

# Women in Business

A supplement to  
*The Daily Reporter*

## **ANNUAL ROUNDTABLE:**

Mentoring  
Building business,  
building leaders

## **PLUS...**

**Nancy Burton helps  
steer Central Ohioans  
through traffic troubles**

Clients and friends  
convinced Tonya Tiggett  
to open her Spanish  
education business

Local community  
a priority for  
Dublin spa owner

Columbus woman's  
business success  
speaks for itself

Guirlinger's own health  
issues led to successful  
fitness business



**Angela Petro —  
One-time 'adventure'  
now a booming  
catering business**







# One-time adventure now a booming catering business



From learning to cook out of the pages of her red-and-white gingham-checked Better Homes and Gardens cookbook to opening a new 3,000-square-foot banquet facility, Angela Petro has built her catering company from the ground up.

Company growth is nothing new for Petro, owner of local catering company Two Caterers Contemporary Cuisine, but transforming a vacant, historic German Village building into a shining and chic banquet facility was a challenge that she struggled to wrap her mind around.

"I drove by this building every day for a year and I kept looking at the for sale sign and thinking, 'Oh my gosh, could we really pull that off?' And I never thought we could pull it off," she said of her decision to buy the structure that several generations ago was a car house and horse barn.

Walking into the newly remodeled banquet facility on South High Street, it's hard to believe that the building once housed horses and the city's street cars.

It's even more difficult to believe that just last year the space had fallen to ruin.

"The first time we walked in, it smelled like sewer gas and it had leaks and it was rotting," Petro said.

Now, the place adds a revitalized feel to its South High Street block and offers an air of rustic elegance to its visitors.

The exposed original brick walls and water-stained wooden rafters remind clients of the building's rich history, while a newly added second floor and streaming natural light bring the building a shabby-chic or restoration-hardware look.

Petro said people often ask if she plans to add a ceiling or cover the wooden beams.

"Absolutely not. I love to see all the water stains and the old chipped paint and the brick in the building is a different color on every wall. It's 151 years of life in this building," she said.

While Two Caterers has certainly come a long way from its beginnings in a rented out bar kitchen, its return to German Village is actually a step back toward its origins.

Petro was working as a bartender in the building next to the newly renovated High Line Car House 17 years ago when she and a friend decided to try something new.

They approached the bar owner and asked if they could use kitchen space in his other bar to start a catering company and his consent led to a small lunch restaurant and weekend catering venture.

At the time, Petro thought of the company as just something new to do.

"It was an adventure and I had nothing to lose. My friend and I both felt like we were just killing time until we figured out what we wanted to be when we grew up. But I was 27 and had been out of college for a few years, so I figured doing something for myself had to be better than the crappy day job I had," she said.

She added that when she started out she didn't know how to cook, but used the iconic, gingham-checked Better Homes and Gardens cookbook to teach herself.

"I remember the early days, literally crying over a big pot of soup because it took me like four hours to make because I didn't know what I was doing," Petro said.

Rather than stemming from a love of cooking, Two Caterers was born after a New Year's Eve party that Petro and her friend hosted.

She said the pair bought everything from Sam's Club and her friends raved about how wonderful everything was.

After that, the girls thought "Oh catering seems easy," Petro said, laughing and noting that, "it's not!"

Despite the struggles over pots of soup and long work days, Two Caterers soon outgrew its humble beginnings and moved to its own space in Linworth where it stayed for nine years.

About a year into business, the company's co-founder realized that catering just wasn't for her.

Petro said that was when she decided the business had shifted from being a way to kill time and had instead become what she wanted to be "when she grew up."

"There was a small buyout, it felt like a million dollars to me. It really was a small amount of money, but I didn't have it," she said. "So, I realized that in order to buy her out and move forward I either had to decide to take this completely seriously and make significant changes in how I went about my business or give up."

After the buyout, Petro pursued the business with a new gusto.

She attended a three-month class at the Ohio Foundation for Entrepreneurial Education that taught her how to work on her business, rather than in her business.

That was also when she started working with a mentor, which she said has helped her immensely.

Toward the end of her classes, Petro was slapping herself to stay awake, but the education changed the way she viewed owning a business and taught her how to build her company into a permanent structure.

And while she built, she grew familiar with all the intimate details of Two Caterers.

"I taught myself to cook. I taught myself how to fix the fryer. I knew how to wait tables, but everything else I taught myself on the fly. I've worked in every department until that department was built and I moved into the next area of building. So I've done everything in this company from the ground up," she said. "I have insight into every department here."

That knowledge and her ability to stay on the leading edge helped Two Caterers flourish even during the economic downturn.

While other companies started to get their toes wet with social media, Petro said Two Caterers decided to dive in head-first.

She did her homework and noticed that most of her competition had blogs or social media accounts that were often neglected or updated irregularly at best.

To avoid falling into the same habits, she hired a creative director and said it led to growth of 30 percent per year straight through the recession.

"I really believe it was linking in with social

media early and hitting it hard and owning the space where our competitors were late to the game. It kind of launched us a little bit," she said.

Throughout its growth, Two Caterers has forged relationships with well-known entities around town including Ohio State and Ohio Health.

But, for Petro, it's the smaller relationships that are the most important.

She said she has a handful of clients who have been using Two Caterers since its beginning and she's honored to have helped the same families celebrate weddings, the birth of their children, high school graduations and other landmark occasions.

"I actually value those far more than I value the big fancy relationships that we have," she said.

She's also excited about a couple up-coming events.

On back-to-back weekends this May, the High Street Car House will host weddings for couples who decided to book the venue even before its remodeling plans were drawn up.

Petro said the couples first viewed the space when it still smelled like sewage, but they had faith.

"Both couples were so adorable, they bought into the dream before we even had a drawing," she said. "It's really cute."

She said the couples were blown away by the building's transformation at their most recent visit.

While the place has certainly come a long way, Petro said she's far from done. She said she plans to continue improving the facility in small stages and she's confident that it's rustic chic look will keep in vogue.

"I don't think it'll ever go out of style. The building is 150 years old, it looked cool then, it looks cool now, it'll look cool in another 150 years," she said.

More information about Two Caterers and the new venue is available at [TwoCaterers.com](http://TwoCaterers.com).

— Jessica Shambaugh



# Mentoring

## Building business, building leaders



**Erin Cleary**

Erin joined Kegler Brown in 2009 and is an associate with the firm. Erin focuses her practices in the areas of business, tax and securities; mergers and acquisitions; and estate planning. For businesses facing transitions, she assists in areas of succession strategy, charitable giving and estate planning. She is a graduate of Georgetown University and The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law



**Yvette Cox**

Yvette is a member with Bailey Cavaleri LLC. She practices in the areas of bankruptcy; commercial banking and finance; commercial law and transactions; workout and transaction restructure; creditor and debtor rights; corporate reorganization and commercial litigation. She is a graduate of The Ohio State University and Capital University Law School.



**Lori Embrey**

Lori is associate vice president, financial advisor of Hamilton Capital Management. As a member of the firm's wealth management team, she is responsible for organizing, managing and directing the delivery of client services. A graduate of The Ohio State University, Lori has a bachelor's degree in consumer affairs and a master's in family financial management.



**Peggy Ruhlin**

Peggy is the chief executive officer of Budros, Ruhlin & Roe, Inc., a Columbus-based wealth management firm with \$2 billion of assets under management. Her professional skill coupled with her ability to build strong client relationships has earned her the distinction of being one of America's most distinguished women in wealth management, as determined by Wealth Manager magazine, and one of the Top 10 Woman RIAs in 2014,

according to WealthManagement.com. She is a Certified Public Accountant with a Personal Financial Specialist accreditation, and a Certified Financial Planner certificant.



**Cindy Shillingburg**

Cindy is Publisher of The Daily Reporter. She has been with the newspaper since 1998, serving as Editor for 15 years.



