

# Encourage Her NETWORK

*inspiring the creative entrepreneurial spirit in every woman*

## **BUSINESS TIPS**

*Essential Elements  
of a Contract*

*Encouraging women  
to demand change*

## **NETWORKING TIPS**

*How to grow your business with  
word of mouth referrals*

*5 ways to build relationships  
through social media*

## **MONEY TIPS**

*Make time work for you*

*Understanding investment terms*

*Access the  
Twin Cities  
ULTIMATE*

*women's business  
directory inside!*

*This issue features  
JENNIFER SMITH  
CEO of Innovative Office Solutions*



**We are building  
a worldwide  
MOVEMENT for women.  
Learn more inside this issue!**

**Q&A** with **Jennifer Smith,**  
Innovative Office Solutions

**Katy Jo Turner:** Can you briefly tell me a little bit about Innovative Office Solutions?

**Jennifer Smith:** Our vision is to make workplaces more productive. What this entails is that we are a provider of not only products but also solutions (for offices, churches, schools, etc.). We provide anything from paper clips and pencils, to furniture, to paper towels. We print business cards and marketing materials. Anything you can imagine that goes into a workplace, we provide. Everything we do goes into making work places productive.

**KT:** How did you get involved (and when)?

**JS:** I founded the company in June 2001.

**KT:** What made you go into this field?

**JS:** I grew up in this industry—my father owned an office products company. I grew up in the business.

**KT:** What sort of skills does this job require? Any unexpected?



**JS:** Any time that you are in a leadership position you are always learning and growing. There are different challenges along the way. Even though I grew up in the office products business, being the CEO and leader came with many challenges that I didn't anticipate. When you're forming a company, you're forming a culture—I realize that now. The things I was doing those early years were actually defining the company's culture. It all worked out fine, but knowing this I would have been more purposeful.

**KT:** How are you purposeful today? How do you maintain your company's culture?

**JS:** We have a set of core values—and we hire around those core values. Everything that we do is centered around them. Our core values came later on in the company. They were always kind of there, but when we formalized them, they helped us scale, and quickly. They made all the difference in the world. Once you put core values in place it really helps kick out the gray area, it makes it much more clear about who's a good fit.

**KT:** What do you love about your job?

**JS:** I absolutely LOVE to inspire people to do good work. It's what gets me up every day. I'm so proud of the team of people that work for me every day—it keeps me going.

**KT:** How do you think you inspire people?

**JS:** As a leader I feel it is really important to establish a purpose—people like to work for a purpose.

I let people know how they contribute to the company's vision. It's very inspiring when people know they can make a difference in the company and what they are working toward.

**KT:** Do you have any professional accomplishments that you'd like to share?

**JS:** My favorite award of all is the Minnesota Business Magazine's 100 Best Companies to Work for. We've been named one of the top 100 best places to work every year since the campaign/organization started four years ago.



**KT:** What are your current goals within the company?

**JS:** We just did a major acquisition. Most of our work has been organic up to this point. This year we are folding in a great company with the company that we already have. Every single door is open to us—everyone's a potential client and there are so many opportunities, and people want to partner with us. We have to stay focused. We pick a couple of things that we're really going to focus on for the year, or we can get off track fast with all the different opportunities. We have strategy meetings to set goals for the year so we know what we're working for what needs to be accomplished.

**KT:** What does your typical work day look like? Any productivity tips to share?

**JS:** My typical day is never the same (another thing that I love about my job). My week might consist of networking events, and speaking engagements, and meeting with various people (board meetings, customer visits, etc.). Every single day and week is different.

**KT:** How do you unwind (any hobbies)?

**JS:** I love my job so much it doesn't seem like work (no need to unwind). I am constantly getting inspired by others. I do love to travel and golf.

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