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## Leading Ladies

**These women-led businesses are speeding their way to the top.**

By Sara Wilson | [Entrepreneur Magazine - November 2008](#)

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Women today continue to push to the forefront of small business. So for the second year, Entrepreneur and the Women Presidents' Organization set out to find north america's 50 fastest-growing women-led companies. Topping the list is one woman holding her own in a male-dominated field.

Heidi Smith Price might speak in a soft voice, but she's definitely loud enough to be heard. In fact, at only 29 years old, she has established a notable presence in a male-dominated industry. "You hardly see any women in the construction industry, much less the industrial industry," says Smith Price, who has grown her heavy industrial contractor business, Spartan Constructors LLC, from a mere \$100,000 in revenue in 2003 to a projected \$150 million this year--landing her securely at the top of this year's list of the 50 fastest-growing women-led companies.

In 2004, Smith Price bought majority partnership in the Sugar Hill, Georgia-based [business](#) and was up for the challenges that it presented--namely earning respect from her peers. "You just have to stand your ground and not let other people walk all over you," says Smith Price, who has focused instead on the opportunities that she knew lay beneath the surface. She immediately certified her company as a Women's Business Enterprise and was thereby able to open up her business to major contracting opportunities. This simple decision has enabled her to enjoy substantial growth over the past four years--at a rate faster than even she thought possible.

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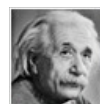
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And while many might find the turf unfamiliar, it's been Smith Price's stomping ground ever since she was a young girl learning the ins and outs of her father's construction company. That experience as his executive assistant prepared Smith Price well for her role today, which requires that she wear many hats to get the job done. This level of competency, coupled with high standards for quality control and attention to safety, has won over major clients like Georgia Power and Southern Co.

The rate at which Smith Price has grown her business is exceptional, but her success is not unusual. The Women Presidents' Organization, the nonprofit peer advisory organization for multimillion-dollar women-led and women-owned businesses, estimates that 41 percent of all privately held companies in North America are owned by women. Meanwhile, WPO members earn average annual sales of \$13 million, says Marsha Firestone, founder and president of the organization. "It's very difficult to build a business. And it keeps the fire in the hearth burning to see women who have made it."

### Top 50 Fastest-Growing Women-Led Companies

1. **Spartan Constructors LLC**  
 Industrial construction Sugar Hill, GA [spartanconstructors.com](http://spartanconstructors.com)  
 Heidi Smith Price  
 Began: 2002 Initial Investment: \$350,000 2003 sales: \$100,000 2007 sales: \$136 million
2. **Pinnacle Technical Resources Inc.**  
 IT staffing Dallas [pinnacle1.com](http://pinnacle1.com)  
 Nina G. Vaca  
 Began: 1996 Initial Investment: \$300 2003 sales: \$9 million 2007 sales: \$141 million
3. **Temporary Housing Directory Inc.**  
 Temporary housing & hotel placements Castle Rock, CO  
[temporaryhousingdirectory.com](http://temporaryhousingdirectory.com)  
 Teresa Vidger  
 Began: 2001 Initial Investment: \$100,000 2003 sales: \$281,000 2007 sales: \$20 million
4. **EnterForce Inc.**  
 Managed services provider Waukesha, WI [enterforce.com](http://enterforce.com)  
 Marie L. O'Brien, Filippa C. Weber  
 Began: 2001 Initial Investment: \$26,000 2003 sales: \$1.9 million 2007 sales: \$50.3 million
5. **Strategic Staffing Solutions Inc.**  
 Staffing solutions Indianapolis [strategicstaffonline.com](http://strategicstaffonline.com)  
 Debra J. Maynard  
 Began: 2002 Initial Investment: \$60,000 2003 sales: \$1.3 million 2007 sales: \$39.4 million
6. **Polaris Direct**  
 Mailing services Hooksett, NH [polarisdirect.net](http://polarisdirect.net)  
 Judith Maloy, Suzanne Lampognana  
 Began: 2003 Initial Investment: \$2.4 million 2003 sales: \$2.1 million 2007 sales: \$43.9 million
7. **Artech Information Systems LLC**  
 IT staffing Cedar Knolls, NJ [artechinfo.com](http://artechinfo.com)  
 Ranjini Poddar  
 Began: 1992 Initial Investment: \$200,000 2003 sales: \$16.5 million 2007 sales: \$128.2 million

