

SOUTH CAROLINA BUSINESS

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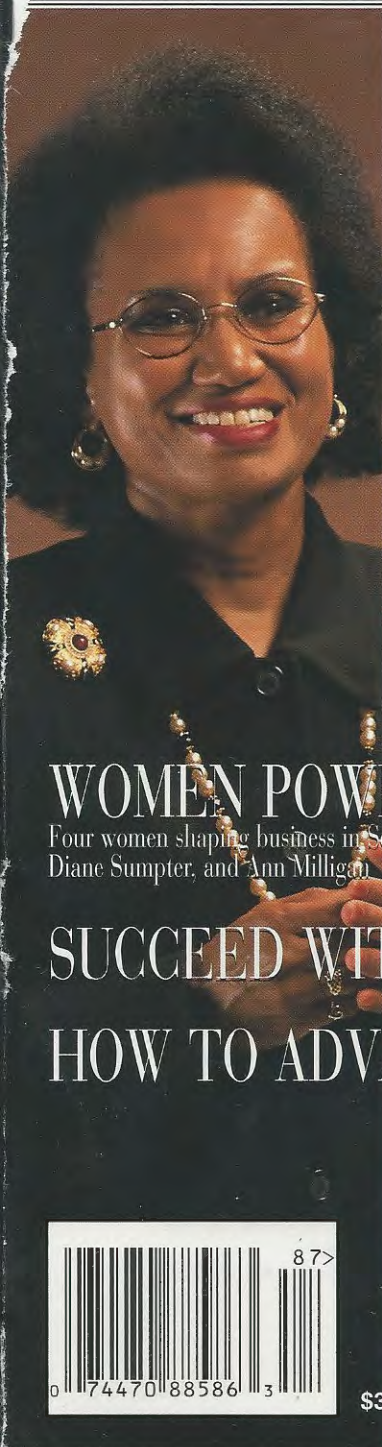


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WOMEN POWER IN BUSINESS

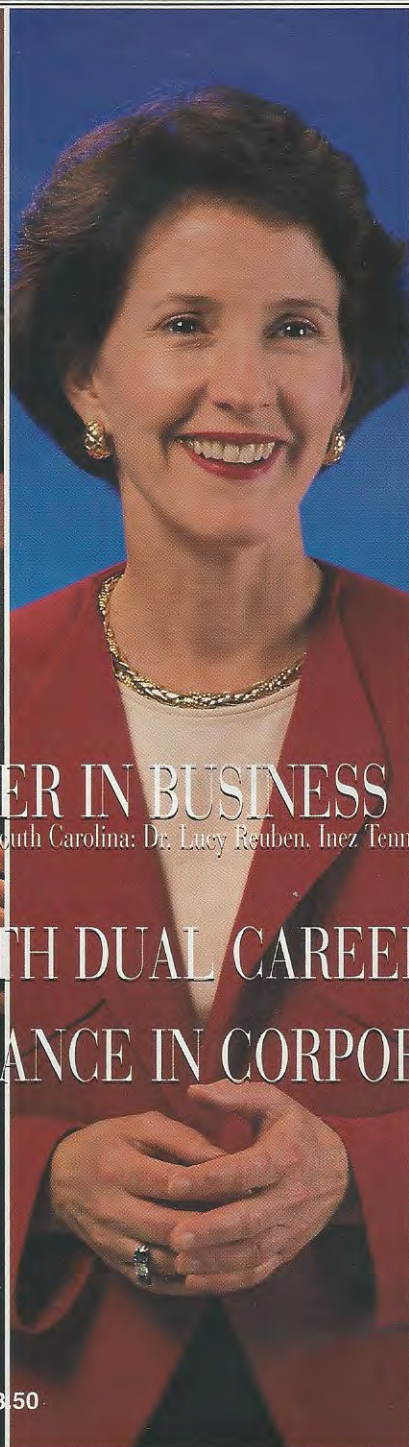
Four women shaping business in South Carolina: Dr. Lucy Reuben, Inez Tennenbaum, Diane Sumpter, and Ann Milligan