**Megan Warman**

Megan is an officer within the trust and investment department at The Park National Bank. An experienced estate planning professional, she actively manages and monitors her clients' accounts to meet their investment and estate planning goals through innovative solutions and strategies. Megan is a graduate of Clemson University and the University of Akron School of Law.

SHILLINGBURG: Many, if not all, of us have had mentors in our lives; and many, if not all, of us have served as mentors for others. The reason mentoring works within our companies is that it allows us to grow by strategically passing along important information to those who have been trained to understand the company's culture, its history, its strengths and its weaknesses.

Mentoring allows the teachers to delegate work so they can focus on other matters. It can be used to transition a mid-level manager into an executive position, and mentoring can aid in succession planning.

So chances are, whether we are the mentors or the mentees, as business leaders, we understand the value of teaching and learning from others. That's what we're going to talk about in this roundtable.

I'd like to start with the basics. I was doing some research yesterday and read an article written by a University of Washington professor who stated that there is no universally accepted definition of mentor.

COX: I knew she studied for this. (Laughter.)

SHILLINGBURG: I do. I do. (Laughing.) Yvette, tell me how you would define it.

COX: Well, I think that at least in law firms — I have been in a megafirm and I have been in a small firm and now I'm in a medium firm — I think in the megafirms there's sometimes a push for formal mentoring programs. That's kind of like institutionalized friendship. I am sure that it has its pluses, but I find that the one-on-one relationship building is much more effective than enforced "let's all meet once a week and talk about our problems" type of mentoring. What do you all do at Kegler?

CLEARY: We do have formal mentors, but to be honest, I think more of the true mentoring comes from the people who are immediately giving you work and the people who you are immediately giving work to. I find that to be the most valuable mentoring — for me, at least.

I worked for a really large corporation where there was a formal mentoring program. The mentors you were assigned were people outside of your department. I think that serves a valuable role as well when you have questions that require judgment and you don't want to ask the people you work for or who work for you. But I think the most true development happens, like you say, with

the people you work with every day. I think that's the most valuable.

EMBREY: I think a mentor is just someone who cares about your success, who wants to spend time with you and make sure that you succeed. You may come in with a lot of effort and a lot of ambition, the fire in your belly — which is wonderful, but you need direction and you need purpose. I think your mentors, whether they're formal or informal, help you to find that purpose and direction.

COX: Does the bank have a formal mentoring program or departmental mentoring?

WARMAN: In terms of our department, it's more of a natural progression. We're not necessarily assigned a person, but if we have new people coming on, if somebody is appropriate to help them with that, they go ahead and take them under their wing. So I think it's a more natural environment from our perspective.

RUHLIN: Well, my firm's fairly small; there are only 40 of us in the firm. So, obviously, a formal mentoring program probably is impractical at that size of a firm. But we do form relationships and try to help not only the newer employees, but also the high-potential employees, in being able to achieve as much success as they're capable of in the firm.

WARMAN: Something else that's important is that the mentor should want to be a mentor. When you have an artificial environment, sometimes it feels a little forced or they feel like they have to bring somebody along. A really good mentor is somebody who is wanting to help that individual grow, become a better person through the business, and also help the company. That's such a key aspect that hopefully we all experience and are able to pass on.

COX: Absolutely, and most of us who, when we got out of school — I don't know about business school and things like that, but coming out of law school, which three of us here did, law school doesn't teach you how to do anything. I mean, it's three to four years and —

SHILLINGBURG: Should I delete that when I get the transcript back? (Laughter.)

COX: If there's a lawyer who disagrees with that statement, I would like to talk with them alone. (Laughter.)

You learn a lot of theory, you learn how to think, but most of us were somewhere in our 20s when we got out of law school and we'd been going to school all of our lives, so we hadn't had a lot of the life experiences that a lawyer, or a good accountant, or certainly, an investment expert, needs to relate to all kinds of people and all age groups.

So because of that you look back at your first job and the people who worked with you. I'm not sure we even called it mentoring at that point. It was just the development of a working relationship with older, more experienced people and the newbies on the block, so to speak. I think that's what we were both saying, it's the informal mentoring...

CLEARY: Right.

RUHLIN: I think there's maybe a misconception about mentoring and having a mentor, at least on the part of the younger or the newer employees. I mean, I have had people describe it to me as, "Well, my mentor is someone who is going to, you know, just kind of pick me up and pull me along, and kind of do everything for me, and make sure I have all the opportunities, and tell me everything to do." And that's not a formula for success. It's not going to work that way. The mentoring relationship is not completely altruistic, where we are just going to sacrifice ourselves to...

COX: I'm not your mother.

RUHLIN: Yeah. It's not going to be like that. It has to be a give-and-take. At our firm, we attempted some-



thing we called coaching, versus mentoring, and we were assigned various people in the firm. Every quarter we would meet with them for an hour or so and have time set aside during the day to do that. Basically, at least

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the ones who were assigned to me, they would come in and they'd just sit there and they'd wait for me to tell them everything.

You have to be prepared and you have to know what you want to draw out of the person you want to be mentoring you, and also figure out some way where you can give back to the mentor. Where I like the giving back is, I'm older than a lot of the employees at our firm and so I appreciate knowing how Gen Xers and Millennials think about things, because they think about things differently. They think about investing differently, working with a professional advisor differently. So they can help me even though they're new.

SHILLINGBURG: Sure.

COX: I totally agree with what you say. I think you take the young lawyer or the young accountant who has all of this learned theory, and the most important thing they need to know now is how to interact with our clients, internal and external, and the expectations of our clients, and the formality or the informality with our clients. That's critical to the mentoring process. I think that there is a different view with Gen Xers and Millennials that we need to deal with because sometimes the decision makers at the client level are the experienced people that...

RUHLIN: The Baby Boomers.

COX: ...that may not necessarily appreciate the Millennial approach to life. And that's OK. They're the buyers of the services, so we care about that.

SHILLINGBURG: Do you think you can teach that to them?

COX: Yeah.

SHILLINGBURG: You can?

COX: I think you can if they're open to it. I think that it's almost what we all learned when we were growing up: how to react to people and how to act with people, and building that mutual respect and trust, and it's not fake and it's not phony. You can't necessarily teach that.

SHILLINGBURG: Sure.

COX: But you can emphasize how important that is. I mean, you can write a wonderful brief, but if you can't have a good, meaningful conversation with somebody, your brief's a dime a dozen down the street.

WARMAN: I think, in terms of developing those skills, that's a very long process, too.

COX: Yeah, it is.

WARMAN: Usually when you're able to develop those skills with somebody who's younger, I have to

believe that takes a very long time. It continuously grows and grows as you work with that mentee. My experience is, I had the privilege of working with somebody for three or four years before they left the bank, and that was huge to have that duration with them, to learn those skills.

RUHLIN: It's difficult, I think, for our new younger staff members on the wealth management and the investment side, too, who have to work with a client who's maybe 70 years old and has millions of dollars, and they just graduated from college and they have student loans, not millions of dollars. It's just a whole different world. How are you going to sit down across the table and communicate with that client and give good information and have it be accepted by the client?

So if they have a mentoring relationship with someone in the firm who's older — they can kind of practice on me, you know, and here's what someone of another generation might say that none of my friends would say. It's very natural. So I think the mentoring process also gives them experience in working with clients.

CLEARY: Along those lines, I think even just witnessing someone have that interpersonal relationship and have that meeting is valuable. I know a lot of people don't have the luxury of, say, having two lawyers in a meeting, but to the extent when people have done that for me and said, "I am just going to invite you to the meeting and write off your time," that is some of the most valuable time I have spent, just to see what the questions are, what the answers are.