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Entrepreneur magazine cover featuring two men. Text on the cover includes "HOT 100" and "SAVE 80% OFF NEWSTAND". Below the cover is a red banner with "SUBSCRIBE TODAY" and "CLICK HERE" with a right-pointing arrow.

8. **Global Resource Management Inc.**  
IT & supply chain [management](#) services Suwanee, GA [grmi.net](#)  
Naheed Syed  
Began: 1993 Initial Investment: \$100,000 2003 sales: \$2.2 million  
2007 sales: \$39.9 million
9. **United Scrap Metal Inc.**  
Metal recycling Cicero, IL [unitedscrap.com](#)  
Marsha Serlin  
Began: 1978 Initial Investment: \$200 2003 sales: \$33.9 million  
2007 sales: \$172.8 million
10. **Morpheus Media**  
Interactive advertising & [marketing](#) agency New York  
City [morpheusmedia.com](#)  
Shenan Reed  
Began: 2001 Initial Investment: \$0 2003 sales: \$2 million  
2007 sales: \$35 million
11. **Pinnacle Petroleum Inc.**  
Petroleum products Huntington Beach, CA [pinnaclepetroleum.com](#)  
Liz McKinley  
Began: 1995 Initial Investment: \$100,000 2003 sales: \$19.3 million  
2007 sales: \$120 million
12. **Sun Coast Resources Inc.**  
Petroleum products Houston [suncoastresources.com](#)  
Kathy Lehne  
Began: 1985 Initial Investment: \$2,000 2003 sales: \$554 million  
2007 sales: \$1.1 billion
13. **Salo LLC**  
Senior-level finance & accounting staffing Minneapolis [salollc.com](#)  
Amy L. Langer  
Began: 2002 Initial Investment: \$150,000 2003 sales: \$3.4 million  
2007 sales: \$42 million
14. **Search Wizards Inc.**  
Consulting firm Atlanta [searchwizards.net](#)  
Leslie O'Connor  
Began: 2000 Initial Investment: \$0 2003 sales: \$359,600 2007  
sales: \$12.2 million
15. **TransPerfect**  
Translation services New York City [transperfect.com](#)  
Elizabeth Elting, Shirley Shawe  
Began: 1992 Initial Investment: \$5,000 2003 sales: \$37 million 2007  
sales: \$156.5 million
16. **MediConnect Global Inc.**  
Medical record retrieval & digitization South Jordan, UT  
[mediconnect.net](#)  
Amy Rees Anderson  
Began: 1996 Initial Investment: Undisclosed 2003 sales: \$2.8  
million 2007 sales: \$35.6 million
17. **The Saxon Group Inc.**  
Industrial construction Sugar Hill, GA [thesaxongroupinc.com](#)  
Jeni Bogdan  
Began: 1995 Initial Investment: \$100,000 2003 sales: \$13.4 million  
2007 sales: \$81.8 million

