

10-25-2009

Interview no. 1535

Armando Alvarez

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.utep.edu/interviews>



Part of the [Oral History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Interview with Armando Alvarez by Edmundo Valencia, 2009, "Interview no. 1535," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute of Oral History at ScholarWorks@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Combined Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Armando Alvarez

Interviewer: Edmundo Valencia

Project: Hispanic Entrepreneurs Oral History Project

Location: El Paso, Texas

Date of Interview: October 25, 2009

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1535

Transcriber / Summary: Vanessa Pantoja

Armando Alvarez was born and raised in El Paso, Texas. Alvarez played for the El Paso Patriots soccer team for three years, after turning down a scholarship to SMU. After working odd jobs around El Paso, Alvarez moved to Arizona to attend Collins College and became a graphic designer. He then found employment with different small glass companies such as Kraft Quality Glass, then moved to commercial companies. Alvarez states the main difference between large and small companies is the attention to detail. This is why he opened a small business in order to pay more attention to detail. Viva Creative Group concentrates on small local businesses in El Paso. He works with a group of freelancers and creates his own network. He claims that this model works the best for his graphic design company at this time, but eventually wants to grow his company. Alvarez remembers always being artistic and his mother wanting him to become an architect. Alvarez credits his parents for instilling values of education. Viva Creative Group began as a side project and then evolved into something more. While working for other companies, Alvarez learned how to work with a creative team and how to properly manage time. Working for these companies also helped his creativity and how to create ideas on a time frame. Alvarez as also influenced by his former boss to create his own business. Upon moving back to El Paso, Alvarez became employed by El Paso Magazine and eventually created his own agency to offer something different to the El Paso market. After coming out of a difficult business partnership, Alvarez separated and tried a networking approach to business. He still relies on word of mouth recommendations to keep his business going. Viva Creative Group offers a personal approach and attention to detail by taking on a small amount of clients. Viva also won national and regional awards recognizing their work. Reflecting on his business, Alvarez would have had a legal contract with his partner and have a business plan. Alvarez is currently working on a revised business plan in order to help his business grow and eventually have employees and not just a team of freelancers. When discussing El Paso business, there is a lack of job opportunities for graphic designers. Alvarez adds he hopes to see a growth in El Paso's downtown area, and hopes to find contracts with larger companies.

Length of interview 58 minutes

Length of Transcript 20 pages

Name of Interviewee: Armando Alvarez
Date of Interview: February 25, 2009
Name of Interviewer: Edmundo Valencia

This is an interview with Armando Alvarez on February 25, 2009 in El Paso, Texas. The interviewer is Edmundo Valencia. This interview is part of the Paso del Norte and Entrepreneurial Oral History Project.

EV: So thank you for giving us your time. And let me start with when and where were you born?

AA: I was born here in El Paso, Texas, March 14, 1976, and I grew up here. I was here throughout my childhood.

EV: Who are your parents or where are they, if they're still alive?

AA: Yeah, they're both alive, thank God. My mother's from Chihuahua. She was born in Chihuahua. Moved to the United States when she was a teenager; finished high school. My dad was born here in El Paso, Texas, but he moved back to Mexico, and spent his childhood in Tijuana. And eventually, he moved to Juárez where he met my mom.

EV: What are their names?

AA: My mother's name is Myrna Alvarez and my dad's Armando Alvarez, Sr.

EV: So they met in Juarez, got married there, and then moved to El Paso, and then you were born here?

AA: They actually moved to El Paso while they were pregnant with me. So I was born here, and they ended up staying here.

EV: And what were their occupations?

AA: My mom worked personnel for Wrangler for many years. Just got laid off a couple of years ago with the economy, I guess. My dad still works there. He never finished school, his education. I don't think he finished high school, and he always got on me about that, about making sure that I finished school. So that definitely persuaded me to push myself and finish school.

EV: What is his position?

AA: He works at a warehouse; he handles shipping and delivery. I think he does a little bit of everything in there, so I wouldn't know exactly what his title is.

