

## **Transcript\_Podcast#7\_Workforce Lens\_Hosting Jessica Stewart LOC, strategic advisory and leadership team coach to Fort worth**

### **Shannon Bryant(host):**

Greetings and welcome to our podcast series the workforce let brought to you by Kelly college in North Texas. I am Shannon Bryant executive vice president for corporate solutions and economic development and I will be your host moderating strategic conversations with employers and economic developers on all things related to repairing and growing the workforce today and in the future.

Today please help me welcome our guest is Jessica Stewart LOC. Jessica is a strategic advisory and leadership team coach local here to Fort worth welcome just so happy to have you here.

### **Jessica:**

Thank you guys I'm honoured to be here.

### **Shannon Bryant(host):**

So, I want to dive right into your story you know I've known each other for a while now and I think you have an absolutely fascinating story and so this is really a discussion today about entrepreneurship and your journey in so if we could. Walk us through your story let's start from the beginning tell us who you are.

### **Jessica:**

So, my full name is Jessica Stewart and I was actually raised on a cattle ranch in the mountains of by a marine corps dad and you know grit hard work just not your ordinary thing that you see today was instilled in both my brother and I early on and. It carried through on throughout my life but anyway I was raised on a ranch was raided by marine corps dad grit hard work was instilled in us and. Failure has never been an option and so I went on to leave the ranch and go to college I actually played volleyball I was the first athlete inside of my high school to receive a full ride division one scholarship. And after volleyball I went on to graduate Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and I graduated with an animal science degree and from there I went on to be a school teacher.

### **Shannon Bryant(host):**

Oh, well right.

### **Jessica:**

Those that have. The way I loved it and today I teach in so I can kind of see how the 2 tied together and was successful in being a school teacher I loved it and moved to a community with my now husband today that didn't have teaching jobs and we had kids and so we were 2 income family and I needed to figure out what to do so I started a medical billing company out of my house. With 2 young children under my feet and you know my intentions were to start the company to stay home with my kids and raise my kids and it soon turned out where it grew beyond the house and I grew into a nationwide company with 2 U. S. locations with an international division. And I recently just sold the company very successfully. So hitting the ceiling and doing things that are outside of the box is not unusual for me. I have been there and done that

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Normal is boring boring. But just to go back for just a second what made you decide to select the medical billing business how did that come about.

**Jessica:**

That's a great question so I've always tended to not do things that I've studied I I leap into things because I can have a passion for it so it was actually conversation with my mom one night as to what I should do to. Raise kids and be home and a medical billing company a revenue cycle management company was something that that came up and I soon figured out that I had an incredible passion for solving problems and I need to solve problems it was satisfying for me so anybody who knows a revenue cycle and medical billing is its extreme it's extreme complexity and I really liked it. so I took off with it.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

There you go in your target market for the medical billing company was hospitals doctors' offices who were you're the primary target?

**Jessica:**

Started with physician offices small physician offices and soon became very popular in solving some big problems for physician offices and saw that we had a need for the amatory physician care inside a hospital space and so we started working with larger practitioners larger clinics and got into the hospital space and took off from there.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

So, it's an entrepreneur's business must match their personality. How did Pacific medical data solutions match your personality?

**Jessica:**

So, passion I have an extreme passion for loving to do the things that I love to do so I love to solve problems and like I said it was very satisfying to me. So it fit me.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

There you go and your big personality?

**Jessica:**

Yes.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

It makes sense to go to a big company so what are some of your greatest lessons in this journey of building and selling the company and that entire journey?

**Jessica:**

Yeah, fun ones so the biggest lesson that I learned is you know the people on top of the mountain didn't fall there. And I learned early on how hard it was to actually make the climb and I teach this today. But I have more respect for those that have lived the American dream and kind of realize

their goals the picture of success with the iceberg could not be more perfect to me right we as humans pay attention more to results and less to what goes on underneath that right that.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Over the ice bears most of its underwater ends a little peek?

**Jessica:**

Yeah, underneath is the you know the hard work the risk the sacrifice the loneliness of doubt you know the actual climb to success so very few people see that and I think that's one of my biggest lessons another lesson that I have is. Know your purpose and make it meaningful. Winds come when all of that lines up you have to love what you do. And your passion needs to choose from you.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

I could not agree more yeah exactly

**Jessica**

Yes

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Some days the claim to leadership kind of feels like you're talking about the mountain kind of pushing a peanut up the nose up the mountain with your nose.

