

Lisa Nichols: It's a privilege today to welcome Linda Haberstroh to the show, Linda is the President of Phoenix Textile Corporation. I am so excited to have you on the show today. You and I've only known each other for about a year, but it was kind of an instantaneous connection when we met.

Nichols: Well, let's go on, there's so much I want to talk about today, we've got a lot to talk about, so I want to jump on in, can you talk to us just a little bit about growing up?

Nichols: I bet. Well, I think about your mom, and I think she founded Phoenix textiles in 1983, that's right and, really, it's not like she had a lot of experience or background in this I think about your mom and I think she had a lot of courage and a lot of bravery didn't she? So she founded Phoenix Textile Corporation. Which you are the president of today, but what I want to talk about a little bit Linda if you don't mind, I know that it was not easy for her, when she started the company and you talk about... I think you had even told me a first time we met how your mom had to go to all these textile mills in New York and she kept going.

TECHNOLOGYPARTNERS.NET/PODCAST

mortgage on her home and ended up getting a job opening accounts there through a wonderful series of God incidences was able to make a connection with a textile industry, and that's where she found her great love of selling. She is just such a gifted salesperson. Loves to connect with people, hears that need. She has only ever represented our product that she believes in so deeply just loves to make those connections, it shows and shines through.

Nichols: She's probably still a good salesperson and she's in her 80s.

Haberstroh: It's so scary when you're her daughter, because you know after you've said that third yes you're in and I warn others, it as well, but when she had this opportunity, the owner of her former company was tragically killed in a car accident he had other opportunities to go to a competition, but had the wonderful experience of her partner that she had met through the investment club at Mark Twain State Bank, which just goes to show those early jobs, those early connections, just nurturing those, continuing to give back every step of the way to be able to nurture all of those connections. But she had stayed involved, so all these years later, she had taken every penny of her savings at that point, which was \$5000, put it in the investment club, and so she went to Mr. Dean and said I'm going to need to relocate my family, so I need my money back and he said, Well, number one, you don't have money anymore, you have about three inches of a strip mall, you said, but number two, why do you need your money?

She explained to him what had happened to her company that she was going to need to relocate and told him about the opportunities that she had and he said, Pam. If all these other people believe in you so much, why don't you believe in yourself enough to start your own? She said, "Well I know and love our customers. I know this industry but I don't have any business background. And really no money, obviously. I'm talking to you." And he said, "I do have a passion for investing and entrepreneurs and I do know about business. Let's see what we can do. They partnered. And he gave her the opportunity over the years till by 51% of the company and we were able to grow and just before Mr. Dean passed away, he gave my sisters and I, the opportunity to be able to buy his shares I know it's been a wonderful opportunity for our family, and to build this family business over the... Actually, we're 36 years old last week.

Nichols: Wow, that graduation yes that is so exciting. Well, as I'm thinking there's just so much packed in that little story that you just told. Number one, he saw something in your mom, he believed in your mom right and he spoke that into her. They say you have to see it to be it. And so he helped her see it that she could be the one to start her own business, so he obviously believed in her or he would not have invested.

Haberstroh: You challenged us with question, the last time we were together. What is that something extra? And I had to share about my mom and it is that she believed she absolutely believed in her goals and believed in herself.

Nichols: And believed in the product, she believed in what she was doing.

Haberstroh: Absolutely. The customer experience that we are committed to delivering but whenever you are not able to achieve that goal and you are going to experience those failures along the way, return to number one, believe in yourself, you are going to do it. Persevere. She just had that special inspiration of... You knew that she believed in and that you were going to be able to.

Nichols: I love that. If she did strength finders, belief is probably one for her top five strengths. I would imagine.

Haberstroh: So many of us that came up in the business together with her experience that same thing.

Nichols: We'll talk to us a little bit, we've already started talking about Phoenix tell us a little bit about what Phoenix does, Linda for the listening audience that doesn't know.

Haberstroh: Phoenix Textile Corporation, we're a supplier of institutional linen. So we supply Linen, we supply apparel, uniforms and the patient apparel and then about a third of our business is designed for healthcare. Again, all strictly focused on healthcare both acute and non-acute care communities nationwide. We have a division that works with the government, both federal and state government, again, strictly focused on healthcare, so that has been our privilege really, to be able to serve our heroes, through serving them in their healthcare institutions across the country.

