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Women-Led Businesses

A helping hand

For many successful female executives, mentors play an important role

BY MARY MOORE
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Behind every great woman is a mentor, and no exception are the Boston-area women executives whose professional muses have guided them along the way.

From business partners and co-workers to husbands and fathers, businesswomen across the board said that they have not done it alone. They have learned leadership skills, management techniques, self-confidence and, in some cases, the simple realization that they are capable of making good decisions.

"I definitely learned the art of not getting entangled in the emotion of it. When you have to make a clear decision, you can't react to how everybody responds to it," said Andrea Cohen, CEO of HouseWorks, which provides home care options. "You really have to trust yourself."

Cohen's mentor, Alan D. Solomont, is the co-founder of HouseWorks and a Democratic party fundraiser who now serves as the U.S. Ambassador to Spain. In addition to emphasizing the importance of strong decision making, Solomont taught Cohen that it is perfectly acceptable to ask for what you need, rather than wait for someone to offer.

"No one ever knows what you're thinking. So ask," she said.

Laura Trust, co-president and co-founder of Finagle-A-Bagel, said she has had many mentors, but her father has been the most influential. He owned a fashion business in the garment industry, and Trust spent her early career working for him.

"My father was good at understanding

the power of a brand versus the bricks and mortar," she said. To that end, she said, Finagle-A-Bagel, has been selling its brand in BJ's Wholesale Club, Stop & Shop, Market Basket and Roche Bros. since 2009, moving beyond storefront locations to increase company sales in a recession.

When Finagle-A-Bagel started, Trust also consulted with Paul Fireman, former CEO of Reebok International, who gave her tips on marketing.

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Tracey Armstrong
CEO of Copyright Clearance Center

"I've been so fascinated by what he said and did with his company, I've really tried to take the same approach to marketing that he did," she said.

Tracey Armstrong, CEO of **Copyright Clearance Center**, which works in the publishing industry, has sought guidance from several women along her professional path. "Women like me wouldn't be doing what I'm doing if they hadn't done what they did," she said.

As Copyright Clearance Center is expanding internationally, one of Armstrong's greatest mentors lives in Finland — Tarja Koskinen-Olsson, a member of the Copyright Clearance Center board of directors.

"The first word to describe her? Diplomacy. And she has really taught me how to balance," said Armstrong. "We don't

need to climb the hill in the first day. It's a marathon, not a sprint."

Donna Kelleher, president and CEO of Next Generation Children's Centers, considers her husband Walter to be her mentor. Together they developed the childcare business, which launched in 1993, and Walter serves as the company's chief financial officer.

Budgeting, payroll and strategic planning — forecasting and attracting the right mix of age groups in each childcare center so they are sustainable — are among the skills he has taught her, Kelleher said. Her husband had been a manufacturer's representative prior to the childcare business.

Married more than 42 years, the couple now is "together 24-7," Kelleher said.

"He has the financial background to make all the right decisions there, and I know all the regulations and what I want to see in my schools," Kelleher said.

For Stephanie Sonnabend, CEO and president of Sonesta International Hotels Corp., her mentor is Irma Mann, founder of Boston-based IRMA Inc., a marketing and branding company.

Mann worked for Sonesta Hotels in the 1980s, leaving to start her own firm, Sonnabend said. Today, she said, Mann serves on Sonesta's board of directors.

"I really learned from her how to think about the customer, how to create plans and structures and feedback mechanism to really understand the buying behavior of the customer," said Sonnabend, who joined Sonesta in 1979.

Mann also taught her how that "different people need to be managed differently."

"Even today, I go to her for advice," Sonnabend said.