COX: I do that a lot. And in addition to saying, "I'm going to invite you, I'll write off your time," when we go into the meeting I say, "I want to introduce you to my colleague, my associate who works with me on a lot of projects, I wanted you to be able to meet her or him, and she's free today," or he's free. And I think that's fair to tell a client.

CLEARY: Right.

COX: We've all been in situations when the New York drives come in for a meeting and there may be six of them and three of them are carrying briefcases for the other three.

CLEARY: All at \$600 an hour.

COX: I'm not saying anything good or bad about that, but it is kind of a cha-ching, cha-ching experience. And in the Midwest I think we're expected to behave better than that.

RUHLIN: We do.

COX: We do.

EMBREY: It's important to give



younger associates those opportunities to be in front of clients too, just to be there and start with casual conversation and just feel the moment. And beyond that, to give them opportunities to interact with those clients. There are always simple tasks or something that they can easily handle. Just give them those opportunities to start those conversations and to develop the confidence in interacting with those older clients or the clients of an older generation.

COX: Fortunately, my clients are my friends. I mean, I feel like I'm very blessed that some of the people I met years ago and who hired me and took a chance when I was green as grass, etc., etc, are still my clients. They've changed institutions and they've brought me with them and I have learned. They've introduced me to other people, and that's how business grows.

But to a certain extent the business becomes secondary. If you can have those relationships, then the business relationship follows and it's not necessarily the most important thing. Because what we all do for a living is not all that easy and sometimes it's not all that much fun, but if you can have a good conversation with a friend who also is a client during the day, it really changes the atmosphere and the feeling of things. That's the kind of thing I like to tell young lawyers about. That's what's important. The practice of law or the practice of accounting or investing, advising, it's not fun, I mean, let's face it.

EMBREY: That's a perception. (Leaning in toward stenographer.) I love my job and I love my clients. (Laughter.)

COX: And we all do, too. And that's really not what I mean. What I mean is there are lots of people who are so well suited to sitting in an office and running algorithms or... just shoot me now! Number one, I

don't have the skills. And, number two, I really think that interaction is the good part of being out in the workplace. Part of that with young associates is making sure they understand that you're a better lawyer if you're a balanced person. You don't want your client to just see you as a lawyer.

CLEARY: You want to be the trusted advisor.

WARMAN: You want to be a person, too.

COX: Absolutely. Absolutely. And don't say, "Well, I'm going to have a client development lunch." I go, "No, you're not. You're not going. No. No."

SHILLINGBURG: Megan, you said that you had a mentor early in your career. Have all of you? Can you tell us a little bit about your experience with mentors?

WARMAN: Sure. Actually, that was something I was curious about in terms of this topic. I was very blessed coming into my career to work with a seasoned professional. She was just retiring, but I was essentially working through her client book and helping her out as she transitioned into retirement. She took me under her wing and was able to kind of walk me through things — things you don't learn at law school and things of that sort.

Essentially from the ground up she taught me the basics of business in terms of client interaction, communication, just the important things of the job that, if I didn't have that person in my life, I'm not sure how developed I would be right now in my skills. So she was vital in terms of where I am right now in my career.

CLEARY: I have also been blessed. I feel like I have been blessed with lots of mentors. I had a job in a big corporation before law school and I had a great mentor there. She was about 20 or 30 years older than I was, so she definitely had seen lots of business relationships and office politics, and she was a great mentor in that regard.

I have been really blessed with my formal mentors at Kegler right now, as well as informal mentors. I actually had the chance to participate in a somewhat new program through which you get CLE credits your first year of practice if you partner up with another lawyer in town. So I had a chance to have a mentor outside of my firm — and actually outside of a law firm, she was working in-house. That was a great experience just to receive a little bit of guidance from someone else who knows the ropes and has been practicing for a while. So all were great experiences.

COX: Law is my second profession. I was in journalism and on faculty at Ohio State for several years while I went to law school at night at Capital. So I wasn't new to the workforce in my first legal-profession job. It was a small boutique — It was a boutique firm that specialized in financial institutions and the Ohio Bankers Association and represented banks. There were three men who were the partners, and they couldn't have been more different in personality and in outlook on life.

They were all my mentors, and I'm blessed to still work with all three of them, but they are still tremendously different. One of them is a Type A personality and he's there 18 hours a day and that sort. Another is the calm, sage advisor. The other one is, "Let's go play golf and talk about the law." And the "Let's go play golf" one — they told me this later — goes to the others and says, "I'm really worried about Yvette. I mean, she's getting so uptight. She's just work, work, work."

And the guy with the Type A personality says, "Leave her alone. I've got her just where I want." (Laughter.)

So I think that's small firm mentoring. It was the greatest experience of my life. At that point in time, they'd never hired a woman, and they were not quite sure what to do with me.

RUHLIN: Well, I think I am kind of in a different situation because I basically have been self-employed since I was 25 years old. I have always had at least one partner, they've always been men, but we've been equals — peers, partners, equals. So it was kind of a question of, well, who's mentoring who here, because we're both just trying to figure out what we're doing or we're all trying to figure out what we're doing.

I started my career as a CPA, as an accountant, but switched to become a financial advisor after about 14 years. When I started, when I got my Certified Financial Planner designation, about 25 percent of all CFPs were women, 75 percent were men. That was 25 years ago. Today about 25 percent of all CFPs are women and 75 percent are men. So nothing's changed. Very much women are in the minority in our profession.

I'm starting to feel the pressure to actually do more mentoring and do more outreach to let women know what a wonderful career this is. You heard her (Pointing to Embrey) say it. I love my job. I love my clients. I am happy. It's a great career for a woman, and I don't know why we can't attract more of them.



EMBREY: When I was at Ohio State, I was a consumer affairs major. I had to take a financial planning class to get out, to graduate. I was absolutely terrified of this class, so I put it off until the last quarter I could possibly take it before I graduated. I tell this story in our Women's Exchange because women tend to be afraid of this topic sometimes.

RUHLIN: They think it's all about math or something.

EMBREY: Exactly, and that's exactly what I thought.

RUHLIN: And it's not.

EMBREY: I thought, I don't want to take this class; I'm really scared of it. And I fell in love with it. I fell in love with it! So I went on to get my master's degree in financial planning. I, too, have had a number of mentors, some that you, Peggy, mentored before they mentored me. And I'll tell you that the mentee has to want to be mentored.

CLEARY: Absolutely.

RUHLIN: Very good point.

EMBREY: The mentor has to want to be a mentor, and there has to be communication and respect. It's hard to "assign" a mentor to someone because you really have your own style, you have your own way of doing things. While there are some things you have to do certain ways, we're always going to interact differently with our clients. It's good to find someone that you have something in common with, someone who may have a similar working style, similar conversation style. That being said, it's also good to find someone who's a bit different than you who can kind of plug those holes where maybe you have weaknesses.

CLEARY: I will say, I think some of the most valuable mentoring doesn't take any time at all. I think a lot of people think, "I don't have time for mentoring." The other day another woman and I got an email from a very senior woman attorney at my firm in a different department saying, "Hey, I was at a meeting about all of the different practice areas and

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*women's exchange*



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it really seems like you two are doing so well. Your names came up, and I'm just so proud of you." And even though it took her two minutes to do that, I think that sort of thing is among the most important parts of mentoring.

EMBREY: It's also part of the job. It's part of doing your daily job. When I'm working with a younger associate, I encourage them to try new things. And my mentee always wants additional responsibilities, so I can send him out on a project — him because we don't have younger female advisors — so I can send him out on a project and he can get me 10, 20 percent of the way there. I send him out on that path and then we kind of finish it up together. It's an opportunity — he's helping me, he's providing support to me by doing some of those things that I know he can handle; and then together we're walking the rest of the way. As we continue to work together on those types of things, he can get farther and farther along to where I'm just kind of tweaking the final product.

COX: That's kind of the scenario that I was alluding to when you talked about formal versus informal. The people that we work with — the new hires, the young lawyers, or the lawyers who are transitioning from another job or whatever profession — who want to work with us are natural mentees and those are natural mentoring relationships.

