



Five Things I've Learned Since Founding ANSWER

You never know where life will lead you. I never imagined one day I'd direct a non-profit organization that means so much to so many women and families. For every person who's got a big dream, I'm happy to offer some lessons I learned along the way that may help you, too, as you start something new.

- 1. Big projects are composed of lots of little projects.** Tackle one at a time and you'll build what you imagine. Some of my best ideas come at night, when I'm drifting off to sleep: "ANSWER needs a professional development series" or "maybe we should start an alumni program." I always underestimate the amount of work involved, which is probably a good thing. Ignorance can be bliss or I'd never move forward. But I've also learned you don't have to do everything at once. Take one step, then another.
- 2. Seek out people with different kinds of expertise to supplement your own.** Creating something new can be a humbling experience. I discovered again that I can know only so much. Surround yourself with good people who are a fit in personality as well as talents. Your work is much easier when you get along with your colleagues.
- 3. Being persistent pays off.** Don't give up when people tell you "no." Keep moving forward and you'll eventually get to "yes." I learned that raising money for ANSWER. When we first started, I assumed organizations who donated to us one year would contribute the next. While that's mostly true, personnel and charitable priorities can change at companies, foundations, and other funders. The first time a past supporter stopped working with ANSWER, it was like losing a friend. But in time, we found other funding partners who love how ANSWER has grown and have made that growth possible.
- 4. Relationships make things happen.** Our recipients are incredibly grateful for the scholarships we award for college tuition. But what they really love about ANSWER are the friendships they develop with fellow ANSWER scholars, mentors, donors, and friends. Those relationships keep them going on days when motherhood, their jobs and their studies feel like too much. Relationships are absolutely key. Money, even scholarship money, is not enough.
- 5. Don't be afraid to take what's working and see what could make it better.** It's tempting and easier to coast. Think big and you'll be amazed at what you can accomplish.