

Continuing the Climb--in Heels



Take the time to blink and you may miss one of these women-owned businesses achieving another sales goal. With an initial investment of \$100,000 in 2002, Salo LLC, the No. 1 company on our list, surpassed the \$32 million sales mark in 2006. And the other 49 fastest-growing women-led companies aren't any less inspiring. All had 2002 sales of at least \$50,000 and had reached sales of \$1 million or more by 2006.

The ranking was compiled by *Entrepreneur* magazine with the assistance of the Women Presidents' Organization. Privately held, women-led companies in the U.S. and Canada were ranked based on their percentage and absolute growth.

Here we take a closer look at 10 of these remarkable women and their successful businesses. Find out what inspired them, how they've overcome their biggest challenges and what advice they have for you.



Koni Corp., #2
Koni Kim

Hospitality industry window treatment and linens

Location: San Diego

2002 sales: \$60,000

2006 sales: \$13.7 million

How she started the business: "Recognizing early that the traveling public desired an environment that is special and memorable, I focused my passion to create new bed ensembles and window treatments for the hospitality industry that offer a more luxurious and

inviting experience than those typically found at home."

Her advice: "Success is a state of mind. Every day offers new opportunities to succeed. Share and enjoy the success with others."



Circles, #3

Janet Kraus, Kathy Sherbrooke

Marketing solutions

Location: Boston

2002 sales: \$26.9 million

2006 sales: \$44.4 million

How they started the business: "As students of Jim Collins, we were struck by his premise that great companies are founded by people who share a common set of values and vision for an organization. We began by writing our values statement then researched business ideas."

Their advice: "As the company grows, informal communications that worked with 15 employees do not work at 100 employees. Communications need to become formalized. When there are 100 employees, confusion can grind the train to a halt."



Lanmark Technology, #7

Lani Hay

IT/administrative services

Location: Fairfax, Virginia

2002 sales: \$151,000

2006 sales: \$10.1 million

Her biggest challenge: "As a small professional services provider, Lanmark Technology did not have the luxury of name recognition when it came to recruiting professionals. However, by investing much of its upfront operating capital into building a competitive employee benefits package, LMT was able to recruit and retain qualified and competent personnel."

Her success secret: "Always portray where you are going in life, not where you came from. Dare to dream and create the life you want to live."



PeopleServe, #22

Linda Moranski

Technology staffing

Location: Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

2002 sales: \$425,000

2006 sales: \$9.4 million

Her biggest challenge: "Challenges never go away, they just change. One of the best things I've done for my business was to join a CEO forum. We act as an advisory panel for each other, learn from each other, and push each other outside our comfort zones."

Her success secret: "Don't give up. One of my best clients today would not take my phone calls for over 8 months. I never gave up calling. We did just under \$400,000 in business with them last year."



The Saxon Group, #26

Jeni Bogdan

Industrial construction

Location: Sugar Hill, Georgia

2002 sales: \$4.3 million

2006 sales: \$30.5 million

Why she started the business: "Saxon was formed in 1991 at the request of a client to help win a bid. This contract grew into more contracts. We began constructing power generating facilities in the mid-1990s and have enjoyed a steady growth."

Her success secret: "Saxon has a 'team approach' management style. Each member works together to provide personal, innovative and responsive leadership."



Perfect Power, #31

Lynn Paige

Solar electric design/installation

Location: Phoenix

2002 sales: \$62,000

2006 sales: \$3.1 million

Her success secret: "Have the end goal in mind every day, with every project."

Her advice: "Always remember you can only give your best when you fill yourself up first."



Fraser Communications, #36

Renee Fraser

Advertising/PR

Location: Santa Monica, California

2002 sales: \$100,000

2006 sales: \$32.7 million

Her biggest challenge: "Investing in growth. I took a risk by using valuable resources to get into certain doors, and it paid off. But it was difficult to spend those funds on the 'possibility.'"

Her success secret: "Keep learning. Learn the client's business. Learn about new media. Always keep stretching yourself."



BrightStar Healthcare LLC, #38

Shelly Sun

Health-care staffing

Location: Gurnee, Illinois

2002 sales: \$112,000

2006 sales: \$3.5 million

Why she started the business: "I started BrightStart Healthcare after my husband and I [had] to find reliable care for his late grandma while she was battling cancer. This motivated me to develop a healthcare staffing business to provide reliable, trustworthy and compassionate care to all in need."

Her biggest challenge: "My biggest challenge was managing the fast growth of the company. I worked long hours and found top talent to help me."



Powertek Corp., #41

Nancy Scott, Samar Ghadry

Business/IT solutions

Location: Fairfax, Virginia

2002 sales: \$25,000

2006 sales: \$611,000

Their biggest challenge: "The biggest initial challenge was to get people to trust your ability to do a good job as a newcomer. We overcame this by conveying to potential customers that we were a quality organization and then living up to it."

Their success secret: "Realize that the company is as good as your people. Always try to get the best out of your employees. Encourage them to treat your customers like gold, and your customers will in turn be loyal."



Advantage Performance Network, #48

Mary Sue Leathers

Travel/incentives

Location: Savage, Minnesota

2002 sales: \$21.8 million

2006 sales: \$60 million

Why she started the business: "I had been in the industry for 20 years and with all the changes taking place, there seemed to be a lack of customer service. My No. 1 priority was to bring customer service back to the customer and to create an atmosphere whereby our customers could become our partners."

Her success secret: "A business is not built around the word 'I.' Without the trust of your employees and your customers, you have nothing."