



THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD

**TAB MEMBER
CASE STUDY:
JENNIFER COLLINS**



Timing Isn't Everything When It Comes to Business Success

JENNIFER COLLINS IS THE PRESIDENT AND CEO OF JDC EVENTS, a Silver Spring, Maryland based event planning, management and strategy company. Jennifer launched her business in earnest just before September 11, 2001. Little did she know back then how global dynamics would continue to challenge her business and help shape her into the massive success story she is today.

The moment you meet Jennifer Collins, you know she is special. She is a charismatic business leader, a trailblazer, and a true connector. Though she will readily admit that timing hasn't always been on her side.

"Right before 9-11, I went in full-time on my business," Jennifer said. "After the attack, the only client I had at that time disappeared." While large events took a bit of a hit in the aftermath, the slowdown was relatively short-lived. Jennifer's business rebounded and continued to grow steadily. In just a couple of years, she picked up some big long-term clients like UC Davis and the Mars Corporation.

In 2009, despite the looming recession, Jennifer expanded her business into the government space. "It was hard to move forward during that time, but the government provided some stability and we were able to win several multi-million-dollar contracts. So that was a good thing!"

Jennifer's business continued to thrive and was a success by all measures. Then along came COVID. And nothing Jennifer had experienced before prepared her for business survival during a worldwide pandemic.

After just signing a three-year lease on new office space, like many businesses, JDC sent everyone home in March 2020 for the next 16 months. During that time, Jennifer willingly made sacrifices to ensure her team's wellbeing. "We had no layoffs. We had no furloughs." And Jennifer made certain that everyone who had earned a bonus or commission received it in full and on time.

"The pandemic strengthened us in different ways and changed us for the better," Jennifer said. "It gave us time to look at who we are as a company, how we move forward, what skill sets do we have that we can reinvent, and how can we reimagine ourselves as a company. It has truly been a transformative experience."

While the drawn-out circumstances related to slowdowns and shutdowns were unrelenting, Jennifer had one ace up her sleeve. You see, she joined a TAB Board back in 2016.



"When I started on my TAB Board, one of the first things we did was work on strategic planning. This included a risk management component."

Jennifer said her strategic plan actually served as a roadmap to navigate the pandemic. Her books were balanced, she knew how to manage human resources, she understood she could pivot portions of the business. In short, TAB had readied her for business survival during a global crisis, even if she didn't realize it at the time.

"Quite frankly, everything that was included in my risk management strategy was something that I leveraged during the pandemic."

Jennifer said that her TAB Board provided her with insight and clarity as she navigated such an extended disruption in the event, convention and trade show industry. "I was the only one on my board whose business pretty much disappeared overnight, so I was experiencing very different shocks than the others. But everyone on my board was so supportive and proactive. They provided me with all sorts of detailed information and recommendations."

Now with the pandemic in the rearview mirror and the event industry mostly rebounded, Jennifer's company is stronger, more innovative and now expanding with diversified lines of business.

"TAB has been a large part of my growth as a business owner and my ability to sustain JDC throughout the pandemic." Jennifer said.

Make no mistake. Jennifer Collins has always been an event industry powerhouse with the poise and acumen to excel in such a competitive market. But even so, she knows that the time is always right to grow as a business leader.

"TAB really pushed me to up my game."