EV: And please tell me about your education.

AA: Education – of course I went to Kinder[garten] at Travis Elementary, moved onto Coldwell Middle School, and went to Austin High School; graduated in 1994. After that, I decided to play semi-pro soccer for a couple of years. After I was done with that, I went to community college here in El Paso for a semester or two, ended up going to UTEP for a semester or two, and decided to leave El Paso, and ended up going to an art school in Arizona. It's called Collins College now. It used to be called Al Collins Graphic Design School or School of Art, something like that. I don't remember. I graduated with an associates degree back in 2000. I didn't see the need to go on with my education with my profession as a designer. It was really mostly in me, and to pay twenty thousand [dollars] for somebody to teach me Photoshop, just didn't make sense.

EV: And how did you go into soccer?

AA: Soccer – well, I just played through my childhood. I was really into it. [I] played in high school. We went to [the] state playoffs in '94. I had a scholarship to go to SMU in Dallas after high school, and I guess because of my youth and being stupid at the time, I got a call from the El Paso Patriots, and decided that was the

best thing for me to do. Which, of course, as you get older, you know, education is the way to go. That's how I ended up playing semi-pro.

EV: And how long did you do that?

AA: I did that for three years.

EV: What year did you start?

AA: It was '94, right out of high school. Actually, I committed to go to SMU and like two months before I told them I was going to stay home and play instead.

EV: What were your first jobs?

AA: First jobs – just regular jobs. My dad never wanted me to work because he thought I would like the money and not go to school. Like I said, he never finished school so he was afraid that I wouldn't finish my education. My first job wasn't until the summer after my senior year in high school. I worked at JC Penny for the summer. I quit, thinking I was going to go to a college in Dallas, and ended up staying here. So I played soccer. And during the off-season, I think I worked at Long John Silver's for eight months at one time. And then I worked at UPS another year, again, during the off-season. Then after that I quit soccer and moved to Arizona. I had a cousin out there that was a glazer, works with windows and glass. He got me out there. So I started working. It's actually a really good job; you make pretty good money. I started going to school full-time and working full-time, too. I did that for about three years. And when I got my degree, I went into my profession as a graphic designer. [I] started from the bottom.

EV: And at your jobs, what did you do?

AA: Well, at Long John's, cooked – I was a cook there. UPS, I unloaded all the semi-trucks. That was rough. [I] woke up at two in the morning to get in at three, and trying to finish loading up four or five semis by eight in the morning, that was rough. [I] definitely lost a lot of weight, there. When I went to Arizona, I started doing residential glasswork, you know, replacing windows, doors. And then we started doing commercial, like climbing skyscrapers. That was kind of scary for a while. There was a big boom out there, a growth boom, so we were doing a lot of commercial, just a lot of storefronts and skyscrapers and stuff like that. It was kinda cool. Learned a lot, how to use my hands, which was cool.

EV: What would you consider that you learned – what have you kept with you of what was lessons that you learned during that period?

AA: Some of the more basic lessons are how to work with people, how to communicate with people. Business is tough. If you don't know how to deal with people. I think the job I learned the most from was being a glazer. Got to work with my hands; got to work with different tools. Had to do a lot of thinking, math, somewhat engineering, too, because there were some projects where I guess you had to pull a MacGyver to get things done. That was kinda cool. [I] learned a lot, how to use my hands, which is great because, also being an artist, I grew up being an illustrator and somewhat of a painter too. It was kind of neat for me to be able to use my hands, especially with those custom jobs. My boss would ask me to do some of those things.

EV: What is the name of the company again?

AA: I worked with two companies: one was, give me a second here, one was Aluglass, that was the last company – Aluglass, A-l-u-g-l-a-s-s. I'm trying to remember the first one. It was a family-owned business.

EV: Actually, that's where I was going. Were they locally owned or were they –

AA: It's called Crafts Quality Glass. Craft was the guy's last name. They're from Buffalo, I think.

EV: What was his full name?