**Jessica:**

It's a perfect metaphor exactly and the it's hard it's very hard

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Yeah, and it is so it's great I love that I love that would you mind sharing an experience or a situation in your business where things didn't go as planned give us some examples of some of those hardships and what you did to? Go back and re adjust your sails.

**Jessica:**

Absolutely I used to call it re calibrate I love it as entrepreneurs were pioneers right and we're out there on a on a ship by yourself sometimes and it's dark and we have a compass and sometimes things just don't go the way we plan and then we hit an iceberg. But I had a doctor that was billing fraudulently and this that's a big deal in health care. Really big deal and so I was mid tenure when this happened so every drop of money was very important for us. And I had to fire the client and we lost 80 percent of our revenue overnight well it was one of those moments I didn't know if we were going to survive. Good lord willing we we did and we came out better and stronger because of it the lessons learned in it was you know surround yourself with those that do good will make better compliance we became a better company we became a better team we stuck to our core values and we never slipped from our integrity and that that carried us all the way to the end now one of the easiest thing might have been to say yeah we'll keep on just for the revenue C. against all. Inner core us.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Would it be safe to say that was a lesson to learn not putting all your eggs in one basket

**Jessica:**

Absolutely you know that's a great point actually is diversification but it's hard as you're growing a company especially with one that was self funded by mine it's hard to diversify your revenue right off the bat and you're out there taking every client I can guarantee you when we got back on our feet after this after this incident we were a little more diversified.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

I give imagine learning to scale that's the that's one of the difficult parts of the entrepreneurial journey.

**Jessica:**

Absolutely and sometimes you know it's 5 steps forward and 7 back you just don't know but you just can't keep going best if your purpose is your why and why

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

So, Jessica asks how many employees did you start around the office and where did you end up absolutely company

**Jessica:**

So, I started with one company one employee

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

that would include yourself?

**Jessica:**

Actually, worked pretty much every position inside the company and when I sold we had 30 full time employees like I said to U. S. locations but we had 150 employees overseas.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Well and that was over a time span of hello?

**Jessica:**

15 years

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

That is impressive so what's been some of your most exciting moments as an entrepreneur. You're all hot moments.

**Jessica:**

There's a lot of them right and traveling with Jess's that pretty comical so there's always a lot of them but I would say the number one for me is I'm a designer heart and love to build things we build solutions at Pacific Medical that were outside the box. We played the risky side we believed in the blue ocean not the red ocean how could we how could we be unique.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Can you explain that just for a listening audience lender and what that means?

**Jessica:**

Yeah so how do you know how do you make sure that you're not just another fish in the sea how do you become a unique company that every client needs what your solutions what's your differentiators what keeps you in that promotion and sometimes the version is the riskiest road to take in the scariest one

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Also sharks.

**Jessica:**

lots of sharks absolutely and so anyway we built solutions outside of the normal revenue cycle management this might be kind of nerd health care talk but. We didn't just stick to being a traditional medical billing company we saw the limitations that are physicians had and we build solutions around that we were actually one of the very first companies to take a software and make it remote this is before the embargo and allow our physicians the ability to dial into their project management systems practice management systems remote so wherever they were located. That was big we started into heavy analytics and we build Multan's if you wanna call it solutions to the practice management and EMR. Platforms for our physicians so that they had better access they had real time data and it was extremely successful.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Certainly, sounds like it so we are sitting here today at Tarrant County college at our north east campus and there's a lot of students here while students across all of TCC and we have a lot of students who are interested in business and entrepreneurship. From you have taken this journey and being a strong woman leader and woman owned company what advice would you give to our students here at the college?

**Jessica:**

So, I think I started by saying with the people on top of the mountain fall there's pro my favourite quotes but I'll get into being dependable business guy Caron minute but it's what I teach today and so if I have something to say to people is don't be afraid to surround yourself. With people who are either smarter than you or have been there. I think the biggest piece of advice I wish somebody would have given me and I don't get me wrong I was surrounded by advisers and peer groups and great people but I needed that guide right what why would we ever want to climb Everest by ourselves you've got to have somebody that's gone and done it speaking of the crime get the guides be in a position to receive believe or not that's a hard thing for us entrepreneur stratus to be able to receive gifts or receive advice. And not stray off of us of our passion and our core but be able to receive that advice and take it and build something from it so surround yourself with people that early on there have been there and done that. The other thing and I'm big on is follow your gut it just speaks to you there's a reason that it's there don't be sceptical jump. Fail fail and fail fast fail hard. Jump you'll be better for it.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

I can use the new what I typically say is there are no mistakes in life just lessons learned.