18. **Aecometric Corp.**  
 Industrial combustion equipment Richmond Hill, Ontario  
[aecometric.com](http://aecometric.com)  
 Jill Anderson  
 Began: 1978 Initial Investment: \$50,000 2003 sales: \$1.5 million  
 2007 sales: \$23 million
19. **Kilop USA Inc.**  
 Raw materials sourcing & distribution High Point, NC  
 Christine Yumei Chen  
 Began: 1988 Initial Investment: \$44,500 2003 sales: \$3 million 2007  
 sales: \$28.8 million
20. **KellyMitchell Group Inc.**  
 IT consulting St. Louis [kellymitchell.com](http://kellymitchell.com)  
 Cassandra Sanford  
 Began: 1998 Initial Investment: \$10,000 2003 sales: \$4.6 million  
 2007 sales: \$33.6 million
21. **Communispace Corp.**  
 Online community creation & management Watertown, MA  
[communispace.com](http://communispace.com)  
 Diane Hessian  
 Began: 1999 Initial Investment: \$100,000 2003 sales: \$2.4 million  
 2007 sales: \$23.6 million
22. **Advantage Performance Network**  
 Travel & performance improvement solutions Savage, MN  
[advantageperformancenetwork.com](http://advantageperformancenetwork.com)  
 Mary Sue Leathers  
 Began: 1995 Initial Investment: \$40,000 2003 sales: \$23.3 million  
 2007 sales: \$85 million
23. **RCC Associates**  
 General contracting Deerfield Beach, FL [rccassociates.com](http://rccassociates.com)  
 Beverly Raphael  
 Began: 1971 Initial Investment: \$5,000 2003 sales: \$34.8 million  
 2007 sales: \$105.1 million
24. **Continental Cabinets Inc.**  
 Cabinets Dallas [ccabinc.com](http://ccabinc.com)  
 Beverly Taylor  
 Began: 1988 Initial Investment: Undisclosed 2003 sales: \$48.9  
 million 2007 sales: \$130.8 million
25. **NCompass International Inc.**  
 Marketing agency West Hollywood, CA  
[ncompassonline.com](http://ncompassonline.com)  
 Donna Graves, Kae Erickson  
 Began: 2003 Initial Investment: \$1.5 million  
 2003 sales: \$360,000 2007 sales: \$7.3 million
- Words from The Wise**  
 We couldn't pass up the opportunity to dig a little deeper and uncover their secrets to success.
- "Sixteen years ago, we were cold calling and struggling to land our first client, The Port Authority of New York. New Jersey called us by mistake, attempting to contact a company whose name was similar to [ours]. We kept them on the [phone](#) and discussed their IT infrastructure and project needs at length. Needless to say, they became our first client. We still laugh at this."  
*Ranjini Poddar, owner of Artech Information Systems LLC, No. 7*
26. **Camp Bow Wow**  
 Dog day camps & boarding services franchisor Boulder, CO  
[campbowwow.com](http://campbowwow.com)

- Heidi Flammang  
**Began:** 2000 **Initial Investment:** \$85,000 **2003 sales:** \$100,000 **2007 sales:** \$3.8 million
27. **Casco Contractors Inc.**  
 General contracting  
 Irvine, CA  
[cascocontractors.com](http://cascocontractors.com)  
 Cheryl Osborn  
**Began:** 2000 **Initial Investment:** \$20,000 **2003 sales:** \$3 million **2007 sales:** \$22.9 million
28. **Saicon Consultants Inc.**  
 IT consulting  
 Overland Park, KS  
[saiconinc.com](http://saiconinc.com)  
 Swati K. Yelmar  
**Began:** 1998 **Initial Investment:** \$6,000 **2003 sales:** \$1.8 million **2007 sales:** \$16.5 million
29. **Outcomes Health Information Solutions LLC**  
 Health-care data retrieval, auditing & reporting  
 Charlottesville, VA  
[outcomesinc.com](http://outcomesinc.com)  
 Wanda Kochhar  
**Began:** 1996 **Initial Investment:** \$60,000 **2003 sales:** \$3.5 million **2007 sales:** \$24.5 million
30. **MurTech Consulting**  
 IT services  
 Independence, OH  
[murtechconsulting.com](http://murtechconsulting.com)  
 Ailish M. Murphy  
**Began:** 2000 **Initial Investment:** \$100,000 **2003 sales:** \$685,700 **2007 sales:** \$10 million
31. **Stratix Corp.**  
 Mobility solutions  
 Norcross, GA  
[stratixcorp.com](http://stratixcorp.com)  
 Bonney Shuman  
**Began:** 1983 **Initial Investment:** \$750 **2003 sales:** \$38.2 million **2007 sales:** \$106.3 million
32. **Application Development Resources Inc.**  
 IT services  
 Alpharetta, GA  
[appdevinc.com](http://appdevinc.com)  
 Daksha Choksey  
**Began:** 2001 **Initial Investment:** \$5,000 **2003 sales:** \$697,000 **2007 sales:** \$9.7 million
33. **Ricochet Fuel Distributors Inc.**  
 Fuel distributor  
 Euless, TX  
[ricochetfuel.com](http://ricochetfuel.com)
- Cedar Knolls, New Jersey*
- "The biggest mistake we ever made was undervaluing ourselves. When we started, we were young and hungry, and we didn't give ourselves credit for the amount of value we brought to our clients and strategies. So the lesson learned is: Don't undervalue yourself and your expertise, and don't let your size dictate your value."  
*Shenan Reed, owner of Morpheus Media, No. 10*  
 New York City
- "It is important to take an inventory of your strengths and what you like to do. Focus on those things and get help for the others as soon as you can."  
*Amy L. Langer, owner of Salo LLC, No. 13*  
 Minneapolis
- "Be a great juggler. As a woman in business, you will always have lots of balls in the air, including the activities of running your business and being strategic in your decisions to grow your business. In many cases, [you also have] the role of being a wife, a mother, a daughter and a sister. The same traits that make us great in all of these roles are the ones that you will rely on to excel in business."  
*Leslie O'Connor, owner of Search Wizards Inc., No. 14*  
 Atlanta
- "Build an atmosphere of trust and respect. You must always respect the [employees and clients] you work with. Believe in your people. Make your word count. In addition, never lose focus on your next challenge."  
*Jeni Bogdan, owner of The Saxon Group Inc., No. 17*  
 Sugar Hill, Georgia

