Clarity’s results speak for themselves; the majority of Tina’s clients double or even triple their price point during their 16 weeks in her business accelerator program, and in a relatively

short amount of time, clients across the board see the promised growth and revenue increases.

As a leader, it's no surprise that Tina considers herself supportive and encouraging, but she adds a caveat that she's also no-nonsense. "I have a couple of mantras—One is: mediocrity is not an option. I'm not okay with you doing the bare minimum," she elaborates. "I see their potential, and I challenge them to give their best. And then a Marine Corps motto always served me: improvise, adapt, and overcome. There's always something that we can do. We're never totally hopeless. And if things don't go our way, there's always something that we can tweak, or course correct to get a different result. I'll lovingly kick your butt into action!"

"My coaching is not about creating a dependency," she affirms. "I'm all about giving you the roadmap, helping you along the way, but then letting you ride the bike on your own, without the training wheels. As a coach, I believe you know the answers, and it's my job to help you pull them out. That way you'll take more ownership of your choices, your actions, your successes and you'll uncover important lessons that will impact your future results. It's the whole idea of teaching you to fish."

Her methodology isn't a drawn out, multi-year process; it's a system that gets you into action and generates results quickly. Her three- and six-month programs are intensive one-on-one experiences for established business owners, while the 16-week accelerator is a more affordable option for startups or those looking for a "business in a box" structure. It's usually the go-to option for businesses that aren't consistently generating multi six figures or may not have the capitol to invest in one-on-one coaching.

In the initial phases, clients fill out an extensive questionnaire, then jump on a strategy call to determine whether the partnership is an appropriate fit. Once details are hammered out, coaching consists of bi-weekly calls, weekly assignments, and a weekly tracker to review performance and provide accountability. True Clarity looks at a business's products or services, their business model, and takes a deep dive into operations, financials, company culture and

values. Tina makes sure that the business owners are spending their time effectively and strategically. She's quick to emphasize that her work isn't about telling people what to do, but rather, helping them do what they need to do in order to achieve their goals.

To college kids entering the workforce today, Tina advises getting clarity around what you want and why, without paralyzing yourself with options. "I would say hire a coach, get a mentor, and model after someone else who has been successful. Don't try to figure it all out yourself, because you're going to waste valuable time, energy, and money. Instead, pay for speed."

Together with Robert and two stepdaughters, 31 and 36, she has achieved a happy and full family life balanced with a dedication to her craft. Her eldest stepdaughter is expecting a baby this summer. "We're going to be grandparents," she beams. "Business is good, and life is good. I'm proof it's possible to work your business while being present and enjoying family without guilt or sacrificing either's success. It's something I share with my clients who feel they have to choose between the two. At the end of the day, your business may not always be what you have, but family is always going to be what you need."

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About Gordon J. Bernhardt

President and founder of Bernhardt Wealth Management and author of Profiles in Success: Inspiration from Executive Leaders in the Washington D.C. Area, Gordon provides financial planning and wealth management services to affluent individuals, families and business-owners throughout the Washington, DC area. Since establishing his firm in 1994, he and his team have been focused on providing high-quality service and independent financial advice to help clients make informed decisions about their money. For more information, visit www.BernhardtWealth.com and [Gordon's Blog](#).