

Sharon M. Dillard

GET A GRIP INC.

Dillard has good grip on business ownership

Educational background: no formal education beyond high school

Community involvement: As vice president of a neighborhood association in the East Mountains, she upgraded signs from wood to metal and designed the logo for the Sandia Park area.

Hobbies: I horseback ride, participate in team penning and ranch sorting events in Santa Fe, and trail ride in the mountains.

What CEO do you most admire and why? I admire people who have the moxie to get out there and do it; people who start from nothing, and people who take risks.

If we asked your staff what phrase they hear most often from you, what would they say? 'Let's go!' or 'We can do it.'

BY KATIE COUNCLOR | SPECIAL TO NMBW

Sharon Dillard left corporate life in the big city to be a small business owner in Albuquerque 10 years ago, and she couldn't be happier.

As the president of Get A Grip Inc., a residential and commercial resurfacing company, she has not only grown the firm locally, but has franchises in 17 states.

Dillard trusts her instincts, stays focused on the present and doesn't let fear hold her back.

"I just do everything one day at a time," she says.

She was working in high-end cosmetics and fragrances in Dallas when her older son, Ryan, came to her with a business idea: a patent for a nonskid resurfacing product.

At the age of 46, she left her comfortable existence behind --- along with her Chanel suits, expense account and hefty 401(k) ---- to move to Albuquerque and start a business with Ryan out of her garage.

"People think they can't change careers in their 40s and 50s, and that's crazy," Dillard says. "Taking risks is the only way to advance."

Dillard's philosophy is to surround herself with people who are energetic and creative,

and let them do what they do best.

"I was so micromanaged for so long, and I learned from those mistakes. I let my employees talk; I listen to their ideas."

Trust and respect keep both business and family running smoothly. Her husband and two sons round out the company's executive team. Get A Grip employs 12.

"Sharon does a great job of incorporating a family feel to the business," says Jeremy Oswald, business banking manager with Bank of Albuquerque, who has worked with Dillard and Get A Grip for two years. "All of them are committed to continuous improvement in what they do."

Get A Grip's diversified approach has allowed it to weather the challenging economic climate. The company is up 20 percent over last year. It posted \$1.5 million in revenue in 2009.

"We're always shifting, always reinventing ourselves," Dillard says.

Much of Get A Grip's business is in real estate, including apartment building owners who want to upgrade kitchen counters or tubs and real estate agents trying to sell houses in a buyer's market. While franchise sales have slowed during the recession, their Duke City



COURTESY SHARON DILLARD

business is booming.

"Albuquerque was the perfect place for incubating the business," Dillard says.

And she's thrilled to go to work in jeans and cowboy boots.

"I can work instead of trying to impress," she says. "We just roll up our sleeves here."