

# From Layoff to Payoff

Skai Blue Media founder **Rakia Reynolds** understands that the right attitude can turn a tough situation into a prosperous business

BY MARQUITA K. HARRIS

With tennis champion and entrepreneur Serena Williams, model Ashley Graham and tech giant Dell as satisfied clients, Rakia Reynolds clearly knows her stuff. Since launching her full-service public relations agency, Skai Blue Media, in 2009, Reynolds has, with her team, been the mastermind behind major events and campaigns. Reynolds's wellspring of energy and optimism is contagious. It's part of what helped to turn an unfortunate layoff from a dream job into an opportunity to launch a thriving high-profile business.

**ESSENCE: You attended Temple University. What did you study?**

**RAKIA REYNOLDS:** I studied international business and marketing. Then I went to grad school to study counseling psychology. Temple paid for room, board and all of my classes. But while I was in grad school, I got a job offer from MTV Networks to be a producer.

**ESSENCE: What made you take that opportunity?**

**REYNOLDS:** MTV paid me four times the amount I was earning working in higher education at Temple. At the time I also had a 2-year-old daughter and was about to be married. My fiancé, now my husband, was still in graduate school at the time. But I wanted to live this creative life and write scripts and produce television and do fun things.

**ESSENCE: Producing for TV can be such a fickle business. What was your mind-set back then?**

**REYNOLDS:** I was always one to have multiple projects going on—because I was afraid of the money running out. In addition to my main job, I was producing for all of these publications, and then I started freelance writing for magazines. I thought, *If TV ends, then I have magazines to back me up.* But at a certain point all of those things ran out. Everyone was laid off.

**ESSENCE: How did you cope?**

**REYNOLDS:** That's when I decided to start my agency. I had all these relationships from the work I had done at *Lucky* mag-



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azine, as well as the work I had gotten to do at MTV Networks and TLC and all the shows I had produced up to that point.

**ESSENCE: What advice do you have for women who've been laid off?**

**REYNOLDS:** Determine what's going to work best for you in the long term, not what's working for you right now. From a visionary standpoint, start thinking of where you want to be and what you want to be doing three, five and ten years down the line. What's going to give you insurance and assurance and allow you to build some generational wealth?



**EXCLUSIVE** To learn more about Rakia Reynolds's career, check out our UnBossed podcast.