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HOW TO ADVANCE IN CORPORATE AMERICA

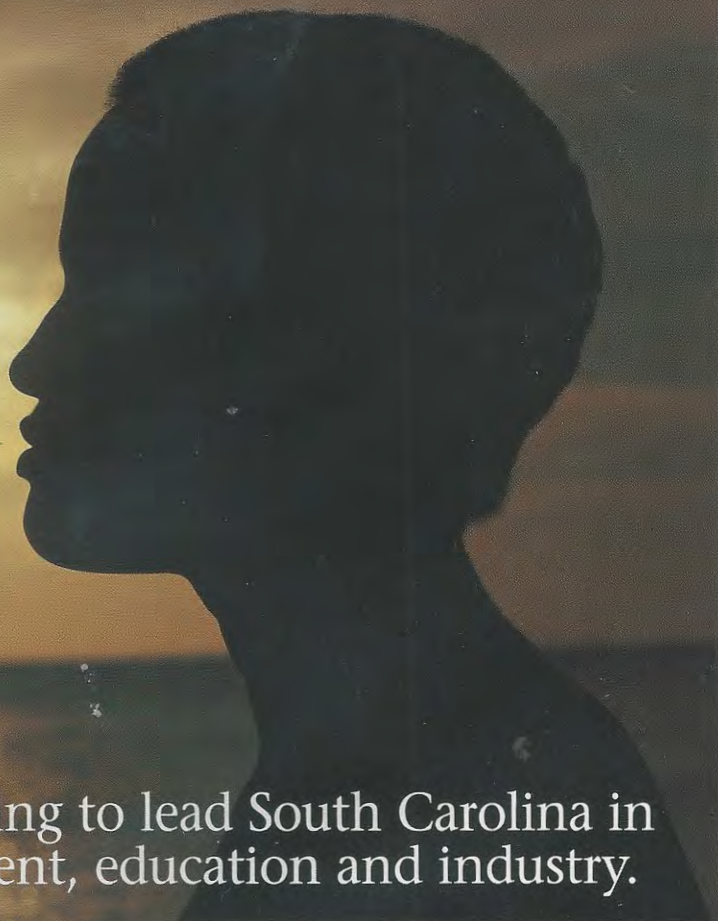


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Women Shaping Business in South Carolina



Profiles of four women helping to lead South Carolina in entrepreneurship, government, education and industry.

By Sandra R. Bell

National statistics show that in every state in this country, women-owned businesses are a vital part of the American economy. According to the Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy, more than eight million women-owned businesses exist, accounting for more than one-third of all businesses. Overall, the U.S. economy is being strongly influenced by women, who in the process are redefining how business is conducted.

Since most industry experts credit South Carolina's ability to form alliances among entrepreneurship, government, education and industry with achieving its outstanding business results, *South Carolina Business Vision* chose four women who represent each of these sectors.

They are as follows: entrepreneurship—Diane Sumpter, chief executive officer, DESA, Inc.; government—Inez Tenenbaum, superintendent, South Carolina Department of Education; education—Dr. Lucy Reuben, dean, School of Business at South Carolina State University and industry—Ann Milligan, vice president and chief marketing officer, SCANA.

While each of these women acknowledges having achieved a measure of success, they all note that women still have a long way to go in this state as women continue to be underrepresented in the fields in which these four women have excelled.

Through this article, each woman reveals her unique road to success and offers views on the role of women in business in this state.



Diane E. Sumpter *Chief Executive Officer, DESA, Inc.*

Diane E. Sumpter offers this advice to anyone wanting to join the ranks of business owners: "Be prepared to lay it all on the line." She says that she started her business because she needed a job. "I had to parlay what I knew into something that could offer me income."

Thirteen years later, Sumpter is one of the most successful African-American female entrepreneurs in South Carolina.

