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THE NEW CT BUSINESS magazine

ENTREPRENEUR

Flying Full Throttle

The CEO of a Glastonbury-based aerospace company got the growth formula right—she learned to connect people with ideas.

By Deborah Nason

Whether your products are helicopters or headboards, having the power to envision your company at a higher level is the first step to getting there. And thanks to CEO Kristin Muschett's vision, Glastonbury-based HABCO Inc. has not only doubled its revenues in the last five years, but it is also getting ready to blast off.



HABCO is a consulting and manufacturing firm largely known for designing maintenance products for the U.S. Military's Black Hawk helicopters. From its 30,000-square-foot facility, the 27-employee company designs and builds testing equipment for numerous markets, including military and commercial aerospace, power generation, fuel cells, industrial, automotive, and medical devices. Revenues have grown from \$4 million to \$8 million between 2001 and 2005, and the momentum is building. HABCO is now poised to enter international markets for Black Hawk.

At first blush, it seems surprising to see a leader with a journalism and women's studies degree at the helm of this company. But then she explains: she grew up in it. Muschett's father, Henry A. Backmann, a former Pratt & Whitney employee, founded the company in 1970 to provide custom components and assemblies for the aerospace industry.

"From age 10 to 12, I cleaned the bathrooms with my sister every Saturday," she remembers. Instead of playing? "Dad made it fun," she notes. "As a teenager, I did office work during the summers, doing bookkeeping and making labels for equipment."

In 1986, when Muschett was just 22, and her sister Erica Diamond was 25, their father asked, "Do you girls want to join the business? I'm ready to sell." They readily agreed, and rose through the ranks while their father continued to lead the company for several more years.

The sisters took turns at different jobs, swapping out every six months to a year.

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They first served in the position of project manager, then accounting, then inside and outside sales, where Muschett says she found her niche. "I used my journalism background," she says. "I used my ability to take complex engineering ideas and solutions and explain them [and thus sell them]. I see connections between ideas and people's needs."

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