

Influential Latinos

By Pablo Schneider



Influential people often wield influence through distinctive capabilities in an area in which they excel. According to George Muñoz, a board member of both Marriott and Altria, "Latinos must define themselves as having a deep specialty and passion of interest with strong credentials as a unique identifier of who they are". In this column, I'd like to talk about **Edwin Flores**, a patent attorney who serves in local and national leadership roles ("The Problem Solver"); **Isabel Valdés**, a pioneering Hispanic market expert ("The Expert"); and **Angel Cabrera**, president of *Thunderbird* ("The Thought Leader"). Each one of these Latino leaders wields significant influence through their specialization in areas where they excel.

Edwin Flores is a formidable problem solver, both in science and in education. With a Bachelor of Science degree in microbiology, a Ph.D. in molecular immunology and a law degree, he has lots of tools to choose from. From the first time we met at an event with Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez some years back to the times we've gotten together since then, Edwin has always been very insightful. He has gone from working three jobs in college to being a successful patent attorney, an elected board member of a majorly Hispanic school district with 160,000 students and a \$1.2 billion dollar budget, and a member of two councils at the National Institutes of Health. The NIH funds over \$30 billion per year in

scientific research. The combination of Edwin's specializations in science, law, and politics put him in a position to continue into higher levels of leadership and to help solve bigger problems facing our country today.

Isabel Valdés is an amazing expert on the Hispanic market. Not only has she "written the book" on this niche market, she has written *four* of the best and most well-respected books on the subject. Watching Isabel speak and talking with her over the years at *HACR*, *NSHMBA*, and other Hispanic events is very enlightening each and every time. During her thirty-plus year career in Hispanic market research she has gone from doing door-to-door health surveys of Hispanic households to working with major companies like Allstate, AT&T, Bank of America, Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, General Mills, Honda, Kraft, PepsiCo/Frito Lay, Scholastic, State Farm, Telemundo, Time Warner, Universal Studios, Univision, and VISA International. Isabel's deep expertise puts her in a position to have tremendous influence on many leading corporations.

Angel Cabrera is a cutting-edge global thought leader. Named by the World Economic Forum as a "Global Leader for Tomorrow", Angel is also a senior adviser to the UN Global Compact Office. As a member of the Thunderbird Global Council, I have had the honor of being involved with many major initiatives at the School over

the past eight years including helping encourage Thunderbird to hire Angel as president. As president of Thunderbird, he is leading a revolutionary change in thinking about the role of corporations from a traditional model where corporations are driven by a self-serving goal of maximizing profits to a new model where corporations profitably serve society by putting together resources, technology, products, and people in a sustainable and socially responsible way that adds value for shareholders and stakeholders. In addition, he has played a key role in creating the Thunderbird Model of Global Leadership, which develops top leaders that have a global mindset, engage in global entrepreneurship, and practice global citizenship. Leading the #1 ranked school of global management, which includes 37,000 alumni in 141 countries, puts Angel in a position to continue exercising significant influence through thought leadership, both in the U.S. and worldwide.

Edwin, Isabel, and Angel are great role models of Latino leaders who exercise significant influence through their specializations in problem solving, market expertise, and thought leadership. Their leadership by example should prompt all of us to think about our specializations and how we can wield influence to improve quality of life for ourselves, our families, our communities, our states, our nation, and our world. 