



## **Carol S. Brown, TC Training Center**

When I was 20 years old I was approached to join a computer software consulting & training company because (as they put it) I had a natural ability to understand the technical aspects of computers, yet explain it in simple terms. I joined the company in Denver, Colorado and began the process of being certified in both Microsoft and Apple platforms. I learned pretty quickly that I did not enjoy fixing broken computers but had a true passion for helping people understand computers, programs and the Internet. Over the course of about 6 years I conducted training for some of the largest companies in Denver including Blue Cross Blue Shield of Colorado, Providian Health Care Systems, the Colorado Avalanche, Jones Intercable and several agencies of the Federal Government.

I moved to Michigan in 1998 and worked for a computer software publisher as the director of technical support. Because of my training background, I was also put in charge of training their software for staff and OEM partners. This training involved flying all over the United States and training technical support departments for companies including Compaq Computers, America Online call centers, Linksys, Best Data, Sabre (which is now Travelocity) and more! These training experiences confirmed that teaching is what I truly loved to do.

After several years I decided to begin training as a contract trainer and worked for various companies in the Traverse City area. After teaching a class, I was continually asked if I had a facility where people could take a class from me on their own. Small business owners also asked if they could just send one employee versus hiring me for an entire day.

This is what fueled my desire to open a training center where people of all skill levels could come and learn from instructors that knew the programs, used the programs daily and loved to help people. I started working on my ideal business. Needless to say I was picky about everything from the location, the facility and the staff. After looking into opening the business several times, everything fell into place in late 2005. I found what I considered to be the perfect location and my dream came true in January 2006 when I opened the TC Training Center.

The company I worked for in Denver was owned by a young, very talented, woman. She worked hard day and night, and her business was her life. She started on her own as a consultant and grew the business to include some of the largest companies in Denver,

Colorado. She took me under her wing and taught me a lot about computers, training and running a business.

Needless to say the computer industry is a male dominated business. There have been many times that my skills have been in doubt simply because I am a woman. The most important thing I think I learned working in this industry, is that you have to have confidence in yourself and your knowledge. That confidence will get you in the door. But you also have to have the skills to stay there. The computer industry is always changing and we are constantly taking classes, reading blogs and magazines, beta testing and updating our manuals and software. We can't just sit back and relax; we have to stay on top of the newest trends, learn them and then teach them.

I feel blessed to be able to do what I love, everyday, and get paid for it. I am proud of my business and our classes. I am thrilled when I get an email or phone call from a customer with a question about their program, because I know they are using skills they learned in class. Clients will email spreadsheets or presentations for our review or suggestions, and I realize that we are making a real difference in their lives. It is truly inspiring.

A few things have surprised me about owning a business... first the amount of work that is involved. You are always working; day, night, when you are shopping or out for dinner. There is always more to do and you are always representing your company (even after hours). When you go home at night you think about what you have to do the next day. There have been many mornings that I was up at 3am just to try to get ahead of the game.

However, I love what I do and that passion drives me to work hard so that I can continue to do what I love! I am motivated by all of my clients who tell me how happy they are with the training or how we have helped them. My children are also a big motivating factor. I want to be able to show them that if you believe in yourself, you can accomplish anything!

My advice to other women is to talk to other women business owners before you open your own business and while you are running it. Get a really good idea of the true cost of business ownership before starting out. Make sure you have the capital or if you are going to borrow the money that you can pay it back quickly. Other business owners can provide such great insight and tell you their experiences, which will hopefully save you time and money. I still value any time I can get together with other business owners and really talk business. It doesn't happen that often, but when it does, I always learn a great deal.

I also make a point to give back as well. I volunteer as much as possible to teach others about computers. We are proud to offer training classes through the Traverse City Senior Center. We also provide a discount on classes to non-profit organizations. We design and support websites for local agencies including the Grand Traverse Area Parkinson's Support Group and Grand Traverse Area Jaycees. I encourage all of our trainers to volunteer when possible.

Believe in yourself and your dreams! If you are passionate and dedicated, you can do anything – even own your own business!