



Sonia has gathered a team of dedicated and talented professionals to assist V.I.P.'s clients in creating the solutions to make their projects successful.

Sonia was elected as a member of the Board of the Better Business Bureau. In addition, Sonia sits on various boards of Brigham Young University's Marriott School of Business, Stanford University, MIT, Harvard, Lone Star College, and the DeVry University.

Ms. Clayton enthusiastically stated, "We are looking forward to future years of innovation, discipline, honesty, and accomplishment through the union between Virtual Intelligence Providers and Lone Star College-Corporate College. The Lone Star College partnership brings together the best of both worlds. One aspect is that of higher education and academics; and the other aspect is our business technology support services provided by VIP. By joining forces, we are able to establish best practices and a stellar track record for our corporate clients."

She continued, "In a single solution, we bring to our customers a single source provider of education, accredited and non-accredited programs, and a workforce for seamless education opportunities. Not only do we reduce educational cycles and training costs through technology and shares services, we also motivate and empower the workforce by promoting vocational training programs at the college and at our facilities. In addition, we are a Houston-based partnership!"

Clearly, VIP will continue their growth, locally and worldwide, because they do so well what they do best...providing IT solutions for very important people!

"The VIP CANCER FOUNDATION was first created in support of the mother of one of VIP's consultants who was fighting a rare liver condition. The Cancer Foundation now actively supports women battling breast cancer. VIP Angels for Soldiers is a volunteer-based nonprofit that was created to assist U.S. Service men and women returning from conflicts or retiring from military services. Besides her own charities, Sonia supports other philanthropic organizations such as Caritas - the global hunger relief organization run by the Catholic Church; The Between Jobs Ministries of Houston; The Hero Foundation Hospital of San Antonio, Texas; The Red Cross; and the LDS Relief Society. To find out more about the charities supported by VIP, go to their website at www.vip-global.com.

Sonia's list of accolades is so long that it could fill a room. For several years in a row, she has been included on the Houston Business Journal's Houston "Fast 50" and "Fast 100" List and the title of "Fastest Growing Woman-Owned Business". She also received the "Award of Excellence" several years in a row by the Better Business Bureau. Ms. Clayton was a finalist of the Woman Business Owner of the Year Award given by the National Association of Women Business Owners and she also was named Enterprising Woman 2014, USA position # 9, by Enterprising Women Magazine, in Sarasota, Florida.

Sonia was presented The Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's "Female Hispanic Entrepreneur of the Year Award" and the "Winner of Distinction Award"; Smooth Jazz FM 95.7, The Wave's "Wave of Hope Award"; Univision Radio's "Heroine of the Community Award"; Texas Governor Rick Perry/The White House recognized Sonia with the "Top Women in Technology Award"; The Houston Minority Supplier Development Council's "Emerging Ten (E-10) Award"; "Top Women in Technology Honoree" by the Association for Women in Computing; "Top Minority-Owned Business" by DiversityBusiness.com; and in 2003, Sonia was the winner of "Mrs. Texas".

VIP is accredited with the Houston Better Business Bureau. They are also certified by the City of Houston's Affirmative Action and Contract Compliance Program as a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Women Business Enterprise (WBE), and Small Business Enterprise (SBE). Last but not least, VIP is certified with the city of Houston as a minority-owned business by the Houston Minority Supplier Development Council.

VIRTUAL INTELLIGENCE PROVIDERS, LLC....PROVIDING IT SOLUTIONS FOR VERY IMPORTANT PEOPLE



Take Away DOs and DON'Ts on Creating and Managing your Own Business

DOs

1. Define your products and services and develop your own brand/niche.
2. Become a solution provider and a problem-solver.
3. Be competitive in pricing, but not necessarily the lowest bidder.
4. Know your competitive advantages and know your competitors.
5. Be wise with your money and reinvest in your company.
6. Keep motivated and happy employees.
7. Create case studies about your success studies and publish them.
8. Create a strong network of worthwhile partners and associations.
9. Keep your sales-pitch concise, understandable, and tailored to the listener.
10. During meetings, give specific answers.
11. Be compelling and passionate about your work and be ready for rejection!
12. Keep satisfied customers; give more than expected; ask them for referrals.
13. Offer something for free - A study, white paper, coaching session, etc.
14. Give generously to others, the community, and your family.
15. Help peers, colleagues, and small entrepreneurs.
16. WORK VERY HARD towards your goals and objectives. If you fail, try as many times as necessary and believe in what you are doing.
17. Be truthful and ethical. A bad reputation can destroy your business.