The better they become, the better we become, because it's kind of a force or a group effort to give the clients what they need and what they want. It's a real success when eventually I can say, "If I am not available, call so-and-so, he's on top of this."

Because what we're really trying to do, and hopefully successfully, is have the client know it's never a situation where nobody's available.

Those people pick up on how you work with your clients and they also develop the skill sets that are required to do the kind of work that I do, or you do, or any of you do. That's the natural mentoring process.

These people have the ability to come in the office and scream at me. I have no problem with that. We have hectic moments. We have midnight projects, that kind of thing, and then everything's fine. But it's a friendship of sorts that is real important in the workplace.

WARMAN: I think somebody else mentioned it, but there's importance in the silent lessons. Not only can we delegate work or show them how to do something, but it's about how you answer the phone, or if you have an angry client, how you deal with that. All those things a mentee pays attention to and they get great insight from you just because you lead by example.

CLEARY: Yeah. Just being cc'd on emails to read in a contentious situation, seeing how someone's responding.

WARMAN: Right.

COX: One of my favorite contentious situations — and you know we've all taken on clients where at a gut level we think, "Don't do this." And then later down the road, it's "I shouldn't have done that."

RUHLIN: Yeah.

COX: I had a client like that, and I told my colleague who works with me on many, many, many things — I'm not sure I use the correct term, but — "We're going to exit from this engagement." And he said, "What?" I said, "Yeah." I said, "It's time, you know. I would rather have an amicable divorce than a very, very unhappy marriage." And so I took care of that and we did exit.

The client came back and said, "Please, please, please." The associate said, "Come on, let's do it again." I said, "No, I'm not going to. We really shouldn't. It's not in anybody's best interest." But he prevailed; we brought the client back in. A month later I said, "It's your turn to extricate us."

That's what we're talking about, handling the tough things that you're not going to find out about in a book. It's developing your gut instincts about not every project being well suited or not every relationship going to work well.

CLEARY: Right. In the service industry, a cost/benefit analysis doesn't always do the job.

COX: No. Because life is short and

there are only so many hours in the day. If you're blessed with clients you love, you don't want to mess up your daily activity with someone you really can't help because you can't develop that relationship. It's good for the client to find somebody else and it's good for you that they do.

EMBREY: I have an attorney I work with on a regular basis who after each meeting with a new client, shakes his head and says, "Lori, you have the nicest clients." And that's by design. I had my own business for a number of years and there were people — I learned it is just not worth doing business with them. It makes for a "you love your job and you love your clients" situation when you get to choose who you're working with and it's a good relationship for everyone.

COX: I totally agree. Understanding that and learning it as somebody entering into the profession — because in everything we do, there's a press for client development. Usually the people that are pressing don't have a client base, but we won't even go there, because they're in charge of client development.

EMBREY: I feel like I just learned something.

CLEARY: Fantastic mentoring.

EMBREY: Yes. (Laughter.)

COX: And you sit there and you go, you know, you don't go out and develop clients. That's not how the world works. That's not how we choose our friends. If we're competent, that's very important too, but I don't want to go to lunch with somebody and say, "I am such a great lawyer and you really need to hire me!"

EMBREY: If you're passionate about what you do, people see that.

SHILLINGBURG: Absolutely, in any profession.

EMBREY: Your friends, your colleagues, your associates, other business professionals you come into contact with, they see that and they want to work with you because they know how much you love your job and see the care that you take in working with your clients.

COX: You all probably spend as much time in your offices as I do, and I don't have a life outside of work, so it's really important that my clients are my friends.

EMBREY: Yes. Right.

COX: They send me pictures of babies and I love it and I know their families.

RUHLIN: A lot of those same lessons dealing with clients apply to dealing with employees or coworkers.

COX: Yes.

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RUHLIN: Especially maybe newer ones you are trying to mentor. None of us hires anyone hoping they're going to fail or that they're not going to make it. We're investing money in these people — time and money, and we want them to succeed. So if in the mentoring process, or in some other process, you're finding that it's not going to be a good fit, either culturally or if it's one-on-one, you can usually shift them to somebody else and make it work that way. But the same kind of thing: You've got to make sure the people in your workplace are happy and friendly and the people you want to work with.

SHILLINGBURG: That's right. RUHLIN: And that you don't need to transition them out as you might have to do with a client.

WARMAN: You hope as a mentor that your mentee would have that comfort level with you, too, to come to you and say, "This isn't working," and they can let their hair down or ask you those questions that maybe you don't want to ask anybody else. So whether it's a good fit or not, you hope you can develop that relationship to the point they feel comfortable enough saying those

things to you instead of sticking with a job that is not a good fit for them, you, or the company.

EMBREY: I have a mentee now who is a truth teller.

COX: A truth teller? EMBREY: A truth teller. I call him my truth teller. He really is wonderful. He's a very hard worker and he provides a lot of support to me, and he also gives me feedback. I appreciate that so much because he does have a different perspective on things and he is just learning. He also works with other advisors in our firm, so it's nice to get his feedback on how we're doing and how we're doing things. It's a different perspective.

SHILLINGBURG: Are there any key qualities in mentors, if you had to list traits, what would be two or three personality traits that you would say makes a good mentor?

COX: Sharing. I think all of us think that we developed or we invented the world. I mean, let's face it, we're all strong women and that doesn't just happen. Fortunately, it just happens more nowadays than it might have used to have happened. We've developed a position and we know what we know. You have to get over the fact that it's not a secret. Your business grows and you're happier if you share this

knowledge and share these client contacts and share your life and professional secrets so that others can succeed, too. We all know a lot of people who have those abilities, but don't want to give up anything. Those are very bad mentors.

RUHLIN: Yes. You've also got to be willing to share personally as well as professionally.

COX: Oh, yes. RUHLIN: Professionally is the most important because that's why you're working with this person. But you have to be able to share personally and to open up about yourself and maybe things you've done well, things you haven't done so well and learned a lesson from, because those things are very valuable to a newer, younger person coming through the ranks.

EMBREY: Patience is really important. It's easier to give someone all the answers, it's easier just to keep work flowing. But to have the patience to let them take a project and take a stab at it before you do, to ask them the questions, "What do you think and why?" You have to have patience to give them time and space to make some mistakes, to learn from those in a safe environment, before you get to the client.

If you're so busy just trudging through the day-to-day, then there are opportunities lost to teach and train someone who can learn and grow and truly pay dividends to you if you invest the time in them.

CLEARY: I think it's the big picture people, strategic thinkers, who make good mentors instead of, you know, "Oh, you missed all these commas," or, "Oh, this one email had a bad tone."

EMBREY: Right.

CLEARY: Mentors should kind of take it up a level and maybe show a little bit more ownership. That goes a lot farther than picking on little details here and there.

WARMAN: I think the last trait I would probably add would be a level of compassion. We all have to remember we were in those shoes not too long ago, so understand they may mess up or something might go wrong, but go ahead and circle back around in terms of teaching the right way to do it in a compassionate manner. That is probably pretty beneficial for a mentor.

COX: Oh, no, I always tell all of the mentees I work with I'm perfect, and they get a good laugh. (Laughter.)

But, actually, we all know better. You're totally right. From the



standpoint of owning a project together and building a team, because that's really what I am trying to do. The younger lawyers that I work with, I want them to continue to work as part of my team. We all bring different skills to the table. There are things that I don't have time to do anymore and I'm not sure I could still do it as effectively as they can. So I'm reliant on their skills and they're reliant on mine. That's a good marriage no matter at what level, and you get all the benefits of that when you do it right.

EMBREY: Respectful communication.

COX: Sometimes shutting the door and screaming at each other works, too.

EMBREY: That works. Get it all out there.

COX: And that screaming can be both ways.