Nichols: I think I'd even read something about that that you guys did. And what was that program called? You institutionalize a program for our veterans.

Haberstroh: We have but what you may have read about because this is just something that is literally brand new. In fact, I was just sharing it in our company town hall meeting this morning, but we have had a group at Phoenix strictly employee-led called it's our community, and they

have chosen to support treat the troops. So we have been sending homemade cookies to our troops. Yes, for over 10 years, month in month out, and so just last week, we shipped 11 boxes of home cookies and slim jims and flip flops and all kinds of things to our troops and we encourage people to send us the names of their active duty loved ones that are serving. We love to be able to reach out and show our appreciation.

Nichols: We'll talk about that and how they can connect with you on that at the end of the show, because there may be people out there that would love to have a care package sent to their loved ones.

Haberstroh: And be part of treating the troops. Many of our outside reps too, just sent a donation just to pay for the postage, you notice in the boxes. But we had done a number of programs as well. In fact, we just created one that's very, very exciting to me. Our National Sales Manager with our PGS team Phoenix Government Services had been working on a new cubicle curtain so the cubicle curtains hang between the beds and hospitals, and they had been working with the VA on a new fabric, that represented their mission. She was so passionate.

Our sales manager, she works with Gene Rogers, my brother-in-law, who is the COO of our Phoenix government services team. They were working to find something that would support the environment of healing that the VA is creating. So their mission of I care which is reaching out to creating this healing space. Pam had read about a lot of the research they were doing on the effect of environment on healing... Whether the troops were coming back being impacted by post-traumatic stress disorder, whether that was another element of their healing, she wanted to be part of that healing environment and so they made all the design selections for this new fabric, put all of that research into the fabric and we just had her first order for it, this week. It is beautiful. Our designers work with the team at the VA, and it is a beautiful fabric.

He took these small elements, our caregivers are so amazing, and they create these clean safe beautiful healing spaces to be able to provide treatment and care, and it is both art and a science. I just love what healthcare designers are doing.

Nichols: I'm so glad that you guys are doing that. I have so much respect for our servicemen and women. My dad was a marine, my father-in-law was a sergeant in the Army, my husband's uncle was a green beret.. We were not... We didn't go into the military but we've got a lot of family that did and I'm just so appreciative of our service men and women. We would not have the life that we have today if it weren't for their sacrifice.

Let's move on a little bit to you became the president of Phoenix. And what I love about this is you decided to go back and get your MBA? Your executive MBA from WashU. Talk to us a little bit about that journey and I know that in talking to you at first you were like... I'm not sure that this is really for a company our size, but can you talk about that program, I've just always heard just amazing things about the MBA program at WashU.

Haberstroh: Oh my gosh, Olin is just an amazing environment for and very supportive of small business, as well as our largest corporate offices here that really nationwide and globally. You know, Here I am our small family business relatively small. And when I transitioned into that role in 2009, as I said, my mom started company in '83, I joined in '85, worked my way up through the entire company, so when I stepped into this role in 2009, I really felt like I was inch wide mile deep, I knew that it was not the real it was important for me to be able to take the step I was afraid, I knew the program would be rigorous and demanding, but it was such a tremendous opportunity to have this world class education right here in St. Louis.

So, I would be able to still lead our family, business and to be able to be part of this cohort. It was heavily healthcare both of professors and my colleagues were so generous with their time, we were all there to grow our businesses together. Now, to be able to solve problems, they encouraged us to bring our own challenges, our financials, we work through them, through the whole program. It was really... And has continued to be so that I graduated in December of 2010 and they continued to be a wonderful resource.

Nichols: And you probably still keep in touch with your cohorts?

Haberstroh: We just met with them about their research around the design of our cubicle curtain for the VA and just recently had the opportunity to be part of the she suite. Meet amazing women business leaders. I got to moderate a panel, and meet these amazing women business leaders talk about their experience at Olin how it really helped them take their career to the next level.

Nichols: Well, we have a lot more.

AD: I want to dig into that a little bit further but right now we're going to take a quick break and we'll be right back with Linda Haberstroh.

Nichols: So, Linda, I know during this intense executive MBA program at Olin... You had a life interruption. Can you talk to us just a little bit about that?