Ranked by 2009 revenue

Rank	Company	Revenue	Mass. employees	Total employees	Services	CEO	Title
1	The TJX Companies Inc.	\$20,288,400,000	13,000	154,000	Retailer	Carol Meyrowitz	President, CEO
2	BJ's Wholesale Club Inc.	\$10,187,000,000	NA	25,000	Membership warehouse club	Laura Sen	President, CEO
3	The Talbots Inc.	\$1,235,600,000	NA	9,100	Retailer	Trudy Sullivan	President, CEO
4	AGAR Supply Inc.	\$553,903,000	430	430	Broadline food distributor	Karen S. Bressler	President, CEO
5	Shire Human Genetic Therapies (HGT)	\$550,000,000	1500	1850	Biopharmaceuticals	Dr. Sylvie Gregoire	President
6	Continental Resources	\$335,000,000	125	300	IT products and services	Mary Nardella,	CEO
7	Copyright Clearance Center	\$206,528,000	235	240	Broker for materials including books and newspapers	Tracey Armstrong	CEO
8	Garber/FCm Travel Solutions	\$205,331,000	143	250	Travel management company	Roselyn Garber	Owner, chairwoman
9	Analysis Group	\$185,000,000	240	490	Economic consulting	Martha Samuelson	President, CEO
10	Atlas Travel International	\$139,771,742	66	117	Travel company	Elaine Osgood	President, CEO
11	Axcelis Technologies	\$133,022,000	550	980	Semiconductor equipment	Mary Puma	Chairman, CEO
12	Constant Contact	\$129,061,000	500	700	E-mail, social media marketing and event marketing	Gail Goodman	CEO
13	BackOffice Associates	\$115,200,000	75	421	Data migration, governance and management	Trish Kennedy	Co-founder, CEO
14	Granite City Electric Supply Co. Inc.	\$85,000,000	135	203	Distributor of electrical equipment	Phyllis Papani Godwin	CEO
15	Sonesta International Hotels Corp.	\$65,000,000	350	700	Hospitality	Stephanie Sonnabend	President, CEO
16	Eastern Insurance Group	\$60,000,000	307	310	Insurance, employee benefits	Hope Aldrich	President, CEO
17	Fetco Home Decor Inc.	\$50,708,000	66	85	Maker of picture frames and albums	Nancy Babine Kucinski	President, CEO
18	Edgewater Technology	\$50,000,000	81	350	Consulting firm, business analytics, data management	Shirley Singleton	Chairman, CEO,
19	Alder Foods Inc.	\$49,800,000	17	25	Selling food brands to the U.S. military	Michelle Keating	President, CEO
20	Infinity Pharmaceuticals Inc.	\$49,539,000	173	175	Cancer drug discovery and development	Adelene Perkins	President, CEO
21	Coghlin Electrical Contractors	\$47,000,000	250	250	Electrical contractor	Susan Mailman	President
22	SeraCare Life Sciences Inc.	\$44,400,000	NA	196	Diagnostic products	Susan Vogt	President, CEO
23	Avedis Zildjian Co.	\$43,850,176	111	123	Manufacturer of musical instruments	Craigie Zildjian	CEO
24	Candlewick Press	\$42,000,000	83	220	Children's book publishing	Karen Lotz	Joint managing director
25	Atlantic Charter Insurance Co.	\$38,285,990	80	80	Workers' compensation insurance	Linda Sallop	President, CEO
26	Communispace	\$36,800,000	270	295	Market research	Diane Hessian	President, CEO
27	PI Worldwide	\$36,000,000	29	29	Management consulting	Nancy J. Martini	President, CEO
28	E. T. & L. Corp.	\$34,000,000	156	156	Heavy construction	Jennie Lee Colosi	President, treasurer
29	Great International Travel	\$33,000,000	30	30	Corporate travel agency	Carole Swartz	President, CEO
30	Travel Leaders/Happy Holidays Travel	\$27,408,000	14	17	Full service travel agency.	Diane Mullahy	President, CEO
31	P3I Inc.	\$26,282,587	121	269	Professional engineering, design and IT	Janice Guy	Founder, president, CEO
32	Next Generation Children's Centers	\$25,000,000	564	564	Child care and early childhood education	Donna Kelleher	President, CEO
33	Fraser Engineering Co. Inc.	\$22,334,168	74	74	Mechanical, electrical, plumbing and general contractor	Cecelia Fraser	President, CEO
34	Ceralta Technologies Inc.	\$21,969,604	57	57	Maker of products for radio and microwave applications	Linda Moulton	CEO
35	Bitstream Inc.	\$21,489,000	61	NA	Software development	Anna Chagnon	President, CEO
36	KNF&T Staffing Resources Inc.	\$19,222,564	24	24	Staffing services	Beth Tucker, Jeanne Fiol	Co-presidents
37	Terason	\$18,000,000	40	48	Maker of portable medical ultrasound equipment	Alice Chiang	Founder, chairman
38	Security Construction Services Inc.	\$17,500,000	35	35	General contractor	Janet Ceddia	President
39	Boston Green Goods Inc.	\$17,077,000	27	27	Healthy living catalog and Website	Mercia Tapping	CEO, president
40	Roxbury Technology Corp.	\$16,500,000	60	60	Imaging supplies and parts	Elizabeth Williams	President, CEO
41	Hollister	\$16,330,816	50	50	Staffing firm	Kip Hollister	Founder, CEO
42	The Center for Business Intelligence	\$15,431,000	57	57	Conferences for biopharma and health care industries	Kathleen Coffey	President
43	Bay State Envelope Inc.	\$15,000,000	35	35	Printer	Diana Skogseth	CEO
44	Dependable Cleaners	\$14,600,000	230	230	Retail dry cleaning and laundromats	Christa Hagearty	President, CEO
45	HouseWorks	\$12,800,000	135	250	Home health care	Andrea Cohen	Co-Founder, CEO
46	United Personnel	\$12,088,075	726	726	Temporary staffing	Mary Ellen Scott	President, owner
47	Buyer Advertising Inc.	\$11,000,000	26	26	Advertising, branding and communications services	Betty Buyer	President
48	Chadwick Martin Bailey	\$11,000,000	60	65	Custom market research firm	Anne Bailey Berman	President, CEO
49	Front Line Inc.	\$10,302,000	65	65	Construction cleaning, demolition, water damage	Nancy Salter	President, CEO
50	CRC Company Inc.	\$10,151,000	30	30	General and marine construction	Carolyn Cashman	President

SOURCE: Information compiled from BBJ survey. List was compiled in cooperation with The Commonwealth Institute.

NOTE: List excludes hospitals, colleges and universities and other nonprofit organizations.

Ties ranked by number of Mass. employees.

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