

Employer Spotlight: The Female CEO

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There are 10.6 million woman-owned businesses operating in the United States, according to statistics recently published by the SBA. These businesses employ over 19.1 million individuals, and unsurprisingly many of these individuals are also women.

In Windsor, Connecticut, The Goodman Speakers Bureau operates with an all-female staff. The business was founded 27 years ago by Diane Goodman, who had noticed the demand for promotional companies at her previous position as a community volunteer. Even though she was a single mother of three children, Diane was able to establish an in-home office with the help of her mother, another entrepreneur.

As the pioneer of the first woman-owned speakers bureau in the male-dominated profession of speaking, Diane says, "I don't want young women to forget what we have done, and to let us mentor them."

Today, Diane believes that her clients appreciate a female staff because women are good mentors, nurturers, and listeners. However, it is also a struggle for Diane to find speakers who are women, as there has not been strong social support for girls to pursue assertive professions like speaking.

Other fields that naturally attract a female crowd are defined by their clientele. Julie Moorehead, Chief of Staff at The Longaberger Company, says that Longaberger "is a woman-to-woman, relationship-based business that women definitely respond to. We do have some men who are customers, some men who are consultants, but clearly the business has been driven from the female perspective."

Success at The Longaberger Company is high, considering that the basketmaking company was established in 1973 with a small team of 5 basketmakers. Currently, the privately-owned company has a staff of 3,000 in addition to 60,000 sales associates who operate their own basketmaking businesses as independent contractors. Of that sales field, 99% are women.

"From a consultant standpoint, the business model allows you as much flexibility as you need to focus on the things that are important to you and your family," Julie says. "Our CEO is a working mother, so she definitely knows what it is like to balance the whole work-family aspect."

Woman-owned businesses usually offer perks that are valuable to working mothers, such as flexible schedules and on-site doctors. These benefits vary from company to company, but one thing that remains consistent is an enduring sense of sisterhood. Julie says that "it's just by nature of having so many women involved in the business that there really is

a great sense of women helping other women be successful. I don't know how to label it, but its part of the culture.”

Whether today's businesswoman is pioneering her way through a nontraditional field or marketing a timeless endeavor, she is part of a strong female workforce that contributes \$2.46 trillion to the economy. The future appears even stronger for female business owners like Diane, who says, “I try to focus on strengths, not weaknesses. We all have to acknowledge what our strengths are.”