- Businesswomen

QC MAYOR JOY BELMONTE EMPOWERS #WOMENTREPRENEURS

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Wh e n Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte first ran for public office and won as Vice Mayor in 2010, she made a VAW: to end violence against women. During her reign, she encouraged women to speak up against any form of violence, harassment, and abuse.

“Through this advocacy, I found out that the reason some women couldn’t leave their abusive partners/relationships was because they couldn’t fend for themselves and their children,” relates Mayor Belmonte. “The solution? Empower them by providing them with livelihood opportunities.”

Speaking before women entrepreneurs at “#Women 2025: WomEntrepreneurs in the Digital Era,” a forum organized by SPARK! Philippines and Robinsons Department Store in celebration of International Women’s Month, Mayor Belmonte highlighted the fruits of the city government’s sustained efforts to create inclusive opportunities for women across various sectors through livelihood initiatives and assistance such as Pangkabuhayang QC, POP QC, Tindahan ni Ate Joy, SIGA and SIGAP.

In 2023, the QC Small Business and Cooperatives Development Promotions Office (SBCDPO), in partnership with SPARK! Philippines, and the US Embassy launched the Academy of Women Entrepreneurs (AWE).

AWE aims to equip women entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skills and access to different networks which will help them in promoting and growing their business.

“Since then, we’ve conducted training sessions, coaching programs, and trade fairs demonstrating our unwavering commitment to empower women not just as entrepreneurs but as leaders in our society,” notes Mona Celine Yap, department head of QC SBCDPO.

The program is conducted by batches. Participants undergo virtual and in-person training and seminar for three months. In 2023, 37 women entrepreneurs graduated from the program. In 2024, Batch 2 produced 25 graduates.

“If you empower women economically, everyone benefits,” enthuses Mayor Belmonte. “Now, I’m proud to say that in QC, more than 70,000 registered businesses are now owned by women. That only means that if we give women the chance/opportunity and tools to thrive, they will thrive. They will progress!”

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

“#Women 2025: WomEntrepreneurs in the Digital Era” forum also put the spotlight on three successful women entrepreneurs — Melanie Magbook, founder of Amber & Anne and Binibini Marikit; Janine Codizal, offline marketing manager, Ecora; and Denice Sy, chief sales and marketing officer, Ever Bilena Cosmetics — who discussed and shared how they continue to

redefine industries, break barriers, and take advantage of technological development to further their businesses.

A graduate of Business Management from De La Salle University Dasmariñas, Melanie Magbook started selling textiles, school uniforms and other home items in her hometown's (Lipa) public market.

"I was an OFW for 13 years. In 2017, I returned to the Philippines to start my own business," relates Melanie.

When the pandemic hit, Melanie tried online selling.

"I embraced technology with the help of my kids and became active on social media. And so, Amber & Anne was born. After five years of hard work, our homeware is now available at Robinsons Malls," Melanie proudly says.

After Amber & Anne, the fashionista mom started her own clothing line, Binibini Marikit which carries fashion items crafted from locally sourced, natural, and eco-friendly materials, transforming them into one-off pieces that celebrate our heritage.

Her advice to budding womentrepreneurs? "Be open-minded. You need to stay afoot and embrace new technologies to further your business."

Denice Sy of Ever Bilena shared tips on how the 40-year-old beauty brand stays relevant and still ahead of the game.

Ever Bilena has been around for a really long time. Clients have changed over the years, and the kind of marketing efforts and digitalization they did 10 years ago are now passe.

"Ever Bilena's core has always been accessibility. We make sure that our materials are not intimidating, but also very cute and still very appealing to everyone," says Denice.

And so in 2024, the brand used the hashtag #foreverybeauty which is also in line with their efforts to stay relevant and stay young for its evolving beauty consumers.

"For product shoots, we play with different elements and use fun designs to make the items pop," she adds. "Who is familiar with CGI? It's the kind of technology you would see in movies like Transformers. Now, beauty brands like Ever Bilena have been embracing this technology."

She adds: "Because of digitalization and the support of women like you, Ever Bilena is still around, proud and thriving."

With experience in event management, influencer marketing for both the Philippines and US markets, and sales training, Janine Codizal has played a key role in expanding Ecora's presence.

'In QC, more than 70,000 registered businesses are now owned by women. That only means if we give women the opportunity and tools to thrive, they will thrive. They will progress,' says Mayor Joy Belmonte.

During the event, she shared her insights on women's evolving role in business, embracing failure as part of success, and fostering innovation through inclusivity.

"Ecora Philippines is a seamless underwear brand which started on TikTok," shares Janine. "We've been in the market for two years, but in that short period of time, we've seen such incredible growth. At Ecora, empowerment isn't just a word. It's a commitment. It's about creating products that support and uplift women, making them feel comfortable in their own skin."

Ecora doesn't force women to adjust to what it offers.

“We adjust to what they deserve. If your bra size is five XL, we’ll give you just that,” says. “Before, when the sales lady tells us the product only comes in small, medium and large, we just leave the store disappointed. But since we chose to speak up, brands have no choice but to deliver what we want. We’re not doing this just to look inclusive. We’re doing this because we believe that this is what every woman deserves.”

BE YOUR OWN WONDER WOMAN

As we celebrate International Women’s Month, we are reminded that while women have made great progress, many still face inequality, gender bias, and limited access to opportunities. Women continue to work twice as hard to prove themselves, to have their voices heard and to secure their rightful place in business in our society.

“That’s why events like this matter. They give women a safe space to learn, connect, and empower one another,” adds Mona of QC SBCDPO. * * *

Amber & Anne, Binibini Marikit, Ecora and Ever Bilena are available at Robinsons Department Store.