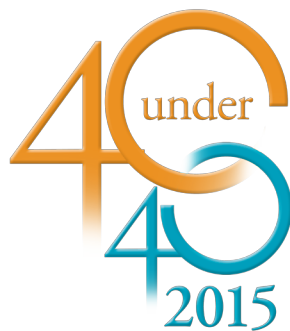


Cristian Vera Mercado

CPA & Partner
Rodríguez, Rivera & Toro PSC



Yahira Caro

Attorney, Counselor-at-Law & Founder
Integrated Legal Solutions PSC



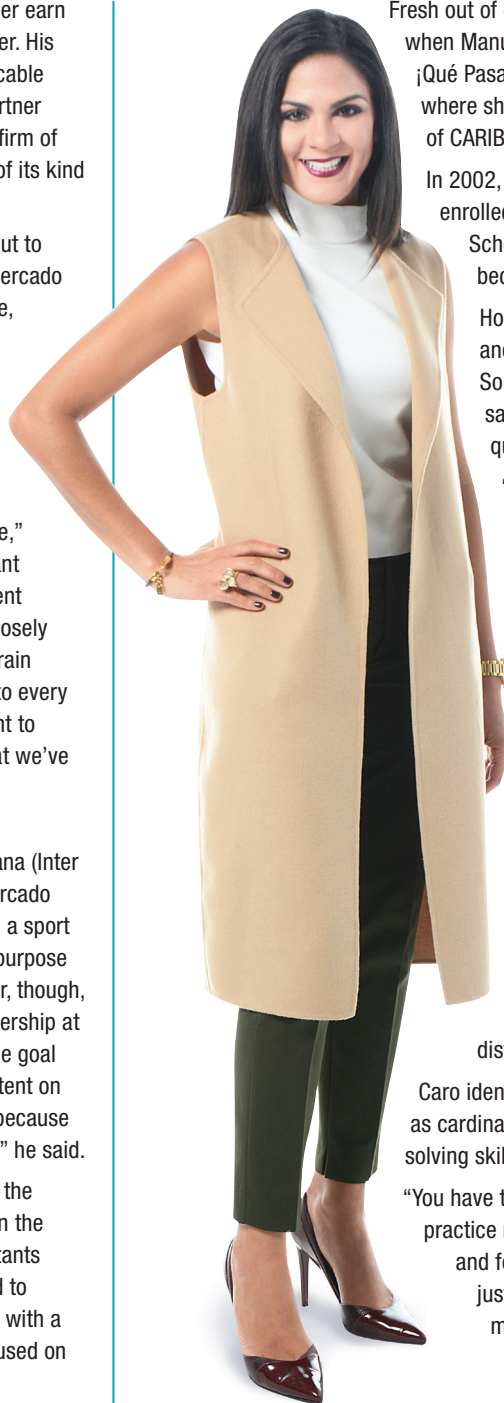
Cristian Vera Mercado grew up watching his father earn his money the hard way, as a construction worker. His father's example taught him to follow an impeccable work ethic that he applies daily to his job as partner at the accounting and management consulting firm of Rodríguez, Rivera & Toro PSC, one of the oldest of its kind in Mayagüez.

With the firm founded in 1967 and about to celebrate its 50th anniversary, Vera Mercado has turned his focus toward the future, where he hopes to lead a younger generation of professionals in the company's continued growth.

"I feel a responsibility toward the firm, to help sustain it so other professionals may eventually grow their careers here," said the certified public accountant and Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA). "We work closely with universities to recruit and train students, whom we integrate into every division of the firm. It is important to me and the firm to give back what we've learned," he said.

While studying to earn his degree in accounting from Universidad Interamericana (Inter American University) in Aguadilla, Vera Mercado held odd jobs and practiced bodyboarding, a sport he credits with instilling in him a sense of purpose and discipline. Throughout his college career, though, Vera Mercado had his eye on the prize: partnership at Rodríguez, Rivera & Toro. "I had set myself the goal of making partner, and now that I am, I am intent on serving the firm and profession as best I can because I believe he who serves is the best of them all," he said.

Vera Mercado makes it a point to stay active in the development of his profession, having served on the board of the Society of Certified Public Accountants from 2011 to 2015. "To believe, to grow and to create is what I aspire to do each day, with a great sense of responsibility and focused on the desired results," he concluded.



Fresh out of college, Yahira Caro was working as a travel reporter when Manuel Casiano offered her a position as editor in chief of ¡Qué Pasa! Caro thus began a career at Casiano Communications, where she also edited Vida Actual and served as managing editor of CARIBBEAN BUSINESS.

In 2002, while working with various Casiano publications, she enrolled as a nighttime student at University of Puerto Rico School of Law. Upon graduation, she left Casiano and became an associate at Ferraiuoli LLC.

However, after two years, Caro took a gamble, left Ferraiuoli and struck out on her own. She founded Integrated Legal Solutions PSC (ILS), a results-oriented boutique firm she said values commitment, cost-effective services and quality over a high volume of billable clients.

"I believed in myself and had the hunger to build something, so I set out to do it and welcomed the risk," Caro said. "I envisioned a dedicated firm that would be a full-service one-stop shop that emphasized a problem-solving approach for clients."

When it was founded in 2007, the firm had a single client. Now, ILS has 35 active clients, many of them both local and stateside professionals and corporations doing business in Puerto Rico. In addition to Caro, two other attorneys work at ILS. Caro calls them "gladiators in suits."

She said the next step is to continue growing ILS, but stressed she doesn't want the firm to grow to the size of larger law firms in Puerto Rico. ILS will bring new business and take on new projects, but will only take on as much work as they can diligently handle to retain the personalized atmosphere and one-on-one service that distinguishes the boutique law firm.

Caro identified prudence, justice, temperance and courage as cardinal virtues that lead to a good work ethic and problem-solving skills.

"You have to try to be prudent and fair, judge situations correctly, practice restraint, patience and self control, and have the courage and fortitude to believe in your own strength and do it justice by working hard," Caro said. "Every day is a testing moment. You have to meet and cherish the challenge."

Full Name: Cristian Vera Mercado

Birthplace & Date: Mayagüez, Sept. 20, 1977

Education: B.S. Accounting, Universidad Interamericana, Aguadilla; Certified Public Accountant

Marital status: Married

Spouse & Children: Janice M. Mejías Vega; Nicolás Mateo

Favorite Food/Restaurant: Home-cooked meals made by my mom and mother-in-law and "mofongo italiano" from El Grand Marnier

Favorite Beverage: Water

Car you drive: Range Rover

Favorite place to shop: Foot Locker; Macy's

Dream destination: Santorini, Greece

Nightstand Reading: "The Radical CPA, New Rules for the Future-Ready Firm" by Jody Padar, CPA

Slogan/Motto: "Only in the dictionary will you find success before work."



Full Name: Yahira Caro

Birthplace & Date: San Juan, May 11, 1976

Education: Bachelor's degree Communication, University of P.R., Río Piedras; Juris Doctor, UPR School of Law

Marital Status: Married

Spouse & Children: Jason K. Bergner; Alexander

Favorite Food/Restaurant: Any dish at José Enrique

Car you drive: Range Rover

Favorite Beverage: Champagne, Laurent-Perrier Rose

Favorite place to shop: Gilt.com

Dream destination: Vietnam

Nightstand Reading: "Anthem" by Ayn Rand

Slogan/Motto: "Never quit."