AA: You know what; I do not recall his full name. Craft was his last name; came from Buffalo. It was his business, but he had his son and a cousin of his son's, which would be his nephew, I guess, working there. So it was a very family-oriented business. And then you had myself and my cousin worked there. There was, I think, five, six employees. It was a small business.

EV: And how about the other one?

AA: The other one was a lot bigger since we did commercial. We had fifteen to twenty employees. And I do not remember his last name. His first name was Bill, the owner. We rarely saw him around. We had the foremans and the journeymans working at the field all the time. So that's who we connected with most.

EV: And what were the main differences that you noticed working from a small operation to that bigger operation?

AA: The smaller operation, you paid more attention to detail, like with any small business. I think so. The bigger one was more, you know, crank out the jobs. Let's get going to the next one. Don't worry too much about certain little issues; just get through them. Which, I don't know, kind of sucks. I think for that reason, I kind of like what I do now. It's a small business, it's very detail-oriented. When I receive projects, I can take my time with those projects and do it right, rather than just crank them out just to get the buck. Again, I like what I

do, so I like to make sure I get things done the right way. And I do it because I love being creative.

EV: And how do you start into all these creative artistic side?

AA: Growing up – being an artist, I wasn't sure what I was going to do when I was eight or nine years old. I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I think I wanted to be a fireman at that time, or maybe even a soccer player, I guess. Never really thought about that. Anyway, my mom always wanted me to be an architect because, at that time, it was good to be an artist. Now, not so much. I mean some of the bigger architects I guess you've got to be artistic, but you crank out a lot of cookie cutter stuff nowadays. So it kinda sucks. Anyway, just growing up I wanted to stay close to, I guess, to the art, and decided that being a graphic designer would keep me close enough and be able to make a living.

EV: Do you think that was in you, like innate, or did you learn that from a family member that you see something –

AA: No, it was in me. I remember my mom telling me when I was still in the crib, I guess I got hold of some crayons and when she woke up, I had drawn this big 'ole Santa Claus on the wall. So I don't remember. I guess it was always in me then. If there was a contest in the paper they would make sure I'd do it. It was great; it was fun. I enjoyed all of it.

EV: So they supported your creative side?

AA: Yeah, they did. Now, I do have an uncle on my dad's side that was an artist, really great artist. Passed away now, but it was kind of neat to see his stuff. Just like any other artist, I always like to see what's out there.

EV: And did your parents, at any point, own a business?

AA: No. My grandfather on my mom's side he did venture – through his life from what I know. I was too young at the time to know what he, or cared to know what he did, I guess. But he started the very first film, or theatre, I guess, movie theater in a little town in Chihuahua called *Ascension*. From what I hear, the first day was a disaster. The machine ended up not working; everybody wanted their money back. Small town and everybody wanted to kill him, whatever. It's a funny story. Yeah, he did little things like that.

EV: And what do you consider are the lessons you learned from your parents?

AA: I guess the major lesson was – nowadays, I think education does matter. Although, I guess, we're in a stage right now where you almost don't need an education now with technology, with the internet. It seems like a lot of people are learning, themselves, how to become professionals. I don't know. I think it's still valuable to have an education, and that's the most important thing I learned, to keep going. I know I didn't get a masters or whatever it was, but I managed to get me a degree that will help me out in what I do. And it has helped me a lot.

EV: What is the name of your company?

AA: The name of the company is Viva Creative Group. And we're a small boutique design firm.

EV: Would you describe more your business: [The] number of employers, products, services?

AA: When Viva started, it was myself and a partner. We had a partnership. It didn't work out, just like a marriage. So now, I'm on my own. But throughout that time, we used a network of freelancers. And I still do. I still use freelancers, and I also network, and I have loose partnerships with other people in the profession.

I work closely with two other people that handle accounts. And I do the creative for their accounts, I guess. And again, it's just a network of people throwing work at each other. Which is really neat, especially for small businesses. Since we concentrate on small business, an account, in our profession, you want a big account that has a budget of \$300,000 plus dollars a year. In the small business world, that's not really an option. So we have to depend a lot on smaller jobs; getting those small jobs every month to keep afloat.

