

# her story of rising

## *An interview with Maria Martinez*

Fall 2022 Women Rising Open Enrollment Graduate



*I'm Kristin Kolesar, Mentor Coach for the Women Rising Program and today I'm sitting down with Maria Martinez, Associate Veterinarian of Mount Dora Veterinarian Hospital. Maria is a scholarship winner from the Fall 2022 Women Rising Open Enrollment program. This is her story of rising.*

**Maria:** I had heard about the Women Rising Program a couple of years ago. I had been interested but I didn't sign up for it. Then I had an opportunity to apply for a scholarship, and I thought "Well, this is a great opportunity." (The program) was really very interesting. It helped me to gain a better understanding of who I am as a leader, and how I can utilize my abilities within my career. The Women Rising Program has been geared toward people who are in corporate practices, not necessarily in the veterinary field. So, it was helpful for me to see, "Okay, how do these large companies manage their leadership? And how do women play such a major role within those companies?" And then from that perspective to be able to understand how I can use what they have learned in my own field.

**Kristin:** And I'm assuming that it was incredibly impactful for you because I hear the enthusiasm in your voice.

**Maria:** Yes, and it impacted me in such a way that I was able to adjust the way that I lead, not only in my clinic, but the way that I lead in my own family as well. It has been an interesting journey to find out what my skills are. For example, most of the veterinary field nowadays is composed of women. Most of our technicians are veterinary nurses and kennel staff are women. For many, many years (veterinarians) have been a male led field. Now that's changing, and therefore our perspective on how we lead people needs to change as well. That was important for me to understand and learn, "How do I change my own presets from what was male-led? How do I better understand myself, and therefore be able to help others in their own leadership roles?" That was part of my growth, was really understanding myself, my skills, and knowing they can be used for greater purposes, but they can also create obstacles for ourselves. So, (being aware) is important.

**Kristin: When you look back, what are you most proud of?**

**Maria:** I'm most proud of what I have gained from this experience. (I have) an understanding of myself, and who I am as a leader, and how I can grow from what I've learned. And gaining the perspective of others, and how they utilize their strengths. For example, we may have the same skill set, but maybe they use it in a different way, and in a way that I haven't thought of. So, it's gaining these little pieces of information and knowledge on how to change, how I lead, and helping those around me lead as well. I think that the Gallup (CliftonStrengths) skills that we did were excellent, because they really open my eyes on "Oh, so that's why I do these things?! That's why other people say that I am this way, that I act this way."



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**Kristin:** Most people are not surprised when they get their results back because they can see, “oh, yeah, I do that.”

**Maria:** Right. But there are other things that are like: “Oh, yeah, I do do that. Maybe I’m not supposed to be doing that?” I keep my top 5 (talents) in my mind while I’m working, and I’m also being able to pick it up on who else might have those (talents), and help them use those skills to help them grow as well.

**Kristin:** So, it sounds like, even though you said you went through the program last year you’re putting it all into practice, and it’s fresh, and you’re keeping it front and center. **What advice would give to somebody that is trying to rise in their career? Or be a better leader?**

**Maria:** Attending the Women Rising program is a huge eye opener and it’ll help you gain an understanding of how to become a better leader. Even if it’s a small team, even if it is just for your own growth, that growth really tends to spread to others. And if you’re wanting to develop more in your career, you really need to understand yourself, and that’s where you’ll be able to get that foothold to become whatever you want to become, or whatever the next step is for you in your career. And so that’s why I would highly, highly, highly recommend (the program), because that has been a really big game changer in my career.

**Kristin:** I’m also kind of curious if when you were going through it, did you have any light bulb moments where you were like, “Oh, this just clicked for me!”?

**Maria:** The light bulb moment started when we went through the habits, because really looking at all at those habits and understanding this is what I’m doing, and this is how it’s negatively affecting me at this point. How do I change that to keep from being an obstacle for me and in my career? So, to me that was eye opening.

I need to stop doing these habits in order for me to grow and realize how women lead and how we want to be led. We need to see how men lead and think so that we can come together to reach our goals as a team. We need to understand both perspectives from a male and a female side of things to be able to lead our group as a cohesive unit. I realized that I needed to adjust my approach, I needed to change the way I spoke in different settings within my leadership role to ensure that we were being heard so that we could ultimately make the changes that we were looking for. Flexing to my audience in terms of how they need to receive information was important. And that was one of the big things that I saw was like, “That’s why, when we have our clinic meetings, this doesn’t work or this isn’t heard, or this doesn’t change.” Because we’re following these patterns, and we’re not breaking them.

**Kristin:** That’s really insightful, interesting to think about women leading a group of women and adjusting your style and the necessity of that.



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**Kristin:** Are there certain things you tried doing that you tested out and saw a huge difference afterward?

**Maria:** I really think that utilizing my analytical skill to discuss things with my boss. He has been really helpful in making change, not only for our team, but also for myself. Being able to analyze data, our production data: how many appointments we see, how much we're producing per month, particularly per doctor and helping him realize this is also how I add value. Letting him know how things are going helps (him) understand my value as an associate veterinarian. Sometimes our bosses don't see what we do, and it's because we don't talk about it enough, we don't bring it to their attention. They don't realize all the work that we actually do. So, let's present it in a way that they'll understand. And it's been very helpful for me.

**Kristin:** That is awesome, and what I hear in that is you just being able to say, 'How does this person need to receive the information?' You know it might be different than someone else. And how can I relate in a way where they can take it in, and the other benefit is, they're going to see the value I'm providing.

**Maria:** Right. Exactly. Also, I have Achiever talents, and as an achiever I work really hard, very long hours, but by the time I would get home I'd be spent. For me realizing if I'm an achiever at work, I need to be an achiever at home, too. How do I make that work? So I created a timeline. I work from 7:45 to 6 o'clock every day and after that, whatever I have gotten done during the day, that's it. So that way, I have energy for both. I wanted to be better for my family, more present, so I'm using those skills also in my family as well as in my work life.

**Kristin:** Fantastic. **Anything else you want to share about the program and your experience with it or your own leadership?**

**Maria:** It's been an excellent program, a real eye opener, and a game changer for the field that I am in, even though it's so honestly, vastly different from what corporate offices are. You can utilize what you learn here in any field, whether it be veterinary medicine, whether it be the automotive industry, whatever these are skills that you will take with you all the way throughout your career.

