

Wichita Chamber Business Accelerator

Episode 61

Anita Oberwortmann

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Don and Ebony: [00:00:00] Welcome to another exciting edition of the WCBA powered, of course, by Evergy. Thank you for listening. Don't forget to like us, love us, share us. We truly appreciate you checking us out. In the house Wilson Building Maintenance, Metro Courier. Anita Oberwortmann E that was a lot. That was a lot. And that is, it's so amazing to finally meet you, you know, being, born and raised here in Wichita and living here, always heard this great name and this woman, and here you are so welcome.



Anita Oberwortmann: Thank you. Thank you. for having me.

Don and Ebony: Absolutely. Anita, could you tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do?

Anita Oberwortmann: Well, I'm the owner of two businesses. I started out by scrubbing toilets. And by myself and ended up getting a helper and then two helpers and three helpers. And then I had, you know, several small buildings, and put people in them, and then we'd go check on them. And then I landed the NCR account, which was like about 335,000 square feet. Had no idea how to do a, big building. And I just happened to be friendly with the engineer and he said, yeah, piece did it, put it in little pieces.

And give everybody a piece of that. So that's what we did. And We did that for 14, 15 years on that, account and then started picking up other big buildings and then landed the big whale Koch Industries which we've had for 33 years. So.

Don and Ebony: And there was another well before that, but didn't you have Pizza Hut.

Anita Oberwortmann: I had Cessna.

Don and Ebony: Okay. I knew there was another big one in there somewhere.

Anita Oberwortmann: Like 67 employees out there.

Don and Ebony: Wow. Yeah. And for those of you don't know, NCR is national cash register. I was just about to

Wow. That is awesome. So you've been around for, for awhile. Yeah.

Anita Oberwortmann: Few years. Yeah.

Don and Ebony: And it all started with scrubbing toilets and a mop and a broom. That's awesome. So you didn't tell me a little bit about that. Did you just wake up and say, you know what, I'm good at this I'm going to, this is my trade and then decide that you want to create an entire business.

Anita Oberwortmann: Yeah. I, I went through divorce and had kids, had to support them. So that was my. main reason for starting.

Don and Ebony: And did you find it difficult finding employees

Anita Oberwortmann: Not at that time. No, not like it is now.

Don and Ebony: So when you started, it was relatively easy to get people on board and get them hired and they would show up and be on time and work the shifts.

What you've seen some change in that. So.

Anita Oberwortmann: Oh yeah. It's a lot different. It's really hard to get employees now.

Don and Ebony: And you started with just a couple and now that you have this massive company, how many employees do you have now?

Anita Oberwortmann: About 200. And then at Metro, we have about 150.

Don and Ebony: That's awesome. So let's talk about Metro Courier. When does that begin?

Anita Oberwortmann: Okay. I I bought it, first of all, I had a vice president and his name was Dean Biggs. And we were looking for a business where we could pay our employees more because janitorial is basically minimum. wage. So we first looked at a taxi cab company. And that. wasn't a good fit. And then we were going down Mosley street one day and saw all these little Geo Metro cars with Metro Courier. How about Metro Courier? So we hired a guy by the name of Dick West, and he went and talked to the guy about selling and initially he didn't want to, and then he did. So we bought it and, it was basically just a Wichita delivery service. And then we had a pharmaceutical client that said, on Friday. we need you to be statewide on Monday. Yeah. So we went from being a Wichita delivery service to go on statewide over the

weekend. basically.

Don and Ebony: [00:05:00] That's the fast.

Anita Oberwortmann: Yeah. we lost, We lost our butt on that So we pulled it back in. We lost that client, you know, we just. couldn't Do it for the money they wanted to pass. And so, we gradually went out and became statewide. now we have an operation in Springfield, Missouri, and Lubbock, Texas working Lubbock is mainly for Amazon.

And then, Springfield is a Home Depot. And Wayfair.

Don and Ebony: So what type of cars do you use now, since this no longer the metros, the GMs.

Anita Oberwortmann: We have, We have you know, little teeny cars all the way up to 26 foot trucks. And that's another thing we're starting to get into is more freight, more freight, work. And in fact, Amazon is freight work. We're taking pallets pallets of Amazon to post offices.

Don and Ebony: When you shared your entrepreneur story and that's a beautiful thing. When Anita was doing all this, I mean, that's when Wichita really had his entrepreneurial mojo going. I mean, Rent-A-Center Pizza Hut, everything was a Coleman was in full force and everything.