EMBREY: I told you I have the truth teller. I get it. (Laughter.)

COX: It's 11 o'clock at night and we're really tired and we're on the fourth draft, and he's screaming, "Stop moving commas around." "Oh, good idea." So I mean that kind of an open relationship. It's fun. You've got to make the workplace fun regardless of where it is or what you're doing.

SHILLINGBURG: I like what you said, Yvette, about the people with their proprietary knowledge and not wanting to share. So I'm going to ask all of you, do you think men are worse than women about not sharing? Or are women worse than men? Young people worse than older people? Older people worse than young people?

WARMAN: That is a dangerous topic.

SHILLINGBURG: It is. CLEARY: Sometimes it's easier

to share and not have that proprietary feeling when you're feeling more secure and more successful. For the ones struggling it's a little bit harder to say, "Here, I'll give away half my work and it's not going to bother me."

COX: Well, having had the benefit of becoming a lawyer in an era when there weren't all that many women lawyers — in the small firm where I started, they were all men. They'd never hired a woman and they weren't really sure what I was, but the experience that I had with them is they shared everything with me because we developed that rapport. I think it's personality-based as opposed to necessarily gender or age-based. Because, once again, life's too short not to have fun at work with what you do.

SHILLINGBURG: Absolutely. So do any of you have any advice for people who want to become mentors or who want to find a mentor?

COX: It's like true love. It either happens or it doesn't. Really.

SHILLINGBURG: I agree.

COX: I don't think you can force that relationship.

WARMAN: No.

COX: I think we look for people who complement us, who we can work together, who we can disagree with. We can shut that door, and I don't care if you're a second-year,

first-year associate, you can tell me I'm wrong, and you're not going to be a good mentor if you can't hear that.

RUHLIN: Right.

COX: Everybody brings something to the table. As that mentee grows, then the relationship grows, and you're more comfortable sharing that person with your clients and your clients with that person.

SHILLINGBURG: Have you ever had an instance in which someone acknowledged that you were their mentor and you didn't even know you were? I had a reporter who left Ohio and she sent me a nice note that said, "Thank you for being a great mentor." I thought, "Oh!" I was honored by the compliment, but I hadn't realized that she saw me that way.

RUHLIN: I've had something similar happen, but when I actually questioned her about it, I found that really what she meant was I was a role model. I don't think a role model and a mentor are exactly the same. Yes, there is some overlap there, but I don't think they're the same. So that's the only time it's ever happened to me.

I did want to say, you asked for advice for somebody who wants to be a mentor or wants to have a mentor, and I would say that if someone came to you and said, "Will you be my mentor?" the first



thing you should say is, "Well, what exactly do you mean by that and what is it that you would hope to get out of the relationship?"

COX: Very good thought.

CLEARY: I'd like to add, too, it never hurts to ask, even if it's not necessarily, "Will you be my mentor?" There are some somewhat intimidating people who I have had to ask for advice, and it turned out even the people who seem the scariest on the outside, they just open right up and are fantastic mentors. So there's no harm in asking questions.

RUHLIN: That's good.

COX: Asking a question is a complement. It presumes I know something.

SHILLINGBURG: Any other final comments? (No response.) You ladies were great. Thank you for being here. ☺

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# Helping steer Central Ohioans through traffic troubles



When Nancy Burton told her parents she was taking a position with the Ohio Department of Transportation as a public information officer after a lengthy career as a television news anchor, her father weighed in with a parable about his middle child.

“Of all the kids, you were the one that we had to put an ‘L’ and an ‘R’ on their shoes the longest and now you’re going to give people directions,” Ira Cantin teased her. “If they only knew.”

Burton, who joined ODOT in 2007, grew up in Norfolk, Virginia, a town with a large U.S. Navy presence.

Her parents owned a hat store but rather than going into the millinery trade, she wanted to enter broadcast journalism.

After earning a degree, Burton was on air with a news station in Springfield, Mass. and later touched ground in Portland, Maine before arriving at WCMH-TV, channel 4, in Columbus.

“I had a great career for 22 years and I loved it but I decided to get out of my contract early,” she said, citing a combination of getting older and wanting to spend more time with her then-12-year-old twins, Mack and Maddie.

After leaving WCMH-TV in 2006, Burton had a six-month stint in public relations and then learned of an opening in the communications department of ODOT’s District 6.

The district covers Delaware, Fayette, Franklin, Madison, Marion, Morrow, Pickaway and Union counties.

In the world of ODOT, with Burton helping to balance communication between the district and the general public, there is no winter, spring, summer and fall.

There’s snow and ice season and construction season.

With construction season kicking off in April, Burton buzzes around a field office on East Fifth Avenue in Columbus taking phone calls and walking hallways lined with newspaper article clippings and poster-size photographs of construction sites.

“What I love best is taking ‘engineer speak’ and turning it into something accurate and that the motoring public can understand. That’s harder than you may think,” she said, adding that her duties include letting people know about projects, commute adjustments and why the improvements are necessary.

“Construction, by nature, is inconvenient. It’s noisy, messy and congested and that’s why it’s so crucial to have accuracy and advance notification. I like making sure no one is surprised.”

With 70 projects currently underway in District 6 and more already under her belt, Burton says she’s not supposed to have a favorite but admits to being partial

to the \$200 million I-71/670 Columbus Crossroads project.

“It’s the largest project that I’ve been involved in and it’s had so many firsts for me,” she says, adding that since 2011, the project has yielded an annual average of 5,000-6,000 phone calls from the public.

“That’s not to mention emails. Months prior to any dirt being moved, we were working.”

Burton recalls officials wanting to test out pile-driving equipment to see if their work on the weekend would infringe upon the Sunday worship services at St. Paul AME Church on East Long Street.

She also points to taking COTA bus stops and Columbus State Community College semesters into consideration and highlights an increased effort to push awareness of the project on social media.

“Short of living under a rock” Burton said it has been the district’s goal to inform all Central Ohio motorists and residents about the multi-year project.

“I see those orange barrels and flashing lights and have the same reaction as everyone else,” she chuckled. “But it’s better when you know about it.”

Since she tends to hear from members of the general public when they are frustrated, Burton says she has to have thick skin.

“No one calls and says ‘Thanks, ODOT. I had a great commute.’ My boss has taught me to listen more than I talk and leave the emotions out of it. Just give me the facts,” she said. “Those are the things that have nothing to do with transportation and those are the gifts that have allowed me to grow. And I still get to be involved with the media. My parent’s investment of sending me to college is still reaping benefits.”

Burton says she wouldn’t have believed it if someone approached her 10 years ago and said she would work at ODOT and get to be creative.

“I would have said ‘No, I don’t think so.’ Who would have thought I would get to be creative with bridges, roads and Interstates,” she said, adding that she gets a kick out of trying to make daily traffic advisories clever. “I’m tired come Friday but I am never, never, never bored.”

Burton says the only downside to working in the state agency is that she can’t always showcase her shoe collection.

At one count, there were 137 pairs of slingbacks, peep toes, wedges, stilettos and boots in her closet.

“I love shoes,” Burton says but then acknowledges, with a resigned smile, that she can’t trek through a construction site in a pair of pumps.

“I don’t even buy them that much anymore because I can’t wear them. I have to wear work boots and a hard hat but if that’s the worst part of the job, it’s fine.”

In a male-dominated department, Burton says she’s been able to hold her own.

“I demonstrate it through my work ethic and I’ve earned that respect,” she said. “ODOT is one of the largest state agencies. Nothing I do and nothing I use belongs to Nancy Burton, it belongs to the state.”

— *Tiffany L. Parks*

# Side job turned into a full-time Spanish education business



Tonya Tiggett never dreamed of opening a business.

But after friends and clients started urging her to turn her passion into a rewarding and profitable venture, she decided to take the plunge.

