

## Personal touch

A young tent and event company emphasizes customer service.

Los Angeles, Calif.-area SoCAL Tents & Events is a new company, but led by industry veterans who have worked their way up. Vice president Judy Montoya began her career in 1991 as a customer service representative for an event supplier, and from 1996 to 2007 she worked for two larger event companies. Frustrations with the corporate culture led to the formation of SoCAL Tents & Events in August 2007.

“The special events industry and economic trends demonstrated to me that there is a strong demand for a more efficient, personalized, customer-service oriented event equipment supplier,” she says. “In today’s highly competitive market, this type of organization can provide the service, quality and pricing that huge, top-heavy, high-overhead corporate companies cannot compete with.”

Similar to Montoya’s rise, SoCAL project manager Jaime “Jimmy” Duran has gone from being a casual laborer to managing national sporting events. While getting a new business off the ground in the current economy may seem daunting, Montoya says that SoCAL is receiving more leads and opportunities than ever because potential clients are shopping around for better deals and service.

“While in the past, companies planned out their events several months to even years in advance, they are waiting until the last few weeks before the event to make sure they have the funding and the potential event revenue to proceed,” she says. “We have positioned ourselves to be able to react at a moment’s notice to close deals that we never had the opportunity to do in the past. There is no such thing as getting ‘lucky’ in this industry. We make our own luck by being prepared for the opportunity.”

Montoya says that one aspect of this business she likes most is meeting new people from different industries and networking with them.

“It’s not the event itself that gives me the most satisfaction, it’s when the customer says ‘SoCAL did a great job once again’—that makes my day,” she says. “Our strong customer service is all about the relationship between us and the customer, and it’s that relationship that gives me the most satisfaction.” ■



**Judy Montoya**  
**SoCAL Tents & Events LLC**  
[www.socaltents.com](http://www.socaltents.com)  
**Year founded:** 2007  
**Employees:** Up to 25  
**Serves:** Southern California and beyond  
**Largest event budget:** \$300,000