

MICHELLE ARMSTRONG HAS A CLEAR MISSION IN LIFE: to help the small businesses in and around the Berkley community. She is the owner of her own small business, **TAG MultiMedia**, but her journey didn't start there.

"It's been in my nature to help the small-business type-of-person since childhood because my mother and my father had a small business," she said. "They are inspiring to me and have helped me set the tone for my definitions of success."

Armstrong is a member of the **Berkley, Clawson and Royal Oak Chambers of Commerce**, **Berkley High School DECA Advisory Committee** and **Royal Oak Women's Club**, and, in 2019, developed the **BerkleyU** series with a goal of helping local small businesses stay informed, network and remain a local value in the community.

As a self-proclaimed advocate for small businesses, it might be surprising that Armstrong spent 15 years working in a corporate setting. Having been on both sides of the fence has only further prepared her for her current venture.

"I've been in sales, management, training, insight marketing and performance management making sure advertising was performing at a level where our clients saw a return on their investment," she said. "I moved from there into a business automation specialist role and was knee-deep in how software needed to be a part of the small business model."

WHICH LEADS TO THE MISSION OF TAG MULTIMEDIA, LOCATED AT 642 S. MAIN ST. IN CLAWSON. Armstrong is using her corporate experience to make software and virtual and augmented reality more accessible to small businesses around Oakland County. But what does that mean?

"We are working on proprietary software that will change the way business is done online and how small to medium-sized businesses present themselves and be represented online," she said.

This isn't just your average website or social media profile. TAG is creating online avatars that shoppers can interact with and digital replications of local cities that users will be able to explore and shop in.

"The avatar can live on your website and your social media and is meant to interact with customers. The beauty of having an avatar is that once you train it, you don't have to retrain it like you would a new employee," Armstrong said. "In the digital cities, we've been able to merge gaming and social environments with a retail and interactive social aspect, all in one space."

TAG HAS APPROACHED MULTIPLE CITY GOVERNMENTS, including Berkley, and local civic organizations to build these virtual cities. Like many newer technology concepts, it may be hard for some to picture these concepts in action. But Armstrong isn't deterred by skeptics.

"Not everyone is going to understand the value of this, but those same people can't deny that eyeballs are online and (businesses) will get lost in the matrix if they don't present themselves a certain way – a new solution is needed," Armstrong said. "Virtual and augmented realities aren't going away. In fact, by the year 2030 it's going to be a \$1.6 trillion-dollar industry."



By Ingrid
Sjostrand

Several of TAG's clients are already using avatars in billboards and commercials. Armstrong suggests watching some of their Digital Community Network videos, available on their YouTube channel, **DCN Network**, to get a better understanding of their product.

"If we don't do something now, the idea of a brick-and-mortar environment where you can shop is going to diminish. We're already seeing the impact of that and if those businesses had a way to compete in both spaces they would survive," she said. "For the last 15 years, I have been helping small businesses bridge the understanding and functionality of software to help them run their business and get a return. I'm looking for more businesses that want to be showcased in this changing landscape." ■

For more information and to get involved with TAG MultiMedia, visit TAGMultiMedia.net.



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www.TagMultiMedia.net
info@TagMultiMedia.net
P. 248.571.4991

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