EV: And how many employees do you have?

AA: Right now, it's myself, but we have freelancers. I don't want to consider them employees. These guys are a different business in Web development, which is part of the networking. Yeah, it's strictly freelancers.

EV: So it's a different model?

AA: It's a model that works for me right now. I would like to grow the company. My goal is, of course, to grow the company, and to do that you need to establish more manpower. So yes, I would like to have employees, short-term goals really. And it's not just designers, but account executives, sales reps, you name it.

EV: So as far as products and services, how would you define it? What would be the main things –?

AA: Our strong point is identity and branding, a lot of start-up businesses. We try to get a presence established to their business so they don't blend with everybody else. I think that's our strongest point. Now, that includes logo work. That includes branding the company, which is making sure everything looks the same across the board, stationery, brochures, even their ads, everything. Making sure everything works well. We do campaigns, ad campaigns. And we're pretty good at that too. I think we're a little bit different here in El Paso. I can do some fresh

stuff. We kinda get inspired with what out-of-town design firms are doing. That would be one of our other strongest points. But again, we have development. We do identity and branding, advertising, marketing, consulting, point of purchase, events – I mean anything creative.

EV: And before I continue in this path, let me go back a little bit. Could you expand about what you learned at the university or the school in Arizona?

AA: Collins College. It's an art school, so you learn a lot, how to work with programs, how to think freely, how to be creative as an individual. I think those were the strongest points for that school. They teach you a little bit of business, but not too much. I think I've learned a lot on my own, and it can be tough at times, I guess.

EV: Do they actually have a specific class for that, for the business side?

AA: They do but, again, it's short, and it's maybe 8, 10 percent of your classes.

EV: Now that you're in the real world, do you think you would have benefited from –

AA: A four-year program.

EV: I mean maybe more classes related to business or financing or –

AA: I went to a two-year school, art school. I think if I would have gone to a four-year program, I think it would have definitely helped me establish just a better knowledge of business instead of cramming everything in two years. And not only art, but a four-year college teaches you a lot more than your major. So I think, yeah, it would have.

EV: And continuing with your company, how many years has the company been in existence?

AA: It's been in existence since 2005, but it was a part-time gig between my ex-partner and myself for about two years. Now, I think we're going on our third year, now, as a full-time design firm.

EV: Why did you decide to go into business for yourself?

AA: It just kinda happened; at the time, I wasn't thinking about it. I was working full-time, and I've worked with three companies since graduating in my profession. My goal at that time was to gain more experience through these companies. I think I was still in that mentality, trying to get more experience. But I started Viva Creative Group, with my partner, as a side project. Then we started doing small projects for small businesses. And all of a sudden, we got this one big account, and it kinda blew up for us in a way where we were able to just go on our own and do this full-time. It just happened. And I guess you can say we were ready because we did the jump. I guess you're always going to learn how to run your business. It never stops.

EV: And where were these companies, where you worked before?

AA: The first one out of school was called Smart Health. And it was in Phoenix, Arizona. And what they specialized was in marketing for real estate and medical fields. They were like a catalog company. They sent out these massive catalogs full of advertising and marketing material they could buy. And so my job, there, was to create some of these materials, hundreds of postcards. There were business card designs and calendars, stuff like that. And I learned a lot because we were cranking out work every day. Did that for, I want to say two to three, maybe two years, just over two years, three years. Then I jumped to another corporate company called Eyes Gallery. They specialized in cruises, in Phoenix, okay. But they did have an office in each continent of the world, so they're pretty big, and they knew what they were doing. So we dealt with all the big cruise

lines. Again, there, we specialized on that specifically. In a way, they were all of our accounts. So if you had – I can't think of any cruise lines right now – but a specific cruise line, we would do their marketing for them and advertising and stuff like that. I was there for about, I would say about two years. I was still at that gig right when I decided to move back to El Paso, Texas. Right before I moved, though, I was going to work for a national magazine called Razor Magazine. And I decided not to take that job because I was planning on moving back home, so I ended up freelancing for them for a couple of months. That magazine's no longer around.