The Speak Our Language founder said she was just working hard to make ends meet when a friend recommended that she stop knocking herself out to teach for others and start working for herself.

At the time, Tiggett was working for a large bank while also teaching Spanish at The Ohio State University and another private company.

She said some of her students complained about the services that company was providing and urged her to teach them independently.

“I had clients who asked me to please start my own company, literally at the same time this other person was offering, because they loved my curriculum and my approach,” Tiggett said.

After doing some research, Tiggett found that she was not under any type of noncompete contract and started brainstorming names for a company that could teach her students conversational Spanish.

Before long, she branched out and started Speak Our Language, a program that aims to teach adults conversational Spanish using non-native-speaking teachers, native-speaking conversation partners and field trips into the community.

The field trips include scavenger hunts through local Spanish markets or eating in a restaurant where diners have to order in Spanish.

Tiggett said she chose to primarily utilize teachers who were not native speakers because it makes them more relatable to students.

“We look like and sound like our students and we know exactly the mistakes they’re going to make, we know why they think the way they do and we’re able to teach in a way that addresses all of that,” she said.

As for Tiggett, she said her love of the language stems from her high school days.

She described her small town as “very vanilla.”

So when a Brazilian woman started working at her school as a Spanish teacher, Tiggett was intrigued.

“I thought she was very exotic and she really inspired me,” she said.

Even from those early beginnings, Tiggett’s passion for the language was easy to see.

“I always had straight A’s in Spanish, it was easy, I loved it, I was fascinated by it so I was going to be an interpreter or a translator,” she said.

However, that dream got a bit muddled when she decided to attend OSU for an international business degree.

While struggling her way through her first economics course, Tiggett realized the field wasn’t for her, dropped the class and enrolled instead in three language classes.

That many languages may be daunting for some, but Tiggett excelled, earning A’s in the courses and soon switching her major to Spanish teaching.

Still, lacking that business knowledge made things a little challenging when she decided to launch Speak Our Language.

She was able to take some comfort from the list of interested clients she had prior to making the decision to open her own shop, but she still decided to keep her day job for nine years as she built the company.

She said having no business background added some challenges, but she was able to overcome them by using experiences at her day job to learn business terminology, accounting terminology and marketing strategy.

She also credits a local women’s organization for much of her success.

“One of the smartest things I ever did was I joined an organization called WELD, which is Women for Economic and Leadership Development,” she said. “It was the best thing I ever did because I was instantly surrounded by energetic, like-minded women who were working at corporations and were also business owners.”

She said the group was able to offer programing to teach her the meaning of owning her own busi-

ness and instill within her an entrepreneurial mindset.

Networking through WELD and the National Association of Women Business Owners really set Tiggett on the right track, she said.

After nine years of ensuring that her business was stable and growing, she finally decided to leave her day job.

She said that day was enormously scary, but still exhilarating.

“I felt like jumping, shouting from the rooftops, I was elated and then I felt like literally vomiting,” she said. “I have never had that equal emotion ever in my life.”

Looking back on it today, she said she’s proud of her decision and the company her passion has turned into.

She said she’s developed close working relationships with several foreign-speaking organizations, businesses that see the importance of becoming multi-lingual, and local seminaries, who choose her classes because her students are able to hold up to 40-minute conversations after just seven weeks.

“We teach a grammatically correct Spanish, so we teach reading and writing, you get listening because it’s immersion-style learning and we have conversation practices throughout the two-hour classes,” she said.

The classes meet for two hours every Tuesday night for either an eight-week program or a 14-week program.

Students are also encouraged to study at home for at least an hour a week.

Tiggett said if her students do the work and show up, they are able to speak in understandable and meaningful conversations by the end of the program.

After reflecting on her own beginnings, Tiggett said she would offer one piece of advice to others looking to start their own business: “Don’t quit your day job.”

“If you want to start a business you need to make sure that there’s a customer base for it, so don’t quit your day job,” she said. “If you want to do it bad enough, you will find a way that you will create the business, keep your day job and learn while you still have someone else paying you a steady paycheck.”

— *Jessica Shambaugh*



# Local community a priority for Dublin spa owner



The salon and spa business is admittedly female-centric but, with competition on almost every corner, salons come and go and the notable ones are those that stand the test of time.

Peigi Fisher-Hanson, owner of the Spa at River Ridge in Dublin, has encountered her share of difficulties during her tenure in the beauty industry but, throughout her career, she has managed to maintain her positive outlook along with a dedication to the people around her and the community that provides a home for her business even if, sometimes, it is at the spa's expense.

Fisher-Hanson grew up in small-town Fremont, Ohio, the youngest of six girls and two boys.

"All the girls were kind of forced into going to all-girls colleges and I had no desire to do that," she said.

Her plan to escape the clutches

of an all-female education was to attend cosmetology school and so began her 26-year career in the industry.

"I moved to Columbus the month after I graduated cosmetology school," she said. "Small-town girl moving to the big city in Columbus; it was a big transition."

The risk came with a big reward when Fisher-Hanson came to work for the Charles Penzone family of salons and became their director of education.

Eventually, though, her small-town roots began to show and, when Penzone consolidated their nine small salons into a "grand salon," she knew it was not the place for her.

"The place just got a little too big for me and I just wanted to go back to a smaller environment," she said. "I wanted something more intimate but it was a great experience, it was the foundation for everything."

But leaving Penzone meant that Fisher-Hanson couldn't do what she loved most for most of the following year.

A nine-month non-compete clause prevented her from styling hair so she got her real estate license and worked as a Realtor for that interim period.

The experience helped her gain a respect for the realty industry, a valuable knowledge base and the realization that Realtor life was not necessarily for her either.

"What I really enjoy about what I do now is that it's instant gratification. When I do somebody's hair or I work with my employees during the day, it's just a good feeling and I go home and I know that this much was done today," she said. "With real estate, the job is never done. I have so much respect for Realtors now because it's every hour of the day, it's week-

ends and you can't turn it off."

Fisher-Hanson used some of her time working as a real estate agent looking for salons where she could eventually be a hair designer again, but nothing quite fit her need for quality work coupled with a homey feel.

The combination of her beauty education and real estate knowledge finally led her to open her own business, Spectrum Salon, in 1994, the same year she married her husband, Eric Hanson.

To open the business, she paired up with a partner, but the experience was not at all what she expected.

The building was a restaurant that they gutted completely and turned into a salon but, in 1996, after about 18 months, the partnership went sour and the corporation was dissolved.

"I made all of my mistakes at that salon and figured things out about opening a business and just kind of learned from our mistakes and went from there," she said.

After that first business attempt, Fisher-Hanson realized she had an untapped resource in her husband, an engineer for Honda.

Her "biggest cheerleader," he agreed to join her in another business venture and they opened up the Spa at River Ridge in Old Dublin in 1994 in a 4,200-square-foot space with nine employees.

"For 20 years this spa has been open," Fisher-Hanson mused. "Oh gosh, it's really been 20 years."

Since then, the business has grown into a Dublin staple, with Eric managing the numbers while Fisher-Hanson maintains the daily operation and creative side of the business.



After the success of the salon proved to be a lasting thing, Fisher-Hanson moved it into the Riverside Drive space it occupies now where it doubled in size and she now has 60 employees.

But with the city of Dublin beginning a massive revitalization project along the Bridge Street corridor, Fisher-Hanson will lose the space she has been in for only three and a half years.

"We've always been in Dublin and when we were told a year and a half ago that we were losing this location, we started looking at other locations outside of the area," she said.

She realized quickly that abandoning the community she has come to love was not an option.

Once again, she tapped into her real estate knowledge and used it to buy land just down the street with plans to take on a brand new project: Building a salon from the ground up.

"Dublin is a great community and good to us, so we want to continue to be here," she said.

Fisher-Hanson's commitment to the area is obvious.