Haberstroh: As I shared with you, I had just turned 50, back in school our growing business, it was it was just a young family, three kids, our youngest 2 were in high school, so I had joined them every night after dinner with a laptop open, doing homework during that time, it was around my birthday that I was ready to schedule my well-woman exam so I just real quickly looked at my calendar to see what day I always did it around my birthday, but just to see what date I had scheduled it for the prior year, and I realized in the craziness of going back to school, I had missed scheduling that prior year so I made it didn't think anything of it, and during that well-woman exam I got the follow-up call, actually on my 50th birthday that I had breast cancer. I didn't know what my reaction would be, honestly, I didn't know if I would be afraid or angry, or shocked, but it just opened up this empty waiting space, and what moved in there, which surprised me was just this incredible sense of the Lord's nearness.

I felt him so near. I had had an incident with my daughter, when she was about three where I was the kind of mother that let the kids play in the yard, and she'd probably a pound a dirt. But we're going to find out why is she sick and the blood test. And of course they couldn't draw blood. And so finally, I said we need to go up to the next level here in getting this draw. And so they said, "Sure we'll go upstairs and they put me in the big... You've seen those big, high chairs where they draw blood. They put me in my little three-year-old on my lap and I had to be honest with her, I said they are going to have to stick you again they're going to come and get the blood draw. And she said, "Are you going to stay here? And I said, "Absolutely and I just felt her little body relax into me and that's how I felt that's the closest way I can describe it. I knew that it was going to be tough treatment road ahead, but I just felt the Lord nearness and he's... Every step of the way. So we, again, are so blessed here in St. Louis to have siteman, such amazing resource.

So, I was able to get siteman. And we had in St. Charles County right there at Barn St. Pier, siteman literally halfway between my home and my office and so I was driving down to WashU to go to school, I of course could have accessed those resources... But siteman had made those resources available in the community, for a small business owner. Like with a family. It was just amazing, and so I was able to... Of course, or I have not mentioned but my cancer, what my breast cancer was TCIS, I was stage 3a. So that's a lumpectomy followed by chemotherapy followed by radiation therapy. But I was able to have, I was able to work on Thursday, morning, have my chemotherapy on Thursday afternoon, take off f Friday, Saturday, and Sunday and

back at work on Monday, because it was right there when I was doing radiation therapy. Dr. Hall is the most amazing caring doctor, her leadership in radiation therapy has been transformative here in STL.

I was able to be right there first appointment every morning so I could have my radiation therapy, and go to work. The drugs that other women have trialed was such an important part of my wellness so I wanted to be part of a drug trial, so that research could benefit other women. So, in fact, that's how we actually met the first time because I'm so fortunate to be able to service as the Chair of the foundation board. I was so blessed to be able to have that caring professional treatment siteman. I knew I wanted to remain involved.

Nichols: Well you're on a mission, now are in the Linda and you and I've talked about this, and women especially, I believe, we are trying to take care of our family, we're trying to take care of what we're doing at the office, we're trying to take care of out-in the community, and sometimes we come last, but you would tell women, our listening audience for the women out there take care of yourself, put your own mask on first.

Haberstroh: It is the most loving thing that you can do. It is one of the best gifts that you can give your colleagues at work. We are very committed to workplace wellness at Phoenix because you spend so many hours at work. Anything you can do to encourage our director of HR, Kevin a few years ago had to walk to Bush stadium so we counted our steps and we all tried to walk to Bush stadium by opening day from O'Fallon. One time we had planks giving, so all they would come on the intercom, through the whole month of November, and we do a few more seconds of planking until Thanksgiving Day, but anything that can make it fun. Leverage the power is I always preach Peloton performance. But that increases wellness as well because you're encouraged by your colleagues and at Peloton performance is what pushes performance in every area.

Nichols: What you have told me, everything at Phoenix is about birds.

Haberstroh: We are, we're the bird analogy habit. We love our phoenix bird.

Nichols: Which your mom chose... And she chose the name of the company is Phoenix based, to a symbol of Atlanta.

Haberstroh: Of course, rising from the ashes better and stronger, than before. It exemplifies our commitment that is the one thing about our business that has not changed, we're a company of integrity, we're customer-focused, we deliver on the bottom line, we value the individual and we have fun along the way. It's emblemized on our phoenix bird. So of course our company newsletter is the birds' words. A little bird told me. We have... We talk a lot about Peloton performance. And to me, it is such a powerful symbol.

