

**case 2-439-231**  
**September 17, 2024**

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## Between Autonomy and Concession: A Female Entrepreneur's Struggle in Latin America

Once again, Liliana found herself questioning whether it was worth persevering in a male-dominated business world. As she made her way home from the concluding meeting of a major project in Chile, she reflected on the last six months of 2022. The project had been profitable, the client was satisfied, and for the first time she had initiated consulting services with a company in a country other than Colombia. However, despite the outwardly positive balance, Liliana found herself grappling with her willingness to keep going in an industry ruled by men where aggressive business conduct was the norm.

### Liliana and Lemaître

Liliana Gutiérrez de Piñeres had studied accounting at Universidad Externado de Colombia, commencing her professional career before she had even graduated. From the age of 18, her exceptional work performance and leadership-oriented attitude propelled her to positions such as audit and internal control manager, financial manager, risk manager, and compliance officer in such highly competitive companies as PwC, El Tiempo, Pfizer, and Sanofi. Seeking to further develop her management skills, she earned an MBA from Instituto de Alta Dirección Empresarial (INALDE Business School) in Colombia.

In 2015, Liliana founded Lemaître, turning her MBA thesis—a project for a management consulting firm—into a business. She viewed Lemaître as an opportunity to devote time to her daughters while leveraging her professional strengths.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, she structured Lemaître as a virtual business, working during the hours her daughters were at school.

The firm's name borrowed from her paternal grandmother's surname to honor her family's entrepreneurial heritage along Colombia's Atlantic coast. Also, in French Lemaître translates to "the teacher." As a professor at Universidad Externado de Colombia, Liliana saw parallels between being a consultant and a teacher, given that both roles involve transmitting knowledge.

*Published by WDI Publishing, a division of the William Davidson Institute (WDI) at the University of Michigan.*

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