

## Entrepreneur Spotlight: Simone Bruni, the 'Demo Diva'

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"This is a man's world!" the King of Soul, James Brown, famously proclaimed in 1966. While he was certainly right in some regards, there's no denying that women are doing big things as well.

And New Orleans women, in particular, are doing it in style.

Simone Bruni, Ursuline Academy and Loyola University alumna, is one of those women and she's doing it in hot pink. If you've driven around New Orleans in the last year or so, you may have noticed the hot pink that we speak of...dumpsters, excavators, and bobcats sitting pretty in pink awaiting the next demolition.



Wait, rewind. Demolition, you say? Yep, we say. By a woman? Correct again. With pink demolition tools? Bingo. Yes, ladies and gentleman, it's time to meet Simone Bruni, the **Demo Diva** and our first **Local Entrepreneur Spotlight** of 2013!

Not sure what a demo diva is? Don't worry, Simone's got you covered. "A *demo diva* is a trailblazer, someone who has done something unique in their industry," explained Simone. "Say for instance, a lawyer wins a case. I'll say, 'Oh, she's a *demo diva*!' I've come across many *demo divas* in different industries. They are strong women who have pushed through a wall of preconception of what women can do and their limitations. A *demo diva* is a woman who is really reaching for a higher stratosphere, breaking down walls and conceptions and nontraditional paths for women."

And this *demo diva* is certainly demystifying those stereotypes with her company of the same name, *Demo Diva*, "a demolition company that specializes in residential and commercial demolition; interior gutting; manual deconstruction; dumpster rentals; architectural salvage; and free demolition or slab removal."



Born out of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, *Demo Diva* embodies its “reinvention, resilience and resurrection” motto. Simone said, “I really started this business out of no other reason, but to help my neighbors. It was a way that I could solve someone’s problem. At the same time, I also wanted to be a part of the rebuilding of New Orleans. I saw so many people coming in from all over the country, who we needed of course, but I was like, ‘Wait. This is my town, my people, and I’m going to help.’ And so that was the motivation; I wanted to be a part of touching people’s lives.”

Now, when you think of a company that specializes in demolitions, as *Demo Diva* does, we can be fairly certain in saying that you’re not gonna think of pink. But thinking outside the box is one of the things Simone does best. “I thought pink immediately!” she mused. “I knew that I had to separate myself from the competition. I’ve got to come out as the ‘pink lady.’ I remember driving back from Prairieville, LA where I’d just picked up the car magnets and yard signs. I put the car magnets on and I remember coming across the Bonnet Carre Spillway, and my heart was bursting with pride. I was so excited. It was the first time that *Demo Diva*, the name, had stepped out.”

“I had guys pull up next to me, honking, pointing, laughing, and mocking me, and I kind of cringed from embarrassment because it was the first time. And I was like, ‘NO, this is going to be something!’ That’s our story, the story of New Orleanians. Laugh at us you may, but we’ve pulled ourselves up from our bootstraps with uniqueness. That’s what makes me so proud.”



As a woman in a male-dominated field, Simone definitely holds her own. "There may be some men that have the perception of, 'Oh, she's a woman,' and don't take me seriously," she noted, "but I don't sense it. I have not experienced it to say I feel discriminated against. And if I have been, I look the other way. I choose to believe the best. There's no time for negativity. I'm really an optimistic person and I'm moving forward."

Some of Simone's greatest rewards with *Demo Diva* have been sponsoring a flag football team for girls in public schools and the *Diva Brigade*, a project with the **New Orleans Mission** getting men, who are struggling to jumpstart their lives, to work on demolition projects. "I have men coming to me and saying, 'Give me a chance.' That drives me because that's what I was saying to people when I first started. So, we're putting these men to work on different projects and they'll all wear their pink hard hats with pride!"

Simone only sees great things in the future for *Demo Diva*. "My goal is to continue to grow. "I feel like it's the law of reciprocity; you keep giving and as much as you give is as much as you'll grow. It's not a monetary value. It's really building the future of the city, young girls, and homeless men, giving them a vision. If I can inspire one person by giving a vision, I feel really satisfied. I've lit the candle and passed the light."



She added, "I've had many reality shows call me. Steve Harvey called me and asked me to be on the show and I had to tell him no because I was hosting our Christmas caroling in Lakeview. But I told him to please call me back, so this is for Steve Harvey: 'Please call the *Demo Diva* back!'"

"Another reality show called and said, 'Hey *Demo Diva*, we've just met with a huge network. They love your concept and they want to know what else you'd be willing to do. Would you be willing to wrestle alligators?' And I said, 'Sure, with my pink excavator!'"

As perhaps the next Mark Kay, of pink construction that is, Simone and *Demo Diva* are taking over the demolition world with pink excavators and dumpsters in tow.

"We're not just a company that is conducting business," concluded Simone. "We're heavily involved with the community. We are leading with our heart. I don't just see people as customers; I see them as my neighbor. That's how I began and that's how I've evolved. That's what makes us different."

For more information about *Demo Diva*, please visit the **website**, **Facebook**, and **Twitter**.

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