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Jan/Feb 2007 Celebrating Local Business and Professional Women

Connie Zack

on Sunlight Saunas' glowing successes

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No Sweat!

Connie Zack takes her company, Sunlight Saunas, from zero to the “Inc. 500 List of Fastest Growing Companies in America”

Interviewed by Sheridan Sechter
Photographed by Christy Lonergan



Connie Zack and her husband, Aaron Zack, started Lenexa-based Sunlight Saunas in the basement of their home in 1999. Just a few years later, in 2006, the company was listed on *Inc. Magazine's* "Inc. 500 List of Fastest Growing Private Companies."

Sunlight Saunas designs, manufactures and markets far infrared saunas in a variety of styles and price ranges including a solo portable model. Customers include individuals who use them for relaxation, pain relief, and to lower blood pressure. The saunas are also purchased by physician offices, day spas and fitness centers.

Among her many contributions to the community, Connie volunteers for the American Heart Association. She was also named one of the Kansas City Business Journal's "Women Who Mean Business" in 2006.

How did Sunlight Saunas get started?

My brother suffered for over 10 years from different conditions including chronic fatigue syndrome and heavy metal toxicity. He tried everything to cure himself but nothing worked until he tried using an infrared (the type of heat we use in our saunas today) sauna to sweat out the toxins. It worked! After all those years of pain, fatigue and dizziness, he was able to exercise again and lead a normal life. Sunlight Saunas was formed to help others live a healthy lifestyle.

How has the company grown since start-up?

It has changed dramatically. When we started, our initial office was no larger than 300 sq. ft. (rounding way up). Funds were tight so we had to squeeze five people in the

What was it like to be named to the "Inc. 500" list?

This was an extra-special accomplishment because it was a goal of ours from the start of our company. When we first started, one of my good friends' companies was listed in the "Inc. 500." We knew it was a very lofty goal – but we made the goal for Sunlight Saunas to be listed in the "Inc. 500" in the next five years, and we made it!

The designs of the saunas are very striking. Is the design work done in-house?

Yes, all our design work is done by our Sunlight Saunas' design team. Thank you very much for the compliment. Our team designed the saunas based on market research with a touch of a "gut" feeling. Design options such as a premium Blaupunkt CD player sound system, beautiful elongated glass door and elegant exterior lighting came from the most important person ... our customer!

What is the science behind your saunas?

Sunlight Saunas are heated by Solocarbon™ Far Infrared Heaters. The Solocarbon Heaters heat up your core temperature, so you burn calories and sweat out toxins. Some of the many health benefits our customers have received are weight loss, pain relief, lowering blood pressure and detoxification.

Who are your customers?

We have wholesale distributors who sell Sunlight Saunas around the world in Australia, New Zealand, Hungary, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

We also sell to doctors, wellness clinics, fitness centers, day spas and residential customers.

What about your business makes you the most proud?

I'm proud of the difference Sunlight Saunas' products make in our customers' lives. We receive letters and e-mails every day from customers who have a lost significant amount of weight using their Sunlight Sauna or a customer

basement and laundry room of our home. Sunlight Saunas has grown exponentially since those days. We are fortunate to share that 2006 was our strongest year to date. Our growth can be attributed to several factors: the introduction of Solocarbon Technology in the Armana Saunas, superior customer service, and best-in-class employees.

“ Follow your gut and pay it forward! When I follow both of those philosophies, everything falls into place. ”

who has been relieved of pain from arthritis and other types of pain. The Sunlight Sauna becomes a part of their daily routine to help them live a healthier life. Receiving this communication from customers makes me very pleased.

What sets your company apart?

Sunlight Saunas' Solocarbon™ heaters, customer-focused team and third-party recommendations. Sunlight Saunas' Solocarbon heaters are the most effective infrared heaters available. Solocarbon heaters are the only heaters proven to lower blood pressure in a clinical trial and increase the body's core temperature. Sunlight Saunas is extremely focused on meeting the customer's needs and letting them know how important they are to our business. Finally, Sunlight Saunas is widely recommended by doctors, weight-loss experts and business owners.

Do you have a guiding philosophy?

Follow your gut and pay it forward! When I follow both of those philosophies, everything falls into place.

You had a thriving career with Procter & Gamble before Sunlight Saunas. What did you learn at P&G that has helped you with your own business?

The importance of understanding the customers needs. Sunlight Saunas is not about me – it is about understanding what the customer is looking for and needing and then addressing it.

You work with your husband. How do you make that work so well professionally and also enhance your personal relationship?

We have very high levels of respect for one another. We truly enjoy working together. When there are challenges or stressful situations, we take the approach of making those situations "fun." Sunlight Saunas has made our personal relationship even stronger than it was before the business.

Do you have any mentors?

My mom is and has always been my mentor. She taught me such an important lesson – I can do anything I want to do and be anybody I want to be. She also leads by example. She is a very loving, unselfish person who I want to be like when I grow up. She is the one who inspired me to always follow my gut.

If you had to name three reasons for your success, what would they be?

I have passion for our customers, employees, business partners and working with the community. Secondly, I have a clear vision and I stay focused. This is key because as an entrepreneur it can be easy to be distracted by opportunities or problems. The third is knowing when to lead and when to get out of the way and cheer from the back row.

company
information

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