DON'Ts

1. Don't stop believing in your vision; don't be afraid to fail; and never quit!
2. Don't promise what you cannot deliver.
3. Don't leave a bad reputation behind. Don't solicit your customers' employees.
4. Don't be late for meetings.
5. Don't be negative.
6. Don't be pushy - Give time to your client to understand your offer.
7. Don't miss your deadlines.
8. Don't try to be a CEO, a president, or a VP if you cannot keep a regular job!
9. Don't treat others poorly.
10. Don't lose your patience or your temper!
11. Don't stop caring about others (Customers, Employees, Friends, & Family).
12. Don't forget about yourself! - Take time for you and your health.
13. Don't stop giving to others. Yes, without expecting something back.
14. Don't embarrass your clients and never speak poorly of them, no matter what!

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Providing IT Solutions for Very Important People

By Barbara R. Davis

Alfonso Ayala Photography Services

even more special is that Sonia has succeeded in spite of being a minority (Hispanic) and also a cancer survivor!

Born in Colombia, Sonia spent the first part of her childhood there. Eventually, her family moved to Venezuela to flee the terrorism brought on by the socialist-supported guerillas. While living in Colombia, Sonia's family moved seven times due to their poor economic situation. Sonia learned to "think outside of the box" as a result of the challenges she had to overcome due to her family's poverty. She reflected, "I learned to deal with everything in life in a very nontraditional way. Nothing was paid for me; I had no father for support if I failed. I had to be very creative, very inventive, and very resourceful. I had no back-up plan. "Life was not easy for me."

In fact, Sonia's childhood had been so difficult and filled with so much adversity that when she was interviewed on a television program and asked would she enjoy her life if she had to live it over again, she adamantly answered, "No!" Sonia then added, "In reality, I am very grateful, because all of those challenges gave me a lot of character, a lot of stamina, and a lot of resolution to achieve what I had to achieve...but the fact that I knew that I didn't have a back-up plan was probably the driving force. I was simply put in the situation where I had to either sink or swim."

When Sonia was eight years old, her mother converted to Mormonism. The Mormon churches that were founded in Colombia and Venezuela were started by American missionaries and Sonia's family was one of the first to convert in that region. Everywhere Sonia's family went, they took on the responsibility to start branches of the Mormon Church. They shared the gospel with everyone and Sonia learned to be fearless when it came to speaking about her religion. "I think it helped me a lot because I was not an inhibited person when it came to conversing about any topic," recalled Sonia. Sonia believes that it was because of her Mormon Church pioneering efforts that she was able to develop her leadership skills.

At the age of 15, in ninth grade, Sonia had to drop out of school to help support her ailing mother and two brothers. In spite of working full-time, Sonia continued her education by taking evening and Saturday classes and eventually was able to get her high school diploma. On top of doing her studies on Sundays, Sonia attended church and also took on additional responsibilities as a church leader! After graduating from high school, Sonia continued working full-time but then attended college at night and on Saturdays in her pursuit of a degree in Business Administration.

After Sonia's family moved to Venezuela, they continued their efforts in pioneering and spreading their Christian beliefs. During this time, Sonia became acquainted with a young American from Salt Lake City, Kirk Clayton, who was also there to help spread the word and grow the Mormon Church. After completing his mission, Kirk returned to the U.S. but a year later, they began communicating with each other and Kirk encouraged Sonia to come to the U.S. and study. By this time, Sonia was working in Venezuela as a security investigator for banking fraud and asset protection.

So at 21, Sonia (who is fluent in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English) moved to the U.S. and within the first year, she and Kirk were married. In 1990, they moved to Houston and Sonia began working for Air France. Later on, she began working for Continental Airlines as a corporate security investigator and was involved in the creation of Continental's Corporate Security Department. This led to Sonia handling their training and education programs that dealt with the US Federal Agencies Drug Interdiction, Human Trafficking, and Anti-Terrorism programs.

In 1998, Ms. Clayton joined the world of ERP/ Business Technology and SAP, a German international software corporation. It wasn't long before Sonia recognized that she was too independent, too creative, and not a follower. She knew that she was not a good employee because her mindset didn't work well with "corporate politics," but she was confident that she would make an excellent and capable leader. So, on September 30, 2001, just two weeks after 9/11, Sonia founded Virtual Intelligence Providers, L.L.C. (VIP).