And now before I get into questions, do you feel we lost our mojo for a while and we're getting it back or did we lose it and we're not back yet as entrepreneurial.

Anita Oberwortmann: No, I think, I think we're there.

Don and Ebony: You think we're there.

Anita Oberwortmann: I think we're there. Yeah, I do. With all the.

Don and Ebony: This

Anita Oberwortmann: and, you know, the just, there's a lot. There's a lot of opportunity. And a lot of places that entrepreneurs can go to learn and be mentored and network, you know, I still, I think we're still in in the right place.

Don and Ebony: Excellent. Now you were very involved. I'd take it still is. You're still at the chamber, but how did you balance all the businesses? And doing community work, like it's important to chamber this and that. How did you balance that?

Anita Oberwortmann: It was just part of my schedule and you know, all of it was a learning experience for me.

I mean, I really didn't know anything about financials, how to read a financial or anything, how to put a financial together and I worked with score score and this guy by the name of Dick for Walter helped me figure out how to do a financial, and then we did financials on each one of our buildings and we found out we were losing money. on one building and this lady was horrible to work with. And I was able to go to her and say, I don't want your business anymore. You know, so that, and then being involved in the Chamber, of the American Cancer Society, and Boy Scouts, and all that, it was all part of my learning experience and growing. And so I never did really feel like it was a burden, Even though I had maybe three to five things a day.

Don and Ebony: You are, I was just watching us. I mean, I was just going back and forth, but, but it also shows specially as entrepreneurship, not all businesses, good business. Sometimes you've got to let somebody go. Yeah. I mean, cause you'd be surprised if you let a loss leader go almost profitable. I mean, it's, it's just not all business is good business.

So thanks for sharing that with Metro Courier and Wilson Building. Is there a crossover between the two or are they pretty separate in what they do?

Anita Oberwortmann: Yeah. They're pretty separate.

Don and Ebony: Okay. They're pretty separate. So can you share, I think you shared about Metro Courier, what all does, which Wilson Building Maintenance do?

Anita Oberwortmann: Mainly mainly maintenance of buildings.

So janitorial is the main focus. We also do window I mean, window washing parking lot. sweeping power, washing all that. We do that through subcontractors, but just mainly maintaining a

Don and Ebony: maintain, Okay, excellent. So it hasn't evolved much from back in the day to now. I mean, you still take care of the whole physical plan of a building for as much as a customer wants you to. Right. Right.

Anita Oberwortmann: Yeah, exactly.

Don and Ebony: Gotcha. You've been in it for a minute.

I'm not going to say how many years, but you said, how do you find success after all these years?

Anita Oberwortmann: I don't even think I've reached that yet. To be honest with you. No.

Don and Ebony: I mean,

Anita Oberwortmann: I mean, I still worry. I'm still at work, you know, I I'd like to get to where, you know, I don't have to worry about stuff anymore. and, you know, with the employment situation, then you've got COVID and all this other stuff. I mean, there's so many, it's just always a moving, moving. parts of it. So.

Don and Ebony: You're not there yet?

Anita Oberwortmann: I don't think so.

Don and Ebony: Okay. Speaking from an entrepreneur, who's been there 43 years. Wow. So always learning. Okay. Here we go. we've always been a sponsor of honors night. Why, why is that, an event you choose a sponsor for [00:10:00] the last 10 to 12 years.

Anita Oberwortmann: Well, I'll tell you how that came up. I was working on, getting sponsorships for the Chamber And Honors Night was open and I thought, wow, that that's the coolest, I L I really liked that one. And, you know, so many times I'm at honors night, and it's people that I know that are being honored and it's so great to be attached to that. because it's a great event.

Don and Ebony: Yeah, it really is. And we were a recipient of an award a couple of years ago, and I noticed you are a recipient.

have an award back in the day. What, what did it mean to you to be honored for

Anita Oberwortmann: I mean, it was a lot, it was a privilege. It was great It was awesome to get up there in front of all your peers, and accept that award and be recognized. So. it's in our office in a nice place.

Don and Ebony: Excellent. Excellent. And when I say we were, I meant to say Everygy was awarded, Chamber Honors Night is going to be Thursday, April 21st. Make sure you come check it out. E that's going to be an exciting night. It's always one of the highlights of, of my year actually. Ha I love that. That that night and the filling that you get, even, you know, your first time going from your first time to your, every time you go, you get that same feeling of excitement.

