



Mary Miller

Mary Miller believes there's room for caring and fun in business.

Describing her business, Mary Miller says, “We’re disguised as janitors, but it’s really about helping people be their best.”

Mary Miller loves being around people who are excited about their future, who have the energy and willingness to pursue their passion in life, but are just waiting for someone to give them permission. As a business owner and coach, Mary strives to give others that permission—so they can be who they really are.

“I love seeing the light come on,” Mary says, “when people take on challenges in the world because they can see a bigger future.” Coaching entrepreneurs in the Strategic Coach® Program always reminds Mary of where she started, she says, and gives her a sense of purpose—like everything she’s experienced so far has happened so she could use it to help others.

Most of all, Mary believes an entrepreneurial career should be fun. “If you can’t have fun doing it, why do it? We take ourselves way too seriously, so it’s great to be in an environment where you can learn, have fun, and talk about the things that don’t work so you can get to the things that do work—and make them work more often.”

Mary feels it’s quite an honor to be a coach. Talking with her sister recently, she recalled with a laugh, “Remember when we were growing up, how I used to get in trouble for talking? Well, I’m actually getting paid for it now.”



Mary Miller

She began in business as a salaried employee of a shoe company, then worked as a commissioned insurance salesperson—rising to become the highest-paid agent in her organization. With this success came a growing awareness: “I always thought my future was up to other people, companies, and situations, but I realized it was really up to me what I did. There was more I could do to establish my life, my results, and my future.”

About this time, a friend introduced Mary to the Strategic Coach Program, and to an entrepreneur named Tony Miller. Tony and Mary started dating, and Tony shared one of his future goals: “To spend more time with my wife, Mary.” They were married the next August, in 1991, and Mary started the Program that September. Soon after, they joined forces in business when Mary came on board at Tony’s company, Jancoa. They had a “bare-bones” team—just two people in the office who did whatever needed to be done, and 55 cleaning staff working part-time. “We were in survival mode,” says Mary.

Mary discovered as she reviewed the budgets that some jobs actually cost them money. They began to specialize in certain types of work so they could become more profitable—and stop working 26-hour days!

She credits Strategic Coach® with the breakthrough that changed everything. “It gave me permission to stop selling and start caring, and that’s really the core of who I am. I guess I subconsciously believed that caring had no real place in business, but that’s where I need it the most, and that seems to be where the innovations have come from.” The biggest innovation for Jancoa was the development of The Dream Manager*, which grew from an employee retention program into an inspiring example of what a business can be.

The company started by offering its employees benefits unheard of in their industry. Beneath these perks was a deeper commitment to the people they hired, many of whom were immigrants or unskilled. “Our basic message to employees,” Mary says, “is that no matter where you come from, no matter what level of income or education you’ve attained, you can lead a productive, fulfilling life—and you can make your dreams become reality.”

In the cleaning industry, a turnover of 350 percent per year is not unusual. Mary stopped the revolving door in their business by creating an environment that would attract and keep the best people. Not only does Jancoa develop innovative processes and equipment, its 320 full-time employees now benefit from paid training and

career development programs—which they’ve used to realize dreams like improving their English, earning college degrees, buying a first home, and even starting businesses of their own.

Jancoa’s staff are regularly recognized for their exceptional courtesy, skill, and attention to detail, which attract lots of new business by word of mouth. The company’s leadership in the community and high standards have also garnered awards from the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce and Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. “We’re disguised as janitors,” Mary says, “but it’s really about helping people be their best, to be who they really are. I’m just so proud of the people we have and appreciative of them doing such a great job.”

In 2007, a fictionalized account of Jancoa, written by Matthew Kelly, was published under the title *The Dream Manager*. The CEO of Procter & Gamble called the book “an important contribution to the literature of leadership.” Tony and Mary are also packaging Jancoa’s philosophies and practices into processes that other businesses can apply for themselves.

The couple has plenty going on outside of work, too, with five children and five grandchildren in the family. Mary enjoys having the freedom to spend time with them and finds that the things she’s learned as an entrepreneur enhance these relationships too. “Having real conversations with your kids and your grandkids—really getting to know them as people—is one of the things The Dream Manager has taught us. Once you start having conversations with them about their dreams, you get to know them at a much deeper level.”

As company CEO, Mary was recognized as 2010’s Woman of the Year Entrepreneur by WE Celebrate and nominated for the Ernest & Young 2011 Entrepreneur of the Year award. Running a business, coaching and speaking, and being a grandmother—Mary continues to enjoy each new opportunity life brings her. “Tony made one promise the day we got married: My life would never be boring. And he doesn’t have to put any extra effort into that one!”

For information about Mary Miller’s upcoming workshops, see:
<http://www.strategiccoach.com/workshops/upcoming>