

SMALL BUSINESS, BIG MISSION

BARBARA MANZI, MANZI METALS



30 YEARS IN THE METALS BUSINESS

BY LUKE TORRANCE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY NOLA LALEYE

Manzi Metals

BY THE NUMBERS

Founded
1989

What they do
provides raw metals, such as stainless steel, copper, brass, aluminum and titanium to numerous buyers, especially in the defense and aerospace industries.

Employees pre-Covid
10

Employees post-Covid
nine

When Barbara Manzi started her own company 30 years ago, she began with a big gamble.

“When I started my business here, with \$10,000 of my own money, I quickly found out that it wasn’t enough,” Manzi recalled. “And the local banks I went to here, even though they could see the orders were placed and business was stable, they wouldn’t give me a line of credit.”

At that time, Manzi and her husband owned a pair of cars. So Manzi gave the titles of her cars over to the bank, and used the money to fulfill her first order with her metal company — an order placed by defense company Lockheed Martin. As soon as the order was fulfilled, she used the funds to buy her titles back.

There can be no doubt about Manzi’s commitment to her company, Manzi Metals, located on the northern edge of the Tampa Bay region in Brooksville. The company is a distributor of raw metals including stainless steel, aluminum, copper, brass, high-temperature and alloys and titanium to the aerospace industry, large manufacturing

corporations and the Department of Defense. It was that commitment that led her to choose Brooksville as the place to base her business.

“Back in those days, in order to be affiliated with some of larger mills and distribution center, you had to be 100 miles away from the distribution center, and at the time there were very few companies in Florida,” she recalled.

ROCKET SCIENCE START

Manzi got her start in the metals industry by working with Raytheon in New York in the late 1970s. She moved to Florida to start her business in 1989.

“I started business in my rented home, with an \$89 desk from Walmart, and I never looked back,” she said.

What began on a small desk she bought from Walmart has grown into a multimillion-dollar company. Manzi Metals is the 30th-largest woman-owned business in the Tampa Bay region, according to the most recent Book of Lists. The company had a revenue of \$8.61 million in 2019, a 49.2 percent increase over its \$5.77 million revenue in 2018. Manzi

Metals has nine employees.

But access to capital remained difficult for Manzi despite the success of her company.

“It hasn’t changed much [since 1989],” she said. “The banks are still the same, they look at the minority, woman-owned company, and they still are judgmental even if your financials are downright fantastic and your business is very stable.”

She said that changed a few years ago, when James Ransom, a chair member of the Tampa Organization of Black Affairs, helped to introduce her to several larger banks in Tampa.

“That’s when they started to look at me, but it took James Ransom and his clout to get a sit-down with the banks where they looked at my company ... and took me seriously,” she said.

Manzi said she currently banks with Cadence Bank, and credits them with helping her business obtain a Paycheck Protection Program loan.

“I can’t say how welcome it was, to get that loan and be able to keep my doors open,” she said. “It came just in time ... Cadence, they were extremely helpful.”

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF BARBARA MANZI