**Jessica:**

Absolutely and invested it get started because there are things that your business or what you're wanting to do is going to teach you that you can't learn in school so get going.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

That's true can I ask them so you're talking about finding other people to support you in that guide. What advice would you give pertaining to mentorship how did you find your mentorship and how did how did you know that those mentors for. Good people if you would follow

**Jessica:**

So great question all right early on I would say that I can categorize it in 3 categories this is what I knew before what I knew today no today but there's peer groups there's round tables and then there's just people right so get out and talk to people your gut is going to tell you when you're talking to somebody who's really sharp somebody who's been there and somebody is willing to give advice asked to go to coffee with them be brave and asked say Hey I want to form an advisory panel would you be on. Early on I formed an advisory board and. It's supposed to be a year tenure well just one of them said I had the. The golden cuffs you know of my advisory board members never left. And they're still great friends today.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

And that speaks volumes to you all right?

**Jessica:**

Yeah, you know I just I do I got a shout out to Kevin Mayer broke Castleman and men and women that stayed by me that worked with me for years and never left my side and never charged me dying. So, there's people that want to help now what I know today is the guy you know find your guide find your business guide I'm a prisoner of pinnacle business guy today I did not know that. Systems like this existed and that's why I've come back in and started helping other entrepreneurs is because this was the missing piece for me and so get out there talk to people did you guys catch basin by 3. Panels and people want to help.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Thank God well I think you just answered my question pertaining to if you could go back and talk to your younger self what advice would you give to you it sounds like it started out sooner with a guide in the mentor it is in the process?

**Jessica:**

Yeah, but I had great ones don't get me wrong but I never thought to just get a specific person or guide that had been there and done it now. Then invest the money and because their third job is to lead you up the mountain. And then get you to those views that very few see

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

And sometimes through the mail?

**Jessica:**

Yes

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

So that leads to our next question which is I think that's a good segue so talking about young and aspiring entrepreneurs I know funding typically comes up and that's that's usually major issue right is how do I get started where do I find the funding so do you have suggestions to offer young aspiring entrepreneurs regarding the funding plan to normally start the business but the fund for the long term?

**Jessica:**

Absolutely so I have a couple answers first one is you know depends on what you're looking for I was one that never went to outside funding. And always believed in the power of little debt so I was the pay for it as you go person that kept me from growing faster and bigger so you know what you got to weigh your options with the need for me to control everything or does it go back to how I was raised you know do it yourself you know that tough great. And so if you are looking for funding my biggest suggestion is consider them as partners not just \$1 consider them partners what type of asset are they going to be to the company to the team you know what type of value or they can offer back how can they help you climb that mountain and then I think you know at the end of the day is and this is what I've learned it now and I would say the last 5 years of my tenure I lived at this right here is why you get your company going. Focus on profit, right? money is not a dirty word it is it is the life that feeds our operations so how do you do that and in what I teach today is kind of a 4-legged stool where you have people purpose playbook and performance if you focus on those and you build those profit comes in with profit comes freedom. And freedom allows us to have what we want to either grow bring in additional partners you know whether it be private equity or any type of phone you're looking for. Those 4 things need to be running on all cylinders.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

I love that if you would just for the audience because I went pretty quick and I love those 4 can you say this one more time?

**Jessica:**

Absolutely people purpose playbook in performance and when we focus on those profit happens and this is actually the pinnacle principle that I teach today and you know profit is yeah like I said the true measure of a successful operation don't be scared to make profit go out and say that you want to from the very beginning I think that. There's a there's a thing out there where you know profit kind can be. Guilty almost and that is not why we're doing business we want to do business to make money we want to do business to have freedom.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Okay, Little bit about what factors need to be taken into consideration when you're scaling the company I know we talked about that briefly but do you have anything that you would call out that would be a bizarre one solid piece of advice for scaling?

**Jessica:**

Besides the surrounding yourself with great people the other is great health need all the energy that you can have and you need to be at your peak state when your peak state you'll know your purpose and why you're put on this earth to do what you're doing. And so reside in that live in that center yourself around it.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

So, I guess maybe being a busy entrepreneur how do you manage a work life balance

**Jessica:**

The tough questions.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Right is a practice what we preach?