And I just it's great

Anita Oberwortmann: When I was the Chair of the Chamber, I was able to actually give Marvin Bastion of Fidelity, his Uncommon Citizen Award, and I invited his grandkids. up and, you know, Oh, it's so cool.

It's always so cool to be part of that.

Don and Ebony: Anita, you've been with the Chamber for a number of years in many different capacities. Why are you a member of the Chamber?

Anita Oberwortmann: Because I love the Chamber. it was a great way for me to meet other business. People to study them to find out how they got their businesses, started, what they were doing with their business.

I mean, it's a great way to, network. I mean, you're not going to meet these people at McDonald's. You know, It was just awesome for me. And then to finally, because it was really funny because Mike Oatman called me one day I'd been real involved in different membership, this membership, that, you know, and he said, you know what I needed, we really appreciate all that you've done for the Chamber.

Who was the chair. And I said, well, what I'd really like is to be the chair, of the Chamber.

And by God, they asked me to do that. Yeah, it was just great. Liz Koch was on the board then, you know, don't you don't meet the, You don't meet, those kinds of people. No.

Don and Ebony: It's the Chamber convenes people and brings people together, connects you 11, hang on. Of course it has this wonderful, innovative podcast right now.

Nice. Come around and just saying, well, friends, we're here with Anita and we'll be back. We're going to hear a word from our sponsors and then we'll come back to hear more about our entrepreneurial.

Welcome back friends right here, hearing from the great. Yes, miss Anita. All right. So we've talked about a little bit about your journey, you running and heading, two companies, two major companies, Metro and Wilson, building maintenance and they are, you know, nationwide, right?

Anita Oberwortmann: Well, Metro.

Don and Ebony: Metro? Yes. So tell us what you think is, I guess what you would attribute to one skill that's helped you the most is being the central.

Anita Oberwortmann: I don't give up. I just keep going. forward. I used to have people, I, I used to call people all the time and say, you know, I'd like, to come by and talk to you. well, I'm really not interested. I said, do you mind if I call you back in a month, I put them on a list, call them back in a month. You know? So I'm very persistent. That's what I'd say. Persistence.

Don and Ebony: What would you say has surprised you the most on this entrepreneurial.

Anita Oberwortmann: [00:15:00] Surprised me, I guess, surprised me is surprises being that customers can be with you for a very long time and be very happy with you and then get rid of you for a national. firm.

Don and Ebony: Wow.

Anita Oberwortmann: that that just, that just blows my mind.

Don and Ebony: Share that a little bit more. I mean, not who it was or anything, but yeah, but can you share. When that happened.

Anita Oberwortmann: Well, One of them, I lost 40% of my business.

One of them, It just, it's just hurtful. It really is. I have another one right now. but it's going with the national company, and it's very hurtful. So, you know, we we do all this talk about, you know, shop local. and all that, but then These guys come in and they're jets and they're this, that, and the other. And.

Don and Ebony: So is it anything, any lesson to I'm sorry, is there any lesson for other small businesses to prepare for that or you can't?

I don't.

Anita Oberwortmann: I just, I would just say, don't become too reliant on one customer. Yeah. Diversify as much as you can.

Don and Ebony: Excellent. No, that those are, those are great questions and I'm glad you, you brought that up. So you've been in business for 43 years and you keep on your, keep on keeping on right. onto the next, but what scares you and this next phase

Anita Oberwortmann: I re honestly, I don't have a darn thing that scares me. I really don't know we've made, we've made it through so many. battles, you know, and we are still battling today. and Nothing really scared. I have the best people I always have, I don't know why, but I've always had the best people. I mean, I wouldn't even have to go to work. They, they take care of it. Like it's their own. you know, so it's great.

Don and Ebony: That's awesome.

Very last question that I have of you. before I turn it back over to Don is how do you, you know, you talk about work and everything that I've heard from you has been, you know, you working hard and you given back to the community equally, right? You are passionate and you're just giving, giving, giving who gives to you, how do you find a balance of work and life and how do you get.

Anita Oberwortmann: How do I get filled? but by interacting with my people

Don and Ebony: Really.

Anita Oberwortmann: In a positive way. I mean, it's like today they had my birthday, breakfast so we had old mill, breakfast burritos now, the shop and there was like about 20 of my employees there and they're giving me, hugs and all that And that's, I need. That's what I need.

Don and Ebony: That's awesome. I mean, so you've created this amazing culture, obviously that you ha you're surrounded with great people who share the same passion as you and the mission of the work that you do.