- Kelly Brett-Roberts  
**Began:** 1988 **Initial Investment:** \$20,000 **2003 sales:** \$7.4 million  
**2007 sales:** \$36.2 million
34. **Logical Choice Technologies Inc.**  
 Education technology integration Duluth, GA [logicalchoice.com](http://logicalchoice.com)  
 Cynthia B. Kaye  
**Began:** 1994 **Initial Investment:** \$0 **2003 sales:** \$19.1 million **2007 sales:** \$65.4 million
35. **SaltWorks Inc.**  
 Sea salt Woodinville, WA [seasalt.com](http://seasalt.com)  
 Naomi Novotny  
**Began:** 2001 **Initial Investment:** \$1,500 **2003 sales:** \$264,000 **2007 sales:** \$5.7 million
36. **Icon Information Consultants LP**  
 IT staffing Houston [iconconsultants.com](http://iconconsultants.com)  
 Pamela O'Rourke  
**Began:** 1998 **Initial Investment:** \$250,000 **2003 sales:** \$23 million  
**2007 sales:** \$72 million
37. **SwervePoint**  
 Promotional products & services Danvers, MA [swervepoint.com](http://swervepoint.com)  
 Juli Sinnett  
**Began:** 2003 **Initial Investment:** \$125,000 **2003 sales:** \$1.9 million  
**2007 sales:** \$15.5 million
38. **Strategic Staffing Solutions**  
 IT consulting Detroit [strategicstaff.com](http://strategicstaff.com)  
 Cynthia Pasky  
**Began:** 1990 **Initial Investment:** \$60,000 **2003 sales:** \$67 million  
**2007 sales:** \$148 million
39. **Butler/Till Media Services Inc.**  
 Media research services Rochester, NY [butlertill.com](http://butlertill.com)  
 Susan R. Butler, Tracy E. Till  
**Began:** 1998 **Initial Investment:** \$10,000 **2003 sales:** \$7.1 million  
**2007 sales:** \$32.3 million
40. **IBT Holdings LLC**  
 Design, building & consulting services Norcross, GA  
[ibtenterprises.com](http://ibtenterprises.com)  
 Mylle Mangum  
**Began:** 1985 **Initial Investment:** Undisclosed **2003 sales:** \$15.8 million  
**2007 sales:** \$53.2 million
41. **Carolina IT Professionals Inc.**  
 IT staffing Mount Holly, NC [citpinc.com](http://citpinc.com)  
 Phyllis Friday McConnell  
**Began:** 2001 **Initial Investment:** \$500 **2003 sales:** \$3 million **2007 sales:** \$19 million
42. **Vignon Corp.**  
 IT staffing Dallas [vignon.com](http://vignon.com)  
 Kathy Hodgins Blanck  
**Began:** 2001 **Initial Investment:** \$20,000 **2003 sales:** \$144,600 **2007 sales:** \$3.6 million
43. **Warrior Group Inc.**  
 Modular construction DeSoto, TX [warrior-group.net](http://warrior-group.net)  
 Gail Warrior-Lawrence  
**Began:** 1997 **Initial Investment:** \$1,000 **2003 sales:** \$11.4 million

