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Entrepreneur Profile

PEGGY HOWSE

PRESIDENT AND CEO,
ALL SEAS WHOLESALE INC.

What it does: Sells seafood in the Bay Area.

HQ: San Francisco.

2008 revenue: \$11 million.

Employees: 30.

Founded: 1985.

Source of startup capital: Personal savings.

Background: Cooked for a living until deciding to open All Seas Wholesale Inc. with her husband, Richard.

Age: 53.

Residence: San Mateo.

Web site: allseaswholesale.com



Big picture

Reason for starting business: In 1985, (my husband) Richard was working for one of our competitors. We had a friend who had a property set up for seafood. Since I was good at book (keeping) and Richard was in the seafood business, we thought, "What can we lose, except our time and money?"

Most difficult part of decision: To put everything on the line, to take a chance.

Biggest plus of ownership: When customers give feedback that allows us to better serve them.

Biggest drawback: Unlimited hours.

Biggest misconception: The owner doesn't make all the money.

Biggest business strength: My team members.

Biggest business weakness: Working with a perishable product.

Biggest risk: Moving to a larger facility in 2005. We had been at the same location on

San Bruno Avenue, and we could either make ourselves smaller or move and grow. We went to (the landlord on) Jerrold Avenue) and signed the lease on Jan. 30 and we had to be out of the other facility by Feb. 28. We moved our business in 30 days. It was costly; however, it enabled us to grow.

Biggest mistake: Not buying enough product before the market rose.

Smartest move: Departmentalizing my teams so each employee's roll is defined. I made a new business model. I didn't like the pyramid. I created circles and the teams are circles of people. It takes a team of men and women to cut the fish. It takes a crew of people working together to get the jobs done. Accounting is six people, and for every job that needs to be done, three people know how to do that job. It makes us all more powerful that we can depend on each other. The burden isn't on any one person.

Biggest worry: That fresh wild seafood availability will decrease. I am very concerned about the world we live in and the seas that provide so much of our healthy protein. Sustainability comes from better farming techniques and more farming techniques.

Top source of inspiration: My employees and customers.

Daily routine

Most challenging task: To keep crews working for the company and not just the paycheck.

Favorite task: Visiting customers to discuss how we can better serve them.

Least favorite task: Collecting money, which has become increasingly difficult in these tough economic times.

Biggest frustration: Not enough hours in a day to do everything.

Source of support in a business crisis: My employees; they are always there to help.

Dreams

Key goal yet to achieve: For the company to own its own building.

First move with capital windfall: 401(k) plans, and to buy a building.

Five-year plan: Diversify product lines and double our size.

Inducement to sell: None at all, I am committed to our company and the direction we are headed.

Personals

Most-admired entrepreneur: I have been most inspired by my mom.

Most interested in meeting: Jackie Douglas, Captain of the Wacky Jackie Sport fishing boat (out of Fisherman's Wharf).

Stress reducers: Taking classes at the local college, and exercise.

Favorite pastimes: I like hiking, cooking, gardening and spending time with my pets.

Favorite book: "Oscar Wilde's Wit and Wisdom: A Book of Quotations."

Favorite films: "A Fish called Wanda," "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World" and "Best in Show."

Favorite restaurant: Astaria in San Mateo.

Favorite destination: London.

What's on your iPod: Exercise music and books on tape.

Automobile: Saab.

—Emily Fancher ■