And that's rare. You don't see that in a lot of companies, so kudos to you for that. I've seen you around, I mean, for quite a while, and you were you're, you're leading, you are leading, then you're still leading now and you kind of like share a Woolford came in after you and she's leading. And I, you know, I mean, what, who do you get your inspiration from to be the leader that you are?

Anita Oberwortmann: Again, my employees really, really my employees. I mean, my first inspiration was my father. My father was in business. in Kansas city. And so, and he was a great dad. So.

Don and Ebony: Excellent. What's next for Wilson Building Maintenance and Metro Courier. What's on the next frontier.

Anita Oberwortmann: We're just going to keep rolling for Metro. It'd be a more. You know, like transportation, that's all you hear about transportation being a problem, not getting enough truck drivers, not being able to get goods from here to there. So we're gonna, we're gonna maximize that opportunity.

Don and Ebony: How do you jump into that more where I take it? There's a shortage of drivers or whatever.

I mean,

Anita Oberwortmann: We're we're just going to have to try to get our wages up there. And, you know, We have a program where we pay our employees \$500. If they refer someone and then we also pay the person \$500 if they stay in it's 90 days they stay with his 90 days. And that's, that seems to be helping some. In Springfield, we were paying a thousand because Springfield was really a tough, market to fill, but things like that,

Don and Ebony: You've been doing this for a minute.

Succession plan. You got one going

Anita Oberwortmann: Yeah, I had this vice-president that I mentioned Dean Biggs and he got

brain cancer. And, so my S he died and my son was living in Dallas, [00:20:00] helping, manage emergency medical facilities. and so. I said, you know, Dean's gone. Would you come home and help me?

And he had an accounting degree from Kau, which he finally got his CPA. And so it's our plan that, he will become more and more and more of an owner in both companies. And then eventually, hopefully he buys me out.

Don and Ebony: I mean, I love that. I love to see when family businesses have the succession of their, their, their sons or daughters and then hopefully grandchildren, you know, so that's really awesome. Do you, and I don't know with him moving back, do you have opportunities for, you know, your grandchildren or your other relatives, nieces, nephews to come in and see the business.

Anita Oberwortmann: I mean, eventually? Yeah.

Don and Ebony: I think that's awesome. So like she ain't, she doesn't plan on going anywhere. She's like, yeah, I'll get there when I get there. I love it. I love everything about you. Other than I do question your friendship since you're friends with Don.

Anita Oberwortmann: oh,

Don and Ebony: Wow. Wow.

Anita Oberwortmann: That hurt, right?

Don and Ebony: Welcome to my world. No, I appreciate you being here.

Anita Oberwortmann: so

Don and Ebony: Last question that I have for you is, what's the best advice you've heard. And we received

Anita Oberwortmann: The best advice when one door closes another one opens and that is so true.

Don and Ebony: One door,

Anita Oberwortmann: And, and, you know, even though something may look really dark and dismal, you know, right on the other side of that's a rainbow, you know, so just got to keep on trucking.

Don and Ebony: Keep on track. That's Eddie Kendrick song in case you didn't know, you know,

these youngsters, you got to mold them. Yeah. I got to coach him.

Excellent. All right. I think we have enough questions. You dealt with that Ebony long enough. You'll reward is word association. I'll give you one word. You'd give me one word back. It's not your it's not wrong. Cause it's your word.

Anita Oberwortmann: Oh

Don and Ebony: You ready? We'll just start with leader

Anita Oberwortmann: hard worker

Don and Ebony: college.

Anita Oberwortmann: somewhat essential

Don and Ebony: Oh, entrepreneur.

Anita Oberwortmann: die hard.

Don and Ebony: Nice success.

Anita Oberwortmann: No worries,

Don and Ebony: failure,

Anita Oberwortmann: big deal.

Don and Ebony: Fun

My dog,

Don and Ebony: the chamber,

Anita Oberwortmann: great Organization,

Don and Ebony: family,

Anita Oberwortmann: love

Don and Ebony: vacation,

Anita Oberwortmann: maybe travel. some time with the job. I love it

Don and Ebony: last but not least. And you got to tell the truth on this one beverage.

Anita Oberwortmann: Beer.

Don and Ebony: Boom. Excellent. Thanks for coming in. I need a it's so good to see you again. It was truly a pleasure. Thank you.

Anita Oberwortmann: You're welcome.

Don and Ebony: All right, friends. We've come to the end of our time.

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