Leigh Rivera has always loved to create. In fact, for her WEDDING DREAMS business, she turned her passion into profit. She began her business in 2016 after initially working in another field. She was willing to get down and dirty in order to set her apart from other planners. She said, “I like working hard. I’m very hands-on. I would think that’s different from other planners. I try to interact with my couples as much as possible and I try to interact with my vendors on a personal level,” she said while making sure the drapes on her arch were perfect.

And as much as it is financially rewarding to Leigh, she said she also gets genuine happiness out of her job and her ability to make couples’ dreams come true on a daily basis. “I really love being such a big part of people’s special day. It’s like I’m always reliving the most beautiful part of someone’s life. That’s very rewarding in and of itself. As a creative person, I like seeing my designs come to life, that’s very rewarding as well. To have the opportunity to create the things in my imagination and to be paid to do it,” she said with a laugh.

But as with all jobs, it doesn’t come without its fair share of challenges. “The most challenging thing is that it’s seasonal,” Leigh said. “Barbados as a whole is an expensive destination. We aren’t just competing with other Caribbean islands for clients but international destinations as well. You have to try very hard to capture the clientele. Once you’ve passed the hurdle of them choosing Barbados, you have to make sure they pick you,” she added.

Those challenges though, have helped the bubbly down-to-earth lass to mature both personally and professionally. “Professionally I have grown in terms of the type of weddings and quality that I offer. I have a lot more flexibility. Personally, I have grown in terms of accepting the fact that I don’t know everything. Everything is a learning process - that was a very big, very valuable lesson for me. Not to mention my increase in patience,” she added.

And never mine to settle, Leigh said she is always thinking of ways to continue to grow her business to become the best she can be. “My immediate goal is to grow my business. To have a more diverse set of clients and to take on bigger challenges. I was really well received by the Barbados events community. But most of my clients are locally based. So it’s no surprise that the 29-year-old has now set her sights on looking at international destinations, including more from her protégé and master ceremonist event designers Preston Bailey. Leigh offered her own bit of advice to young up and coming planners. “The first bit of advice is to get some form of formal training and don’t just call yourself a planner. Do not compare yourself to someone who was doing it for a long while, because you don’t know how they struggled to start in the beginning. It’s very easy to get discouraged when you look at someone who has been doing it for ten years. But in those ten years, they would have faced similar challenges to you so you have to be aware of that as well,” she added.

Two years into her business here in Barbados, Leigh, she said she also gets genuine happiness out of her job and her ability to make couples’ dreams come true on a daily basis. She began her business in 2016 after initially working in another field. She was willing to get down and dirty in order to set her apart from other planners. She said, “I like working hard. I’m very hands-on. I would think that’s different from other planners. I try to interact with my couples as much as possible and I try to interact with my vendors on a personal level,” she said while making sure the drapes on her arch were perfect.

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