**Jessica:**

Yes, especially for those of us to find our purpose in our work you know so after selling my company I have been able to become a mom that I wasn't for so many years. And it has been the best time of my life honestly so I can I can truly speak to a work life balance were back in the day I couldn't because I was so. Dictated to being on the hamster wheel and so I realize the importance of it today because I wouldn't trade these years months days for anything I want more of them I want to life that allows my husband and I the opportunity to be part of a kid's life so how do I teach others to do it I'll go right back to you know the pinnacle principal is don't get strangled by your company master those 4 lakes because when you do. That profit in that freedom comes in that air comes in as a leader as an entrepreneur is the owner of your company and executive whatever your position is that is where more freedom can come. And you gain that perfect balance.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

So, being a successful inspiring woman, I'm assuming that's the same advice that you offer to other female leaders who are trying to work their way up that mountain right now?

**Jessica:**

absolutely and woman to woman I have a lot to say because I was I was that mom that started this company out of my home you guys a mobile home we had \$0 when we started this company and I had 2 young kids and we will live in life we're happy right we don't know how scary this out close to the edge we are the find your sole purpose because when you do and you find your why and why you were put on this planet to do what you do and you let go of your limiting beliefs if you get out of your way watch what happens it has women. We have DNA that's different. And very powerful 8 we have the ability to attack us we have the ability to do things no offense meant because I love you but as women. Don't ever have limiting beliefs that we cannot go and achieve the goals we want to cheat and still have a family and still have the life we want to have just. Go do it.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

I love that we're growing up my grandmother she was a very powerful woman she always said to me the quote good better best never let it rest until your good is better and your better is best the end of that is something that I have always lived my life by and that's you know yes, it's scary but. Does it afraid right take that step?

**Jessica:**

Absolutely so one of my favourite authors is gin since hero in the book you are a badass I have that by my bedside I strongly suggest man or woman read it because it is a great book you know and I've always been a believer in this and it wasn't until I read her book that I was like that that's me right in and she speaks to the universe and if I have one piece of advice for everybody is the universe's bill everything you need and desire you just have to get.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Speak it into the universe?

**Jessica:**

Yes, speak it believe it she says raise your frequency so yeah yeah.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

So, you have been in the Fort Worth area for a few years now, correct?

**Jessica:**

Yes.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

What are your thoughts on the fort worth entrepreneurial ecosystem thus far?

**Jessica:**

Super exciting I was raised here I don't know if I've ever why should know this right I don't know but I've never lived this close to the city especially a city like fort worth the values in the feel of fort worth is jealous it is a cool city and I and I hope it holds it's true to its core values because what an attractive place to be businesses should be looking to come here I feel that it's a business friendly area I actually work very closely with the fort worth chamber actually their guide you know and they've done so many things to put together entrepreneurship programs you know we've got tech fort worth we have sparked yard we have we have an ecosystem that I feel is developed and it's very. Finally, you just have to go find it 2 young entrepreneurs mid tenure entrepreneurs' people like myself that have sold the company and live the dream and are back open pop people soft problems. Right, I have all good things to say.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Yeah, I would agree with you coming here I think I've told you to the enormous size leadership over corporate solutions department to college I also helped to leave your host college for the small business development center for Tarrant county yes and so it's all about helping new and aspiring entrepreneurs with their business plans and anything that they need so it's a it's a great collaborative space to be in

**Jessica:**

Was what I was actually goanna jump into that and are. Just a sec but this college and what you are doing Shannon and team is remarkable the magazine the programs I wish there had been something like this for. When I started you know it it's a great stepping stone and it's so needed so?

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

You think you are greatly appreciating that some of my words that that's a great that's a great segue so any last words of wisdom for addressing the audience

**Jessica:**

yeah, subscribe to this podcast get their magazines get in here you guys though I no joke but really, I want to end with the view at the top is so worth the climb. It's hard it's you're goanna you know

there's days you want to give up but it's worth the climb and so put it all out there go for it live it breathe it be great at what you do.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

That is wonderful just thank you so much it has been wonderful having you here today love the advice love the inspiration love the story thank you so much and so I want to thank you everyone for listening today and we look forward to seeing you on the next edition of the work force lands.