

Hispanic Executive®

Top of



With her MBA, she founded InGenesis.
With her PhD, she's going global.
Dr. Veronica Muzquiz Edwards never stops learning.

Her Class

InGenesis CEO

Veronica Muzquiz Edwards

centers everything she does

around education

by Frannie Sprouls, photos by Gillian Fry

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Throughout her entire upbringing, Dr. Veronica Muzquiz Edwards's parents emphasized the importance of education. She never wondered whether she was going to college; it was a matter of which college.

"I just assumed that was what you do when you get out of high school," says Edwards, a first-generation Mexican American who went on to earn bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees. "I think our family reinforced that so hard because they learned the hard way that you need an education to move ahead."

Her parents didn't imagine she would go that far because she failed first grade, she says, adding that she was a rambunctious child. "Now that I have a doctorate, you see the irony," she says, laughing.

Edwards has taken the value of education to heart, using it to guide her career journey from her first job out of college as a telemarketer to her current position as president and CEO of InGenesis, which has been recognized by Staffing Industry Analysts as one of the largest staffing companies in North America and the largest healthcare staffing firm owned by a woman or minority.

The Road to InGenesis

When Edwards graduated with her undergraduate degree in journalism, she found a telemarketing job at a Fortune 50 corporation. Edwards learned everything she could about the role, and a year later, an annual report landed on her desk. She studied the report and flipped to the back to read about the board of directors. "What was their career path and what else do they have that I don't have?" she asked herself. "As I read through the bios, I realized they all had a master's degree."

So, Edwards jumped into the MBA program at the University of the Incarnate World (UIW), prioritizing

all the marketing and business classes, which she loved, and saved the finance classes for the end. As she pursued her MBA, she continued to work and volunteered for process improvement initiatives that aligned with her university research projects. "My education was relevant, and I quickly learned the importance of operational efficiencies. If I had a project due on organizational infrastructure, I would work with the VP to make recommendations for the division," she says. After three years she earned an MBA and was one of the youngest associates promoted to regional director.

Edwards stayed at the Fortune 50 company for more than a decade, but amid a series of downsizes she was let go. "I became inspired to become an entrepreneur when I got that pink slip," she says. "I gave myself ninety days to be an entrepreneur and my self-imposed deadline worked... InGenesis is about to celebrate our twenty-year anniversary."

She had the background to survive as an entrepreneur, and her MBA helped position her newly formed workforce solutions firm, InGenesis, which is in the healthcare industry. "Supporting clients and professional requires high levels of compliance and is challenging, however, it is extraordinarily satisfying to know our efforts are helping to save lives."

Today, InGenesis manages thousands of professionals on travel and temporary assignments across the United States. Eighty-five percent of InGenesis employees represent a diverse category and 86 percent of the supplier community engaged within

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Mother-Daughter Graduation Day

When graduation day arrived, Veronica Muzquiz Edwards lost track of her daughter, Sydney. Then, she saw her daughter walking to the stage. “I just instinctively stood up clapping and was a beaming mother in a sea of graduates,” she says. “The only thing I saw was my daughter.”

Thirty minutes later, Edwards headed on stage for the doctoral hooding ceremony. When she walked off, she was pulled to the side with her daughter, who immediately inquired why the reporter wanted photos of them. “We’re representing what’s possible,” she told her daughter. “It’s a story where people can substitute our names for theirs. It matters that it’s something that can be done, and the Latino educational scholarships we are establishing to remember this moment will help others realize their dreams as well.”

their MSP programs also represent a diverse category.

And, in January 2018, InGenesis completed its first-ever acquisition: Kelly Healthcare Resources, a division of Kelly Services.

“I think our corporate responsibility initiatives resonate and attract employees, suppliers and clients who have similar aspirations,” she explains. “I’m really proud of our economic contributions and hope other companies can follow our lead to positively impact the communities where we live and work.”

Dr. Edwards

With InGenesis finding success with its healthcare specialization, Edwards took a step back. “I said, ‘Let’s stop and study’—I’m a nerd at heart—‘Let’s look at where we want to be. What does the leadership look like within global communities and what qualities are respected?’”

Much like when she was just starting her career, Edwards studied the leadership across the consulting industry sectors and saw that many of them had doctorate degrees. “I didn’t want a *D* in first grade but when I returned to my alma mater my goal was to become a *D*—doctorate,” she says.

And again, what she was studying (disaster preparedness and crisis leadership) aligned with what was happening in real life. On New Year’s Eve 2015, two years into her doctoral studies, InGenesis had a building fire. “I never imagined InGenesis would become a survival story,” she says. The participants in her final focus group included her own management team. The goal was to discuss and improve their disaster preparedness and recovery plans, then document and share their lessons learned.

“Thank goodness I didn’t stop immediately after the fire to research the seemingly unsurmountable challenges we were facing,” Edwards says. “The percentage of companies that don’t recover as well as we did is astronomical. I hope my crisis leadership and disaster preparedness research and publication contributions will help business communities be sustainable.”

In May 2017, Edwards graduated from UIW’s inaugural Doctor of Business Administration program, becoming the first in her family to earn academia’s highest degree. That day, she also graduated alongside her daughter, Sydney, who was receiving her bachelor’s degree in criminal justice.

Four months after the ceremony, Hurricane Harvey hit Texas. Then Irene hit Florida. InGenesis had hundreds of healthcare professionals on assignment in the field. The experienced InGenesis team applied their crisis leadership skills and once again managed their operations without interruption of services.

“InGenesis is here to support employees 24-7/365,” Edwards says. “We don’t shut down; we don’t stop working. Business continuity and patient



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InGenesis
Talent Takes Center Stage

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care is at the top of our mission and to support business continuity for our clients in the affected areas we gifted more than twenty thousand transportation passes.”

The Learning Doesn't Stop Now

Once someone earns a doctorate, that's the end of the line, right? For Edwards, it's only the beginning of taking education to the next level.

She's sitting on the Texas State University System's Board of Regents, and in early 2017, she was chosen to be part of the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Baldrige Executive Fellows Program. It lasts one year, and it allows executives to examine world-class organizations and how senior leaders achieve operational excellence.

“I have another paper due at the end of the year,” Edwards says. “It's a capstone that's designed around performance improvement for our InGenesis MSP programs. The people and the companies and the level of intelligence required for us to deliver innovative and sustainable programs is an ongoing educational challenge I am honored to be part of.”

Additionally, Edwards is now the chair and head of the US delegation for the technical advisory group (TAG) for the International Standards Organization, Technical Committee 304 (ISO TC 304). The group, which includes thirty-two participating and observing countries, is charged with developing global standards for healthcare administration, including workforce planning and analytics. The three-year project will provide Edwards with the opportunity to be part of global conversations regarding ISO standards while collaboratively engaging with subject-matter experts around the world, she says.

“It came about because of a presentation regarding my doctoral research,” she says. “It's as if a series of serendipitous moments have led to other opportunities and places where we can give back.” ●