EV: And what do you consider that you learned working for those companies as far as developing your skills, not only your actual trade, but also in the business side?

AA: Well, the trade, I learned how to work as a team, creatively, which was really cool. There's nothing like working with other creative people and building something out of it. So that was cool. Also, time management, and how to really get my creative juices flowing at three hundred miles an hour. That was kinda cool. I learned that in both jobs, of course. Business aspect, if you're interested, I guess, you tend to pay attention on how the company is doing, and what they're doing to improve their profiles and their bottom line. So I would pay attention to what was going on with those companies, and what they were trying to do to make it better or whatnot, and how our departments, the creative departments, were contributing to that. I just paid a lot of attention.

EV: How would you do that? What would you do?

AA: The meetings we had, whether they were company meetings or just department meetings, just pay attention to what was happening, asking questions. I was always curious about if what we were doing was helping out, meet[ing] our goals, as far as were we helping this cruise lines get more traffic, as far as cruises are concerned. Same with the medical field marketing company. What postcards are

working for us? Which ones are selling? What's not selling? And what are the trends? There's so much, I guess, involved. Those are some of the things that pop out. There's just so much involved.

EV: And all these years and times, did somebody encourage you to, at some point, open up a business or become your own boss?

AA: I had a creative director. My old boss in my second job, he used to have his own little design firm. [He] did that for many years, like fifteen or twenty years. And he always talked about it. He always talked about how great it is to work for yourself. But he also mentioned how much work it is. I just remember some of the conversations we had. Of course, I thought about eventually opening my own business. I just never knew when I was going to be ready for it.

EV: And so what made you move back to El Paso?

AA: Family. I have a little daughter. I got married my last year of school at Collins College, and I was 24 years old. We got pregnant like soon after, and about two, three years in – no, no, it was about four years in, it just didn't work out. They moved back, so I wanted to be closer to my daughter. That's how I ended up here.

EV: And how did you determine the need for this business?

AA: It's tricky question. Actually, when I moved back from Phoenix I was worried. I was worried about even finding a job as a graphic designer, or creative director, in El Paso because it's a big town, but small town mentality. So there's not that many jobs out there, especially in my profession. I was worried that I was going to have problems, there. Luckily, I did get a job at the El Paso Magazine, and it turned out great. And once I was able to go on my own, it was nice to know that there's work for everybody. You can see it that way. But what was even better

was I knew we were able to give something that not many agencies were able to – big advertising agencies and little design firms. Our creative was different. It was more fresh. It wasn't the same old style you see day in and day out in this town. So that was promising.

EV: Would you describe the initial reaction of the community at large when you opened your business?

AA: Well, within my profession, the agencies and design firms, there was a lot of talk like, who are these guys? Which was neat. It really gives you more confidence, and a great self-esteem. The reaction was great. And I think the campaign that really helped us out was we landed the El Paso Community Foundation's I Am the Plaza campaign. The Plaza Theater was opening up, and they were looking for a fresh (creative??) way to show El Paso what it's about. And we were able to land that. We still get a lot of positive feedback. And I think that's what really, I guess, opened people's eyes to Viva.

EV: And what were the economic conditions in the region when you started?

AA: They weren't bad. Nothing can be worse than what they are today. I think they weren't bad. I think it was pretty stable. Nothing stands out. I think everything was stable.

EV: And did you need funding to start?

AA: No, that was the great thing about this because we started this as a part-time job. All [of] that was extra money for us. We had money in the bank, so when we did move on our own, we were able to buy everything we needed with that money to get us through the first couple of tough months, they say. So it worked out great. No debt. And we still haven't had to – or I still haven't had to borrow money. So that's a good thing. Of course, the only drawback on doing it that way is capital,

of course. Growing a business, you need to have capital to do that. So we're looking at our options right now to see what we can do to grow.

