

JENNIFER GRAFT CEO, FRANCHISE OWNER, MOM

SUMMARY

Jennifer Graft is a woman of many talents, a lot of which have been discovered or advanced due to the coronavirus pandemic. For most of the pandemic, she worked at Reladine, an oil company that strives to sell oil to large corporations and businesses. She also spends her time as the owner of a franchise of Mosquito Hunters, an insecticide company, and tending to her large family. In this interview, I speak with her about how she feels the pandemic has affected not only her line of work, but also her clients, coworkers, and even herself. She speaks about confidence, problem-solving skills, team work, and much more that allow her to survive and thrive in our apocalypse.

INTERVIEW CONVERSATION

Josie: Thank you for being able to meet with me today. I am excited to start talking about your jobs and how you were able to manage during the current pandemic. I want to dive into what your job entails and what specific skills have you gained from your job(s) that you believe have helped you endure the coronavirus pandemic

Jen: I am in between jobs today, but I'll try to give you the best answers. I worked at Reladine at the start of the pandemic as the head of human resources. Put plainly, I was in charge of anything to do with people and the employees. I also manage my own franchise with Mosquito Hunters and try to take care of my family as well. I am super busy all the time, but it's how I've always worked.

In terms of specific skills that I've gained from the pandemic, I think the top benefit is communication skills. I had to tell all the employees how to protect themselves from the virus, the impact of COVID on our business, what measures to take in order to get time off of work, and scheduling newsletters to keep everyone informed. Having our employees aware of what was going was important in allowing them to have a sense that we were still there to support and help them. I also feel that I have gained the ability to work remotely and adjust to a completely new way of life. I learned I could still excel at my job when I can't be at the office.

Josie: What was the biggest impact that the COVID-19 virus had on your career and how did it affect your clients?

Jen: Definitely the additional workload. Having to constantly focus on the health and safety of the employees was the new number one priority along with the millions of other tasks I was assigned to. There were many occasions where I just felt that things were dumped on me—no matter if I had the time or energy to complete them efficiently.

For the clients, we had to encourage them constantly to be patient with us as we figured out new ways to still provide a quality service without putting them in harms way. We didn't allow the salespeople to meet them in person and this caused delivery delays. The service is no longer personalized, which can potentially lower sales and quality of purchase for our clients. It was difficult to try and keep everyone happy.

Josie: Do you feel that, now that we are starting to get in the rhythm of the pandemic, you have grown stronger in your career-based skills or has the advancement of your skills been hindered?

Jen: No, I don't think my skillset has been hindered or slowed for advancement. I truly feel that the pandemic has bettered my skillset by realizing creativity can help me achieve large tasks that I didn't believe to be possible. Sharing that creativity with my coworkers and employees helped in building team spirit and teamwork skills. I had to complete my job and daily tasks in a different way, which forced me to push myself to grow.

Josie: What have you learned since the pandemic began that would help you in an "end of world" type of situation? How confident are you in those abilities?

Jen: The one number thing that comes to mind is problem solving skills. I had, and still have to, be able to think quick on my feet in order to get fast, efficient, and real-time solutions. Not being able to work through any problems that arose could prove to be catastrophic. It also hit home on the ideas to communicate in order to continue to spread this idea of togetherness; to make the employees feel that they weren't alone during these difficult times. I had to understand that some people were losing family members and critical financial support due to the pandemic that would make their lives more difficult.

I would also like to say that I am fairly confident in those skills. If we ever happen to have another global pandemic, I feel that I could be a lot more prepared this time.

Josie: What professional advice would you give to those struggling to survive in the modern apocalypse we are currently in?

Jen: I'd say to take the pandemic seriously. People have lost their lives, jobs, and family members to this disease so it's not to be taken lightly. Messing around and not caring about consequences is how people die. Do everything in your power to follow policies and procedures about how to protect yourself and others. Be safe and look out for your fellows. Most importantly, do your research. Being educated is important in being able to prepare in the event that someone gets sick. Also seeking medical attention when appropriate could save lives.

Overall, I'd really encourage people to be brave and confident. Trust your instincts and allow yourself to succeed. If you don't believe in yourself, how are others supposed to believe and trust you? This idea has gotten me through a lot of jobs and helped me stay in the right mindset.

Josie: Thank you very much for talking with me today. Please continue to stay safe and thanks for all your efforts during these times.