

ACCENT ON BUSINESS

A simple handshake leads to a career in coaching leaders

BY TONIE AUER

T **Laura Morales** was a skinny little girl with thick eyeglasses and lots of self-image issues. Shy, awkward and the youngest of four, she found herself blending with the walls. That is until a young friend of hers ran up to Morales' aunt, introduced herself and shook her hand.

"I can still see this girl and remember thinking 'how did she do that,'" Morales said.

Morales, age 12 at the time, recognized how impressed her aunt was in regard to her friend.

"I thought 'how great is that?' That was a changing point in my life. It was from that moment that I realized that I didn't know what I was so afraid of," Morales said. "That started things. I realized that if I made efforts, especially to help someone feel not so awkward or let them know I was interested in them, it opened up a whole new world."

From that point on, she became more involved in school activities and her confidence grew.

Coming from a lower-middle class Hispanic family, Morales took that confidence and followed the encouragement and applied to Southern Methodist University, where she received a grant and a scholarship. All in all witnessing that one handshake changed her course and outlook on life.

Today, she is the president of Houston-based Energize Your Outlook, a business coaching practice which focuses primarily on helping business executives motivate their employees to create trust within their teams.

"Improvement in morale is a natural result of being positive, building trust and commitment from within your team," Morales explained. "By exploring and understanding the basis from which you are leading your team, [whether] sales representatives, project managers, accountants, engineers, customer service representatives, etc., you can literally bring about positive changes that will successfully spread throughout your entire organization."

Morales worked in the telecommunications industry for more than 22 years in a variety of positions in sales man-



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agement, support management, retention and high-growth sales and marketing and international business development.

"My background was in sales and it seemed that every six months for the last two years I was [with my former company] we had a reorganization," Morales said. "Like most corporations we ended up with a smaller budget, but giant quotas. So, I had to try to get my people to work as a team, and achieve these huge revenue/sales goals. It was a gigantic challenge, but it really helped me because it showed me that I have something to offer."

Morales said she wanted to do something else, but still wanted to interact with people. That led her to branch out on her own with Energize Your Outlook.

"I wanted to be able to have more control of my time," she said. "My main focus was to go into coaching, but I'm also enjoying speaking now. I have been told that I have a gift. My interest is in helping others succeed; to inspire them to be more than they thought they could be." **WE**