EV: You said that you kind of just jumped into this. My next question is did you begin with any kind of business plan?

AA: Our business plan was that we had one big client and that was going to be our ticket for the next year. We never really looked at it any other way. So it's funny you ask me because, right now, I'm barely putting a business plan together.

EV: You're looking into formalizing one?

AA: I am, and I have somebody working on it with me. I'm trying to go to the next step now.

EV: And what were the major obstacles that you encountered in your start-up phase?

AA: The start-up phase, well, the most difficult was the partnership. I guess because we had a full time job, and this was more fun for us at the beginning. The partner I had never realized how much work it was to actually own your own business. So that affected his decision. Therefore, that's why I am now the lone partner. But that was difficult. I learned a lot from a partnership point of view. It's like a marriage. You've got to really communicate and really both have to work hard to make something happen. Because of that, I've been kind of hesitant to bring somebody else in as a partner although I'm always looking for one. I think two heads think better than one. But haven't found that partner. But I've been very cautious about that. What's great about doing this networking deal you could say they're partnerships, but there's no strings attached, and therefore there's no stress behind it. It's kind of nice.

EV: What do you consider are the factors that have helped your business?

AA: Well, having great people around you. That's the best thing for a business. Referrals keep the business going. It works better than cold calling. But knowing good people in the industry and helping each other out, it really helps keep the business afloat. I think that's like the base of keeping a business going. Of course, you've got to work a lot harder than that to get to the next level.

EV: Do you consider that you can offer something different than other companies here?

AA: You can get more personal with us. You'll get more attention with us because we don't have ten big clients where we have to work every single day to meet their needs. The three to six clients, three to five, whatever, we deal with on a monthly basis. We can concentrate more on that client, therefore we achieve more with our goals as far as creative (Creative Group??) is concerned. The client will be more pleased if you give them 100 percent attention. So that's the one thing that is positive for us. The other positive is Creative is different and fresh, like I said. If you like to think outside the box, somebody like us will really help you out in that aspect.

EV: Describe major successes you have experienced as a business owner.

AA: I guess, in our profession, some of the success comes in like awards. I guess being creative, being artistic. Winning awards is a big deal. The first two, three years, we entered many, many award contests, I guess, if you will, and won a lot. That's another area where people start paying attention to us. In our profession, other agencies and stuff because we're winning so many awards, like, who are these guys, they're small? I guess that's how you measure success within the profession. But we haven't been doing the award thing for like two years now.

EV: Were they national awards, local, regional?

AA: Local, regional. We won one national award. We've had a few go national, but never won anything. And again, that's in like two, two and a half, three years maybe of trying. And we would submit anywhere from seven to ten awards a year. So it wasn't a lot. We weren't submitting left and right either. It was awesome. When I look back, you can say we've won like, out of thirty-five entries, we've probably won thirty awards, which is cool.

EV: For you, which were the most important? What were the names of those?

AA: Most important is the one that got us started, I think because they got us started maybe. It's part of us now. The I Am, the Plaza campaign. That was great. Everything just flowed so easily as far as bringing the creative for that specific project. It just flowed so easily, and every time we have special projects like that, I always kind of look back at that for inspiration, if you will. That's one of them. That's the major one, really. There's some small ones like – there's a [inaudible] right now, won a national award. It's been published, which is cool. So I guess because it's been published, kind of happy about it.

EV: What role has your family played in your business?

AA: Just being supportive. I think as a business owner, when times are good; times are really good. When times are bad, it can be stressful at times, I guess, is a word. Rather than the family telling me, Maybe you need to go get a job now, they've been supportive. It's worked out. I don't think I've been at that point where I better start looking at the classifieds or whatever. The support of the family helps a lot. It's just like with anything else.

EV: What challenges, if any, have you faced growing a business as a Hispanic?

AA: That one's tricky because I'm one of those people that doesn't think about discrimination, but at the same time, I guess there's been certain times where you wonder if because I'm Hispanic if that had anything to do with it. But I'm so laid back. I don't try to think negative. I guess it's an issue. I just haven't really thought about it enough to give you a great answer.