**2007 sales:** \$41.7 million

44. **Greenlite Lighting Corp.**  
Energy-efficient lighting products Pointe-Claire, Quebec  
[greenlite.ca](http://greenlite.ca)  
Nina Gupta  
**Began:** 1994 **Initial Investment:** \$1 million **2003 sales:** \$6 million  
**2007 sales:** \$28 million
  
45. **BrightStar Healthcare**  
Medical/nonmedical home-care & medical staffing franchisor  
Gurnee, IL [brightstarhealthcare.com](http://brightstarhealthcare.com)  
Shelly Sun  
**Began:** 2002 **Initial Investment:** \$100,000+ **2003 sales:** \$1.4 million  
**2007 sales:** \$11.8 million
  
46. **Bett-A-Way Pallet Systems Inc.**  
Transportation solutions & pallet management South Plainfield, NJ  
[bettaway.com](http://bettaway.com)  
June Delany, Tracey Ursini, Betty Vaccaro, Laura Vaccaro  
**Began:** 1996 **Initial Investment:** \$6,000 **2003 sales:** \$10.6 million  
**2007 sales:** \$26.2 million
  
47. **ProActive Solutions Inc.**  
IT solutions Mission, KS [proactivesolutions.com](http://proactivesolutions.com)  
Melissa Cather-Thiede  
**Began:** 1996 **Initial Investment:** \$0 **2003 sales:** \$9.6 million **2007 sales:** \$37 million
  
48. **ITI Inc.**  
IT & business consulting Pearland, TX [iti-ps.com/services](http://iti-ps.com/services)  
June Reeder  
**Began:** 2000 **Initial Investment:** \$0 **2003 sales:** \$1.2 million **2007 sales:** \$10.5 million
  
49. **Trans-Expedite Inc.**  
Freight forwarding El Paso, TX [trans-expedite.com](http://trans-expedite.com)  
Keeli Jernigan  
**Began:** 2001 **Initial Investment:** \$29,000 **2003 sales:** \$3 million **2007 sales:** \$18 million
  
50. **LetterLogic Inc.**  
Mailing services Nashville, TN [letterlogic.com](http://letterlogic.com)  
Sherry Stewart  
**Began:** 2002 **Initial Investment:** \$50,000 **2003 sales:** \$1.1 million  
**2007 sales:** \$9.8 million

### Behind The Numbers

The 50 fastest-growing women-led companies ranking was compiled with the help of the Women Presidents' Organization, a nonprofit peer advisory organization for independent women presidents and CEOs. Entrepreneur and the WPO solicited applications from women-led businesses in North America and considered those that met the following criteria:

- Must be a privately held, woman-led company in the U.S. or Canada.
- Company sales in 2003 must be \$100,000 or greater; 2007 sales must be at least \$1 million.
- Companies were ranked according to a sales growth formula that

combines percentage and absolute growth. From this list, the top 50 were selected. (In cases where companies have multiple partners, only women are listed.)

Research was conducted by WPO director of communications Caitlin Jenkins, communications manager Kirsten Wynn and assistants Kat Piracha and Tanya Rosado. Entrepreneur research editor James Park also contributed to this listing.

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