She doesn't have a marketing department. Instead, she has what is essentially a charity department.

"We don't do any marketing. My whole theory on marketing is it's word of mouth and if we can get people in here just to experience the spa, we know that they'll fall in love with it."

The spa donates services and gifts to organizations and fundraisers in the area, ensuring that

they always support those who support them.

"We're very active in the community, donating a lot of time and money and services," she said. "It's worked well. People don't really come to a salon and spa off an ad. By giving them something they can come and experience, it's a better result."

But the community focus is not only for marketing purposes. Sometimes, it's just the principle of the thing.

This past January a local salon in Dublin closed its doors with no warning, right after Christmas but not before selling many gift cards to local holiday shoppers.

"That just broke my heart when I heard about it, that they closed up right around Christmas time," said Fisher-Hanson. "I can't imagine having people who are with you for 25 or 26 years and then you just shut your doors."

Even more unfortunate, said Fisher-Hanson, was that the salon owner knew she would be closing and continued selling gift cards knowing she would never be able to honor them.

"I know how many people receive gift cards for Christmas and I just felt so bad for all the people who purchased so many of them and they had nothing to do with them now."

So Fisher-Hanson put a message out on social media: The Spa at River Ridge would honor the closed salon's gift cards until the beginning of March.

She also offered the now-unemployed stylists an interview if

they were in need of a place to work.

"But it kind of blew up in our face a little bit," she said.

River Ridge had no way of knowing how much money was on the gift cards that people came pouring in to redeem. But they honored them anyway, working solely on the honor system.

"People would bring in these cards and say, 'Yeah, there's \$500 on here,'" she said. "Okay, great, we'll honor it."

In addition, her employees, who work on commission, were still paid for the free services they performed.

In total, Fisher-Hanson simply gave away about \$20,000 worth of services.

The problems continued when a local news station did a story on the gift cards, but a teaser that aired made it seem like Fisher-Hanson's salon was the one that closed.

"All of our guests were freaking out, thinking we were closing, our phones were ringing off the hook, it was awful," she said.

But when asked if she would ever do something like that again Fisher-Hanson was not hesitant: "I'd do it again. I probably wouldn't do it any differently."

According to her, helping people is one of her favorite things about being a female business owner.

"My passion is still in doing hair, but I believe in empowering women to do their best and be their best," she said.

The one thing she would do differently, though, is ask for help.

"I would suggest women (who are just starting out) reach out to other successful business owners and learn from their mistakes and try to learn their stories," she said. "I think we learned so much along the way because we went into it blindly but I wish I would have reached out to other owners, men and women, and just gotten some advice."

Though she is sad to be losing the building she put her heart and soul into, Fisher-Hanson said she's still excited to be taking on something new after all these years in the business.

"It's been a great location but it's kind of fun to think of building everything from the ground up," she said. "We can logistically set things up a little better ... It's exciting to look and plan for the future."

— Annie Yamson



# Columbus woman's business success speaks for itself



When you dial FutureCom Technologies Inc.'s phone number, you don't need to know an extension or go through a secretary to get the founder and CEO on the line. You just say her name: Jeanne Gokcen.

In fact, you don't ever have to dial anything aside from the initial phone number.

As you speak, as if you were speaking to a person, a computer recognizes your speech and categorizes it, getting you to the person you need to speak to faster and providing data for the company about the reason for your call.

Gokcen was raised in the Zanesville area after moving to Ohio from Illinois at a young age.

She received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Ohio University for speech language pathology and then studied at The Ohio State University, earning her doctorate in speech science.

Though her education prepared her to work in a clinical or academic setting, her actual career never quite took the path that she expected.

"My early degrees qualify and train me to be a speech language pathologist, so my plan was that I wanted to go out and be a clinical pathologist and provide these kinds of services," Gokcen said.

She did indeed go into practice

but soon realized that she had a deeper interest in teaching.

"Going back for my Ph.D. I thought, 'Okay, I'm probably going to try and be a professor and teach and do research, that sort of thing.'"

Those plans changed shortly after Gokcen finished her doctorate.

Her husband, Sedat, had a career in speech technology and the types of offers Gokcen was getting from universities around the country were not located in places where Sedat could easily find a job in his specialized field.

After a couple years, Gokcen decided she was staying put in Columbus but was left with the question: "What am I going to do?"

"After much discussion and a lot of reluctance on my part, I started this business," Gokcen said. "I wasn't planning on it and I wasn't really sure what I was going to do with it."

That was in 1994 and, initially, FutureCom functioned as a consulting firm, but it was Gokcen's husband who saw a useful connection between the work he was doing and Gokcen's area of expertise.

Sedat, who worked for AT&T at the time, was working with a team developing speech recognition software.

"He said, 'You know what? We're a bunch of engineers, computer scientists and mathematicians trying to get a box, through the use of algorithms, to speak and understand like a human and none of us really have any background in how that happens, but you do,'" she said.

As an expert in human communication with a background in science, Gokcen, Sedat realized, could become a liaison and help make the system communicate in a more human way.

She consulted on the project for about 18 months and realized that she had the time of her life.

"It was so fun working with speech technology," she said.

Eventually, Gokcen realized that

was the direction she wanted her company to take.

When she was approached by a large company to work on a project that involved deep technical knowledge, she realized again that her husband's skill set would complement hers nicely.

"So I offered him a position with the company, we have this opportunity, what do you want to do?" she said. "It took him about three seconds to say, 'I'm in.'"

Since then, they have been working together, developing a technology that "is nowhere near where it has the potential to be," according to Gokcen.

Now, 20 years into the business, Gokcen has established herself as a valuable asset to the female business community, though she encountered difficulties of her own starting out.

"Initially, because of where my people came from — large, well-known highly respected research organizations — when they came up with things, the world listened," she said.

But as a new company, that was not the case. For all the genius she had at her disposal on her staff, Gokcen was not a well-known name.

"As we were developing our technology we thought, 'Build a better mousetrap and they will come,'" she said. "Well, we did build a better mousetrap, but they didn't necessarily come."

Doing her own PR and marketing was a new lesson Gokcen had to learn but, more importantly, despite her impressive education, she had no business background.

"I had to get a lot of advice from others," she said, noting that her ability to make connections in the community helped her tremendously, and she eventually joined organizations like the National Association of Women Business Owners and Women for Economic Leadership Development.

In 2011, Gokcen served her year as president of NAWBO Columbus.

"For me, the motivation for doing that was this personal growth," she said. "I have a small company, I have employees, but I hadn't really had an opportunity to oversee a larger group and try to be a good leader for that and I really wanted that experience."

Learning how to lead a larger organization helped Gokcen in her business as did being surrounded by women in similar positions.

But while she is firmly of the belief that men and women have inherently different management styles, her business philosophy is also rooted in collaboration.

She said she may run her business one way and have interactions with people on a certain level, but a male counterpart may have different motivations.

"I think there is definitely a difference but I'm really a believer that our styles compliment each other and we should be collaborating a lot more," she said. "I hear that from a lot of female business owners, that we are very collaborative in nature."

As her business celebrates its 20th anniversary, Gokcen hasn't given up on helping small businesses establish themselves and grow, but she also sees a need in the Central Ohio community that is not being fulfilled.

"I think right now, there are a whole lot more resources being put toward getting folks to start businesses, all this start-up funding for them," she said. "I think there needs to be a much stronger emphasis on what can be done to help the established businesses, and I don't think that exists."

As much as we all want them to succeed, Gokcen said that the statistics prove that most start-ups fail.

The five-year mark is when a business becomes relatively stable and established in a community.

"I'm glad we're helping and we want to try to ensure the success of as many new businesses as possible, but let's not forget those folks who've made it to that point

and let's ensure that they have the resources to succeed and grow," she said.

Gokcen wants to see more of a legislative voice for established small to medium-sized businesses.