Originally beginning with a small team of consultants including PhDs, business administrators, graphic and instructional designers, and system engineers working from home, VIP moved into its first office space in 2002. Today, VIP has expanded across the United States and various countries. VIP serves more than 70 Fortune 500 Corporations and has been involved in over 100 SAP implementations.

Interestingly enough, VIP has never spent money on marketing programs; their expansion has been the result of "word-of-mouth"- the finest form of advertisement! In addition, VIP's business model that is based on reducing overhead and unneces-

sary expenses has resulted in producing countless testimonials of satisfied clients who in turn have catapulted VIP to its success. VIP uses virtual connectivity models, video conferencing, distance learning platforms, virtual project management tools, and remote administration to communicate between employees and customers. VIP Consultants use the virtual communication models for consulting and training in order to reduce expenses.

This Houston-based information technology and consulting company specializes in ERP systems including SAP and Oracle training. ERP, which stands for Enterprise Resource Planning, is a business process management software that allows an organization to use a system of integrated applications to manage their business and automate back office functions. ERP software integrates all facets of an operation, including product planning, development, manufacturing processes, sales, and distribution.

VIP specializes in four different areas of the business world:

- 1) Business process documentation and training development;
- 2) organizational change management and e-learning;
- 3) IT/IS project management;
- and 4) staff augmentation with the objective or improving employee performance and enhancing ROI for corporations. VIP primarily serves the Oil and Gas Industry. Their clients include Exxon-Mobil, Shell, Chevron, BP, Baker Hughes, and Waste Management.

In 2012, VIP formed an educational and commercial alliance with Lone Star College System (LSCS). The first of its kind, LSCS and VIP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish an innovative, educational, and commercial partnership to align corporate training needs with higher education programs. This past December (2013), VIP moved their offices inside the Lone Star College Campus located at University Park in northwest Houston.

Sonia elaborated, "Companies were always requesting information and training from Lone Star College on what were the industry standards and what were the best practices. VIP easily fits the bill in a much-needed area involving business. In addition to helping the college promote their curriculum and apprenticeship programs to existing and migrating corporations to the Houston Metropolitan

area, Sonia advises them as a Board member and The VIP Education Foundation benefits to LSCS by providing scholarships to students with interest in Information Technology Degrees.

From the time that Sonia was six years old, she became keenly aware of the USA. Her first recollection was of Caritas, a Catholic Church-run global hunger relief organization that provided food to impoverished families in her community. The people feeding them were Americans. Later, Sonia observed that the soldiers and volunteers who were helping protect her and defend her Colombian countrymen from the Narco-guerilla terrorists were all wearing the U.S. flag on their uniforms. She was so impressed that people from another country would come and fight for their freedoms to protect them and would also help feed them!

That is why Sonia is so very supportive of our military and also why she cares so much about helping others. In addition, she taught her son and daughter to give back to our country through service. Today, her son, Aaron, is a Flight Engineer for the U.S. Navy and an officer (pilot) in training. Her daughter, Lisa, is a Spanish-speaking, returned missionary from San Fernando, California and a senior at Brigham Young University.

Ms. Clayton's appreciation has led her in creating and running three different nonprofit 501c3 organizations. Each year, Sonia asks different VIP employees to be co-chairs in assisting her. Sonia encourages all of her employees to give back to the community by volunteering. Sonia believes that she has been so successful in business because she gives back to the community and to individuals. Yet she also believes that giving should be done without expecting anything in return. That is a very important example that she teaches her employees.

The three charities are: 1) the VIP Education Foundation; 2) the VIP Cancer Foundation; and 3) VIP Angels for Soldiers. The VIP Education Foundation donates scholarships to colleges and universities. In addition, they give scholarships in technology to Hispanic women. They also work with underprivileged students in magnet schools where they train senior students on the use of SAP to give them marketable skills for the workplace. VIP donates the SAP education portals, training materials, and instructors to help the cause. Through this foundation, VIP also donates time, effort, resources, and money to training the Houston unemployed and dislocated professionals. Training takes place on Saturday's at VIP's headquarters and there is no cost to the beneficiaries.



V.I.P. has teamed up with Lone Star College Systems to form a powerful alliance of companies. The Alliance is the first small business brokerage incubator model in the United States where a minority woman-owned business, such as V.I.P., is the appointed leader and resides within the institution of higher learning. The Alliance offers a wide variety of very unique IT, HR, & OCM solutions, products, and services targeting the oil & gas industry and beyond.