

Tejas Office, a Houston Business Run by an Exemplary Family

An exclusive interview with the Fraga Family

Mr. Fraga, when did you start your business career?

Lupe: In 1962 when I opened this company. I worked as an accountant for a pipeline company and after a year back from military service, my friend gave me the idea to start a business and I seized the opportunity and took the risk to start Tejas Office.

I would like to introduce the other members of my family: my wife Irene, my oldest daughter Michele, my second daughter Alisa and my son Stephen, all of who participate in the business. Also working with us are Irene's younger brother and Alisa's husband.



Stephen, Alisa, Michele, Irene and Lupe Fraga

Tejas Office is a family business; what position does each family member hold and what are their duties?

Irene: Lupe and I are retired now, but we have worked together since 1962 when we started dating. I remember one night before we got married, Lupe needed help in the warehouse and I ended up working on deliveries with him until 2 a.m. Of course, things were different back then and I couldn't let my mom find out I had been out with my boyfriend that late, so I had to sneak around the house and call my sister to come open the door for me. Lupe and I dated for four years before we got married and I learned accounting from him. I started working full-time as accounting manager when we got married and I stayed in the business for 40 years.

Alisa: I am the accounting administration manager. I have done sales in the past but now I'm in charge of collecting the money.

Michele: I'm the customer service manager. I work with four other ladies and we make phone calls, take orders from clients, and find the products for them.

Stephen: After graduating from Texas A&M in 1997 with a degree in finance and business administration, I worked

in banking for two years before joining Tejas Office. I am currently the president of the company, in charge of the day-to-day operations and leading the team of managers.

Mr. Fraga, is all your family from Houston?

Lupe: Yes, we were all born and raised in Houston. But my parents were from San Luis Potosi, Mexico.

Do you think that having a family business is an advantage or a disadvantage?

Lupe: I definitely think it is an advantage if everyone in the family is willing to work. Family members usually work harder and take more interest in the job.

Stephen: It is nice to see each other everyday, but it can also be a disadvantage. It can be difficult to separate family from business.

As active members of the community, what are some of the organizations that the family is involved in?

Michele: I participate in several organizations including the Hispanic Women in Leadership and the Minority Business Council. I've also been president of the Life/Houston "Food for Hungry Babies" program for four years.

Stephen: I work with Family Services of Greater Houston, De Pelchin Children's Center, and I'm on the board for a Cristo Rey project to open a free Jesuit high school for inner city children.

Alisa: I have two children, so I am mostly involved as a parent and in their community. But I also help through Michele and my father by contributing to their organizations.

What do you consider is the biggest achievement of Tejas Office so far?

Lupe: The fact that we have been able to stay in business this long and that we can give something back to the community. I got that from my parents; they were so giving and helped our family that moved here from Mexico find jobs.

What advice would you give to Hispanic families who want to start a family business and achieve the American dream?

Stephen: That they need to support one another. It is a lot of hard work but as Hispanics, we have a very strong work ethic. For a business to succeed, you need a good work ethic and the support of family and your employees.

Alisa: I would say balancing business and family is very important. Our parents managed to attend our functions and come to our games while running this company, so families need to know that while the business is important, they also need to be there for their children.