

Her track record gives her confidence

BY SONYA EWAN | SPECIAL TO NMBW

You'd think Pam Schneider would sound less vivacious, having climbed so high.

The story of her career began in 1978, when she was hired as a receptionist at advertising agency Rick Johnson & Co.

Fast-forward 32 years, and Schneider is still at RJC. She is a senior vice president and client services director, overseeing high-profile accounts such as McDonald's, UNM Cancer Center and United Blood Services. She has reason to be vibrant.

Much of Schneider's success can be attributed to her willingness to step up to a challenge — the result of confidence built and boosted over time. Still, someone had to issue that challenge and be supportive.

Enter RJC leaders Rick and Debbie Johnson.

Schneider's biggest challenge came

when she was offered the chance to be an account supervisor for McDonald's.

"That was when I really got into advertising and marketing per se," she says. "That was a career make-or-break situation. I realized I would have to rise to the occasion."

Debbie says she and Rick knew when Schneider was ready: "We could tell — she never let size or magnitude intimidate her. She's a lifelong learner interested in being a better person, a better manager, doing her job better year after year. McDonald's demands that."

Schneider built confidence as she presented effective long-term marketing strategies to a team of McDonald's multimillionaires.

"It was an unbelievable amount of stress and power at the same time," Schneider says.

Next, she approached Dr. Cheryl Willman at the UNM Cancer Center, and then

United Blood Services.

"Those experiences gave me confidence in the work I do and who I am," she says.

Over the years, RJC grew from a little more than a handful of employees to a larger firm with offices in three states. With the recession, it's found a happy medium with one central Albuquerque office that has \$29 million in capitalized billings and 29 employees.

Schneider says weathering those changes forced her to be introspective: "You have to be able to suspend the ego. But if you stand tall in the world, it allows you to put out positive vibes, to bring people with you."

Her methodical nature has served her well: "Plus, I have a 9-year-old granddaughter. Being knee-jerk with her doesn't work. And I'd love to believe I'm an eternal optimist."

Surely Schneider's story has made her one.

Community involvement: co-president of the ARCA Foundation board; board member of ARCA; Community Impact Council member for United Way, Priority Focus Area (PFA) Chair

Educational background: bachelor's degree in education, the University of New Mexico

What's something that would surprise people about you? I love ballet and opera! And I love being "Nana No. 2" to my granddaughter.

Who has been the biggest influence on your career? That's easy: Rick Johnson. Rick and Debbie both have been big influences. Rick saw something in me that he nurtured. He told me I was good — I could do this. He and Debbie gave me so much positive reinforcement.

What do you do when you are really, really stressed out? I sing!

RANDY SENER | NMBW

Adkins helps women move ahead in technology

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When she was 19 years old, Lisa Adkins got a job with a hardware vendor in computer support.

A fellow technician invited her to help one Saturday, and Adkins obliged, "ready to get my hands dirty and build machines," she says.

"I was in there leaning over a machine with a screwdriver and the owner walked in and saw me. He said, 'What are you doing? Put that screwdriver down!'"

Despite her title, the owner had assigned her to answering phones.

Now Adkins owns a computer support company. She attributes much of the success of SolutionWerx, which specializes in software development and information technology support, to its female ownership and management. Adkins and her team of 17 employees have parlayed strong listening skills into

annual revenue of \$1.3 million.

"A woman will listen to the customer to see what the problem is, rather than assuming they already know, and then help the customer understand," Adkins says.

Ken Jacobson, owner of Orbus International LLC and fellow mentor in Next Step Leader Mentoring, says of Adkins, "She's a leader for a rapidly growing, woman-owned company in the technical sector. She's helping women in the community become leaders and women in technology gain access to relevant careers. She stays involved at every level. That's pretty amazing."

In 2003, Adkins quit her job at Sandia National Laboratories to join her husband at SolutionWerx. But the real adventure began in 2005, when Adkins took 100 percent ownership of the company and her husband asked her to focus on networking and sales. While networking became a passion, it took its

toll. The following year proved challenging both professionally and personally, including a divorce.

Adkins also became the first woman chair of the New Mexico Technology Council (she'll be its president next year) — practically a second job.

"That affected our marriage," Adkins says. "It got to a point when things were going well and people were depending on me and I couldn't just stop putting my face out there. People don't know how hard it is to get up every morning and — as I say — put big girl panties on, smile and meet people."

Lately, Adkins has found that balance is something she creates. SolutionWerx employees participate in a corporate wellness program, and employees' kids are a welcome extension of the company culture.

"People know if there's a meeting in the late afternoon, I'm bringing my son," Adkins says. "That's how I create balance. I bring it all under one big umbrella."