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Marketer has taken an interesting path

You know how you sometimes hear about great jobs you never knew existed? Like playing video games for money? Or getting paid to drive the Oscar Meyer Weinermobile? Or writing fortunes for fortune cookies?

Yvonne "Bonnie" Garcia had one of those jobs en route to becoming the president of Market Vision, a local Latina-owned firm specializing in Hispanic-targeted marketing, advertising, promotions and events.

Sure, Garcia currently has a great gig, and it's one she built it for herself from the ground up. But one of her earlier jobs — get this — was as a college rep for the Stroh Brewing Co. Her duties included traveling to colleges and universities and Spring Break festivities, where



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she handed out Stroh's towels and other marketing items, and recruited on-campus beer ambassadors.

It hardly sounds like work. But, Garcia assured me, it was a fun job that also was grueling

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because it required so much travel.

"College Beer Representative" isn't the only interesting entry on Garcia's résumé. As a communications major at the University of Texas at Austin, she dreamed of becoming a nationally known Latina newscaster. She ended up in radio, working as a disc jockey for an Austin radio station before moving back to her hometown of San Antonio to spin records for KTFM and KTSA.

The Burbank High School graduate and native South Sider loved her on-air job, and her father loved listening to her shows — and critiquing them.

"When he passed, everything changed," Garcia said. "My heart went out of it, and I started sending out résumés."

A call from a headhunter led to the job at Stroh's. The beer rep post at Stroh's led to a position as the company's head of Hispanic marketing, which led to the same role at Coca-Cola in Atlanta.

"Corporate America was just realizing the growth opportuni-

BIO BOX

Who: Yvonne "Bonnie" Garcia, founder and president of Market Vision, a San Antonio-based, Latina-owned company that focuses on marketing to the Hispanic community.



Honored by: Hispanic Business Magazine, which named Garcia "Entrepreneur of the Year" in the Latina category in 2006.

Giving back: At Market Vision's 10th anniversary party, Garcia will present her alma mater, Burbank High School, with \$10,000 to establish the Market Visionaries Scholarship Fund. Among the first recipients are students who touched Garcia with their poetry about what it means to be both Hispanic and American.

ties and potential within the Hispanic market," she said. "Beer companies were in on the ground floor."

Garcia remained at Coca-Cola for more than a decade, moving from Hispanic marketing to director of marketing for the Midwestern United States. Eventually, though, she'd had enough. She said she hit the proverbial glass ceiling and retired from the soda giant at age 41, thanks to Coke's lucrative stock options.

"I wanted to move home to San Antonio to be near my family," she said. "I'd been on the road a lot, traveling so much, and I took a sabbatical."

The sabbatical lasted all of three months. Garcia decided to try her hand at opening a company in San Antonio aimed at marketing to the Hispanic community. When she had no luck finding a partner, she opened her own company, with, as she puts it, "three Latinas and a telephone" and a loan backed by that handy Coca-Cola stock.

The Latinas were Garcia, longtime friend Alexis Baldwin and Garcia's sister, Norma Casillas. Baldwin and Casillas took pay cuts of \$20,000 per year to be part of Garcia's vision, and both are still with Market Vision today.

It took hard work and sacrifice — Garcia went without a salary for two years — but Market Vision has become a multimillion-dollar company with 50 employees in San Antonio, New York, Chicago, Atlanta and Los Angeles.

On Saturday, Garcia and her employees will celebrate Market Vision's 10th anniversary with a bash at La Villita. Her client roster is impressive and growing, stocked with blue-chip, household-name companies such as Coca-Cola, Fisher-Price, Miller Brewing Co., General

Mills, Continental Airlines and more.

Garcia's plan for the future? She'd like Market Vision to become more multicultural — and she wants to continue to convince corporate America of the value of the Hispanic market.

"America's companies should ask themselves what would happen if the nation's 45 million Latino consumers stopped going to their stores or buying their services," she said. "The Hispanic population in this country continues to grow, and U.S. businesses should realize its

great economic value."

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