EV: Do you belong to any of the Chambers of Commerce?

AA: Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. I think I need to redo my yearly there.

EV: Your membership?

AA: Yeah, I think so. I don't know if I'm still part of it. Yeah, Hispanic Chamber.

EV: At some point, you have. Have they been supportive. What do you think of the Chamber in general?

AA: If there's a way they can help me, it's not been because of them, it's been because I haven't really let them. I haven't had, like, the need for, like, big help. But now with the economy being the way it is, I think I'm going to look into it a little more, see how they can help. That's part of the business plan: it's to be more proactive.

EV: We're approaching the last part. Looking back on your business, what would you have done differently?

AA: I think I would have had a legal contract with my partner. Because everything was shake of hand. I think the goals we had at the time, they had to change as soon as he left. As soon as we went full time, he left four months later. The goals changed dramatically; they did. Because he was a Web developer and that was going to be a big part of this business. Because he left, that changed. So I would

have done some legal work with a partner. And maybe done a better business plan. Maybe I would have had a true business plan laid out. Who knows, maybe that would have helped keep the partnership alive; I don't know. I think because I've never really done this on my own, and I have learned a lot, I think the more help I could have had in the beginning, maybe this business would have been even bigger now. But who knows.

EV: And what are your views about business in this specific area of El Paso, in downtown.

AA: In El Paso, in general?

EV: No, in this area, downtown. We could talk about general and then go specific with downtown.

AA: In general, for what I do, I think I would be more successful as far as growing the business if I was in a bigger city like Phoenix where I was at. There's a lot more work out there, obviously, and a lot more people in the industry. So you'd be able to find good people to work with as far as partnerships and stuff like that. That would help you meet your needs. In my case, I've got to go out there and find work, and do design work, for the most part. I like to do a lot of the creative still, and I kind of need to let go of that. But that's one thing about El Paso, it's tough. It can get tough trying to land more work, especially with the bigger clients because that's what you really need; you need the bigger clients. As far as working downtown, I'm in downtown because when you say you work downtown El Paso, or downtown anywhere, it's just nice. And I'm hoping downtown El Paso gets to be one of those big city downtowns, eventually. In reality, I can be anywhere. I don't have walk-ins. It's not about walk-ins in, my business. It's just about having a great creative environment to do my work. As far as being downtown, it's just because I like being downtown.

EV: You think the business climate is better for Hispanics nowadays?

AA: Nowadays, I don't know if business is better for anybody. It doesn't matter what ethnicity you are. To be more general, or maybe more specific, I guess so. I think especially here in El Paso, almost the majority of the people are Hispanic, so it's hard to measure success, Hispanics' success, outside of El Paso or comparative (compared??) to El Paso. I guess you can say it's successful here in El Paso, but is it really successful in general?

EV: What advice would you offer a Hispanic starting up a business today?

AA: I would tell them to have a good business plan together, and not to be afraid to ask for help as far as Chamber of Commerce, whether it's Hispanic or just the Greater El Paso, whatever organization's are out there to help small business. Go out there and get the help because you can really benefit; make your business successful.

EV: And this will be the last question I have. What hopes do you have for the future?

AA: Hopes? For myself and my family, of course, greater success, business success. A good life. I want to get to the point in the business where you don't have to worry about finances. Where you have a staff capable of handling the client's needs. Let me rephrase that: a staff that cares about what they do, not just somebody that needs a job and get through life. I want somebody that really likes what they do, and comes in here and keeps, I guess, the Viva motto of enjoying what you do for a living. Those are some of the things that I think about for the future. Of course, I have many personal ones. But as far as business, I hope this grows to a place where people wanna work and stay and play Rock Band because we've got Rock Band, ping-pong table, and just enjoy the environment, and be as creative as possible.

EV: Just want to finish up. Is there anything you'd like to add?

AA: I guess not. I'm a man of a few words. If you don't ask it, I don't tell it.

End of Interview

DRAFT