Ohio is on the path to becoming business friendly, she said, but contentious tax laws and structures can be prohibitive to smaller companies.

Gokcen would also like to someday do work for the government, but the bureaucracy, she said, prevents her access to those opportunities.

"All the hoops that a medium or small business has to jump through and all the relationships you have to form on the inside, we just don't have the resources to do that," she said. "I can't send somebody to Washington to play the game there, I just can't. And yet, I can offer something to the government at a quality and a price that I know nobody else can."

"But can I go there and really, truly market to them and get them to know me and allow me the opportunity to work with them? Hardly."

Complicated paperwork, high costs and legislative regulations, according to Gokcen, really put a damper on growing established small businesses and, until they have a bigger collective voice in the legislature, they cannot truly thrive.

For now, Gokcen is focused on expanding her business telecom management service with a technology that she has developed and continues to refine in order to provide companies a balance between human contact and self-service automation.

And though she can now provide her cutting-edge technology to any company, she still focuses on helping little guys grow.

"We can work with any size company, but I see a real need in that smaller to medium sized business that just is not being met at all," said Gokcen.

— Annie Yamson

## Women-Owned Businesses — Counting on Success

- There are more than 268,000 women-owned businesses in Ohio. Only eight states have more women-owned firms.

- The number of women-owned businesses in Ohio has grown 31 percent since 1997 despite a severe recession during that time.

- Revenues at women-owned businesses in Ohio have grown 49 percent since 1997, from \$30.6 billion to \$45.6 billion.

- Women-owned businesses account for nearly 28 percent of all businesses in Ohio.

- Among the largest industries for Ohio women-owned firms are health care and social assistance, educational services and retail.

- There are 31,000 women-owned businesses in Franklin County, which is 31.9 percent of all businesses.

- Columbus ranks 27th in the nation with more than 18,900 women-owned businesses. One-third of the city's firms are owned by women.

- In the U.S. there are 7.8 million women-owned businesses, or 28.7 percent of all businesses.

- Nearly half of all U.S. women-owned businesses (45.9 percent) operated in repair and maintenance; personal and laundry services; health care and social assistance; and professional, scientific and technical services.

- Of the 7.8 million women-owned businesses, 88.3 percent had no paid employees.

*\* Figures are from the 2014 State of Women-Owned Businesses Report from American Express OPEN and the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners, the most recent statistics available. Women-owned businesses are those that have at least 51 percent ownership by a woman or women.*



# Personal health issues led to successful fitness business

It wasn't until Zoe Guirlinger got her career rolling as an outpatient orthopedic physical therapist that she realized the path she walked for her own wellness journey should be expanded into a business.

Guirlinger, the CEO of Ultimate U Total Health, said that in working with some of her outpatient clients, she knew they needed treatment beyond her official duties.

"I would think 'I can put this Band-Aid on (the problem) but, ultimately, this is not what this person needs,'" she said, recalling her own struggles with food and fitness and a near-death experience after developing a heart problem. "I said other people can learn this, too."

In 2003, Guirlinger created the Ultimate U Challenge, a five-week, multi-phase transformational wellness process designed for individuals wanting to carve out a positive, empowered sense of body, health and well-being.

A few years later, the Ohio native and her husband, Troy McGowan, a certified personal trainer, combined their individual companies to create Ultimate U Total Health.

"At the time, the industry was in a different place culture-wise," Guirlinger said, pointing to no pain, no gain-centered gimmicks. "We wanted to offer wellness. We wanted to be a place where people were supported to be the best they could be."

The New Albany health facility offers personal training, massage therapy, dietitian services, chiropractic care, physical therapy, fitness classes, food allergy and food sensitivity testing and active release therapy.

The Ultimate U Challenge has been expanded from a five-week venture into a year-long initiative and a spin-off program, U University, is popular with the program's graduates.

"We were definitely an island when we started," Guirlinger said, adding that not everyone understood the company's philosophy. "There is a difference between fitness and wellness and we're wellness."

Often, fitness is focused on dominating the body, Guirlinger said, adding that she spent years cycling between periods of inactivity and bursts of punitive exercise.



"I was going to beat this body into submission," she said. Guirlinger later developed fibromyalgia and a heart condition that nearly killed her in 2001.

"That was my bottom," she said. "I had graduated with my master's in physical therapy a year and a half earlier (but) I was in so much pain. I was depressed and living wasn't appealing. Obviously everything had to change."

Guirlinger, who often passes along an email celebrating baby steps that was written by a client who eventually lost 115 pounds, says that she spent the year after her serious health scare researching nutrition, neuroscience and behavioral science.

"Through that research I was able to see the way out," she said. "I learned how to take gentle, good care of my body and find joy and passion in my life that had nothing to do with food."

In praising baby steps instead of lightening fast results, Guirlinger said she began with 10-minute walks and ran a half marathon a year later.

"I found where my body wants me to go is somewhere in the middle," she smiled.

That middle point is where thousands of clients have found success at Ultimate U.

"People finish the Ultimate U Challenge and they'll say 'I don't want this to stop.' That's like oxygen to me. It's extremely satisfying," Guirlinger said, adding that in addition to the company's flagship program, the personal training sessions and massage therapy offerings are client favorites. "It's a credit to our team. We have the right people and it's a great team."

At the facility's peak, Guirlinger, the 2011 NAWBO Columbus Visionary Award winner, said she and McGowan had a staff of 30 but have since become more efficient with a team of around 18 individuals.

Having tapped into wellness trying to "save (her own) skin," Guirlinger said she's found pleasure in helping people come full circle with their health, physical abilities and life satisfaction while continuing her own development.

"I'm still somewhere between my before and after. Happiness is a moving target," she said.

— Tiffany L. Parks



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# Survey:

## Women business owners optimistic about business in 2014

A survey from the National Association of Women Business Owners shows women business owners are expecting 2014 to be a good year. Among the survey findings:

- 89 percent of respondents say they're optimistic about overall business performance in 2014, up from 81 percent last year.
- 87 percent say they're optimistic about the economic outlook for 2014, up from 75 percent in 2013.
- 90 percent say their most important challenge this year is the state of the economy. 80 percent say business tax issues, 71 percent say cost and accessibility of health insurance and 61 percent say access to capital.
- When asked about their biggest near-term concerns over the next six months, the top issue — cited by 90 percent of women business owners — was gaining new customers, and 81 percent are concerned about keeping their existing customers. To address these challenges, women business owners are emphasizing investments in customer service (69 percent) and marketing (62 percent) over enhancing their products (48 percent) or hiring (26 percent).
- Women business owners also place a higher priority on online marketing in 2014, with a larger focus on investing in their mobile presence (13 percentage points more than in 2013), social media presence (8 percentage points higher than 2013), ecommerce (6 percentage points higher than 2013) and website (3 percentage points higher than 2013).
- 92 percent predict more women will start businesses in 2014 than did last year.

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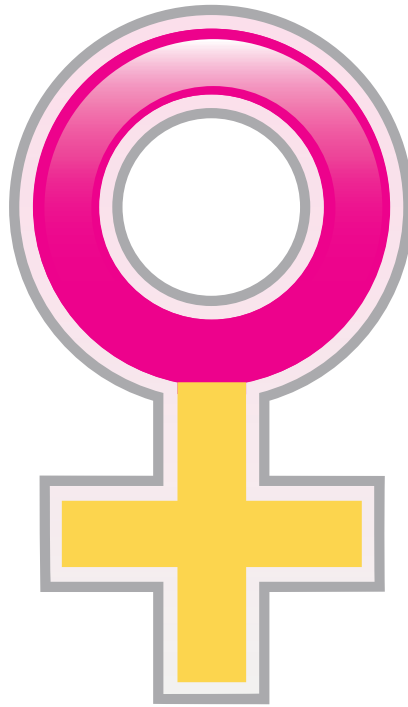
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