

# Succeeding as a WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESS



## EARLIER IN HER LIFE, SANDRA SCANLON LEFT A JOB

with a Fortune 100 company, gave birth to a child and, after a year, decided she wanted to return to the working world. She began consulting out of her home and then made the life-changing decision to start her own business—SSG MEP, a firm of mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineers, specializing in lighting, fire alarm and low-voltage systems.

# THE REST, AS THEY SAY IS HISTORY

Today, SSG MEP works with design partners in Colorado and beyond to provide a broad spectrum of services, including both its specialty services as well as IT, audio-visual and security system design. SSG also assists project teams with feasibility studies, sustainable design options and commissioning support.

## AWARD-WINNING EXPERTISE AND SERVICE

SSG has designed building systems (including lighting design and low-voltage system designs) for a wide range of public and commercial clients. These clients include new and remodeled facilities, such as airports, police and fire departments, correctional institutions, hospitals, medical offices, laboratories, offices, restaurants, hotels and recreation centers and pools.

In 2015, ColoradoBiz named SSG “Best Engineering Firm” and also saluted it as one of “Denver Top 100 Women-Owned Firms.”

What sets Sandra’s firm apart from its competitors?

*“We provide a higher level of customer interaction on projects than many of our competitors,” she notes. “At the outset—and throughout the length of the projects—we meet often with users of the space and buildings as well as with other team members, to provide oversight and assistance throughout the construction phase up to the opening or re-opening.”*

To ensure that design execution accurately reflects the project vision, SSG engineers and BIM/CAD designers conduct regular, detailed project reviews. In other words, she says, “We’re not satisfied until we know our clients’ best interests have been served.”

## “WHEN YOU’RE ON YOUR OWN, THERE’S NO ONE TO ASK”

At the outset of her career as a business owner, Sandra found the situation very different from when she’d worked for another organization.

*“Being part of a large company meant that if you had a question about what to do, you could easily ask someone in another department,” she recalls. “As a business owner, I didn’t have that resource. I was forced to develop my professional network, not just for new clients, but to get assistance where I could about running a business.”*

In 2012, she decided the time was right to join The Alternative Board. Previously, she’d been a member of another CEO peer group but felt she’d quickly outgrown it. She and Bob Dodge talked for nearly a year, she recalls, before she decided to take the TAB Membership plunge.

Soon thereafter, she came away impressed by the commitment and accountability other TAB Board Members displayed. She has consistently drawn upon their skills and insights concerning issues of “people and performance”—concerns experienced by business owners across virtually all types of industry.

*“My chief issue was devising a way to manage people so as to improve their performance,” Sandra says. “TAB Members helped guide me to design performance improvement plans that helped develop the skills of my most gifted employees and steer them towards higher levels of effectiveness.”*

She also found discussion of metrics to be especially helpful for SSG. “It was important to me to design metrics that would monitor the ongoing health of the business. I learned a lot from other members who were already using such metrics. Diving into the specifics of how these metrics are created and used turned out to be very helpful for my business.”

## WHAT LIES AHEAD

While Sandra feels the future for SSG remains bright, she’s concerned about “riding the uncertain economy into 2017.” Many variables lie ahead that can affect the fortunes of her business, as well as U.S. businesses in general.



*“We’d like to believe the economy is doing well,” she says, “but I sense a lot of uncertainty out there. That’s why I value my TAB Membership so much. Our members insist on looking forward, proactively measuring metrics instead of just reacting to events.”*

TAB offers another key value, she says. “I can’t think of any better way to manage what I want personally out of my business and out of my life. TAB helps me with perhaps the biggest challenge of all—understanding how to balance these important professional and personal objectives.”