

A SPECIAL REPORT: GROWING PAINS AT FORT LAUDERDALE BEACH

# Fasttrack

INSIDE SOUTH FLORIDA BUSINESS

South  
Florida's



Most Successful  
Businesswomen

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MOST SUCCESSFUL WOMEN

THE NEWS FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS TYPICALLY IS DEPRESSING. FOR EVERY DOLLAR a man makes, they make 75 cents. Women CEOs at major companies are as rare as Al Dunlap supporters at a Sunbeam stockholders meeting. A recent study by Catalyst, a New York-based women's business research organization, projected that in 25 years women will hold a mere 25 percent of the seats on the boards of Fortune 500 companies.

But such grim numbers only tell a small part of the story. Perhaps sick of crashing their heads into the proverbial glass ceiling, women are striking out on their own. The number of businesses launched by women in the last four years is shattering records, outpacing the number of firms launched by men by double-, and in some cases, triple-digit margins.

In the last four years, the number of women-owned businesses in Broward and Palm Beach counties has increased 23 percent while the number of people they employ has increased 27 percent and their sales have increased a whopping 55 percent, according to the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Women's Business Research. Women-owned firms in the two counties now employ an estimated 77,000 people and generate more than \$12.3 billion annually in sales.

Further, in the last 10 years, women have increasingly become a formidable force in politics, distinguishing themselves as mayors, on city and county commissions, on school boards, in state and federal government and as political party leaders. One of the most watched political races in the state this year pits Florida Rep. Lois Frankel, of West Palm Beach, against former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, of Miami, for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination.

In an effort to remind people what a force women are in South Florida's business world, we launched a search for the most successful women in Broward and Palm Beach counties. While

the criteria, like the definition of success itself, was somewhat flexible, we asked members of the panels we assembled in each county to consider each woman's contribution overall. We weren't necessarily looking for the women who make the most money or employ the most people, but ones who have achieved success against odds and who strive to give back. The basic criteria was that: 1) Their success should be measurable—either by accomplishments, impact or responsibilities; 2) Their names should be recognizable outside their own spheres of influence; 3) Their success must be personal, not just a function of holding a particular seat of power; 4) Their impact should be long-lasting; and 5) Their impact should extend beyond a specific geographic area or business sector. With this guidance, the two panels came up with roughly 150 names. We whittled that list down to 50.

So here they are—our list of the 50 most successful women in Broward and Palm Beach counties. We know we didn't get all of them. Thankfully, there are too many to list. But the women who appear on the following pages are women to watch, to emulate and, if you're lucky, to get to know. By any definition, they epitomize success.



## Karen Amlong

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In 1992, a year after sexual harassment careened into the nation's consciousness during the Senate confirmation hearings for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, Karen Amlong paved the way for Florida women to fight abuse in the workplace. Winning a landmark \$1.3 million case for a Miami woman who sued a movie company executive for harassment, Amlong created a powerful way for women to achieve equality and respect on the job. The case not only paved the way for women to seek redress, but set the stage for what has become a specialty for Amlong, who along with her husband, William, has built Amlong & Amlong into one of the top 100 law firms in the state. Specializing in discrimination cases, Amlong has empowered workers in their fights against greedy corporations and has championed the rights of the powerless against the powerful. She has fought for the rights of gay couples to adopt children and in 1989 successfully defended the rights of a lesbian

woman to regain custody of her child, who was seized by her partner's parents after her partner died. The case last year became a television movie, with Whoopi Goldberg playing Amlong, the crusading lawyer who wouldn't say no. Long involved in the fight for women's equality, the Miami native in 1974 became the first woman to represent Broward County in the Florida Legislature and has represented working women—and men—in their fight for justice ever since.