Nichols: So, talk to us about that because when you first told me that I'm thinking the bike, the stationary bike.

Haberstroh: Of course, I take it the bike as well, the... We are very passionate about our pedal to cause team cancer is gross out in St. Charles County. But when you look up in that fall sky and you see a peloton of migrating birds, they have that power because they are traveling in a Peloton and that wonderful African proverb. If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together and it is so true when you look at what these each individually tiny birds are able to accomplish and the distances that they're able to go with the power and the speed that they're able to accomplish it. That's been our history at Phoenix over and over again.

We love to recognize Peloton performers. I kind of joke sometimes, I say we're a Jenga because we all fit together in a way that creates success, and the whole goal is to create that customer experience that the exemplifies commitments, but it is Peloton performance, that makes it happen. You need that person ahead of you. The person on your right shoulder, and the person on your left shoulder, you need to be that same important part of their success.

Nichols: Every role is important, isn't it, Linda? Every role and everyone in their role doing that role with excellence. Is what makes it happen? And the other thing I think about that it is a very organized... You do need organization. You can't just be chaotic and shoot from the hip. It is a very organized formation.

Haberstroh: You are in a very specific position like you mentioned biking. We love to support the research at siteman both for siteman and for STL Children's Hospital. You are pedal the cause team cancer is gross and we're always looking for riders, so if there's any riders out there in St. Charles county. They can join us on our pedal the cause team. We will welcome them. We have a lot of our young folks that do these great training rides all through the summer to get ready for the ride in the fall. Serious bikers. When you're following the tour de France, you hear about how everybody playing their role is what wins each stage that yellow jersey is truly won by

the team, because each person has done their role at the right stage at the right time, with power, and that power comes from knowing your role and being able to count on the others in your Peloton to be able to fulfill their role.

Nichols: There's just so much great wisdom packed in there. I just, I love it, I love it. And your mom was just amazing to pick that name, because you guys have certainly leveraged that in everything.

Haberstroh: It's inspiring to a very inspiring.

Nichols: Linda, this is something extra. So let's talk about what is, and I know you've already shared with me, with your mom, her something extra, being belief, positivity but are there other something extras that you believe that leaders really need to be great leaders?

Haberstroh: I firmly believe that it needs to be their own something extra. It is very easy with so much great teaching out there about how to be a great leader. The next business book that comes out, the next program that we want to institute... And I think particularly as women sometimes, if there are not other strong women leaders near in your field, perhaps all the other leaders that you've been familiar with might have been male they might have approached either your industry or your work or your profession, in a way that would be very different than how you would approach it. And sometimes people don't feel comfortable enough really being themselves and doing it truly their way with their something extra and I just try to encourage women to double down, on being yourself.

Nichols: And be the best version of you. You're the only one of you.

Haberstroh: Instead of a pale version of someone else, it is incredibly important that no one silence their gift because they feel like they're something extra isn't needed in the Peloton. It is vitally important. Particularly as leaders work together. Leaders need to be able to feel strong enough to be able to know and use their gifts in the group.

Nichols: So Linda is there anything coming up that you want to tell our listeners about, and if so, how can they plug in to what you're doing?

Haberstroh: Well, because we had the opportunity to talk about the Peloton. I would always love people, if they love to bike or spend or volunteer for a great cause and want to get involved

with pedal because just go to pedal St. Louis. It's so easy to sign up and we would welcome anyone to join our team, which is cancer is gross. Our leader is Chuck Gross. And we started our team. Cancer is gross I believe this is 10 years. This is 10 years and so just go <https://www.pedalthecause.org/> you're welcome to join our team, just look up team cancer is gross and we would love to have you join us. But if you live in a different part of the city, you will be welcome on a team or as a volunteer. We want cancer to be something that people read about in history book and the incredible research at siteman at St. Louis Children's Hospitals. It will be a legacy that we will be so proud of. So join our Peloton. Thanks so much for being able to share about Phoenix textile. Our passion for Peloton performance, we appreciate it

Nichols: And it's been a pleasure. It's been so much fun, so thank you so much and we will see you next time.