Since 1986, Sumpter has served as owner, founder and CEO of DESA, Inc. Based in Columbia, S.C., the company's emphasis and focus is on small business development.

Having started with three employees, DESA now employs approximately 175 people. DESA's support staff, housed at one of its three Columbia offices at 2008 Marion Street, works closely with the Small Business Development Center at South Carolina State University. One such joint effort is DESA's role in identifying and encouraging contractors, both women and minority men, who are disadvantaged, to attend the annual Entrepreneurial Development Institute held at the college.

DESA performs similar economic development work through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency. This funds the Statewide Minority Business Development Center at 2111 Bull Street in Columbia with satellite offices in Charleston, Spartanburg, Greenville and Florence.

While advocating for other businesses, DESA also works to participate. The

company is a graduate of the 8(a) program. This is the nation's most controversial program, which is managed by the U.S. Small Business Administration. For nine years, DESA along with an average of 30 other firms in South Carolina, had the opportunity to acquire contracts through negotiation as well as limited competitive bidding.

"The business community in South Carolina [is] receptive to those who they see persevere and accomplish something against the odds."

Diane Sumpter

Through these contracts, DESA's business expanded from work in South Carolina to contracts in South Dakota for switchboard operations, Mobile, Ala. for library services, conference management and support for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta and fiscal and accounting services for the U.S. State Department in Charleston, S.C. and Washington, D.C. In addition, DESA operates such facili-

ties as the Poinsettia weapons range and the hospital at Shaw Air Force base as well as the hospital at Moody Air Force base in Valdosta, Ga.

For its outstanding service, DESA has won a number of awards that include: the Ernst and Young 1993 Minority Business of the Year, South Carolina Business Network Association's 1997 Business of the Year and the U.S. Small Business Administration's 1992 South Carolina Minority Business of the Year.

Despite having achieved some measure of success for her company, Sumpter does not feel that the doors are always open for minorities and women.

"If you look at the state's boards, appointments, elected officials, corporate executives, you see a sprinkling of representation here and there," Sumpter says. And while she acknowledges that this representation is important, she points out that such meager representation can have very little impact.

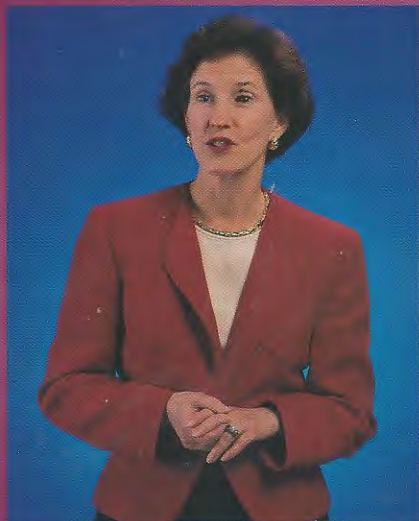
"We (women and minorities) still have an inability to get business," she says. "The business community in South Carolina ends up being receptive to those who they see persevere and accomplish something against the odds."

With her formal training in social work, Sumpter attributes her inspiration and mentor to her grandfather, who encouraged her to study and to lead. She also says that she has now been "taken under the wing" of and offered assistance by such large corporate representatives as John Lumpkin of Edens & Avant and Joe Anderson of BellSouth.

Anderson offered DESA an opportunity to do business with BellSouth. DESA is currently under contract with BellSouth to identify, screen and engage payment agents for phone services throughout its southeastern region, which includes the states of Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, and South Carolina.

In addition, Anderson recommended Sumpter for membership on the South Carolina State Chamber of Commerce Board, a position which she now holds.

"I think it's important to have people who can share knowledge because you get to the point where you can't learn fast enough," Sumpter says. She adds that it is beneficial for her to network with other African-American business owners, particularly those whose businesses are similar to DESA in terms of size and longevity.



Inez Tenenbaum *Superintendent, South Carolina Department of Education*

South Carolina's newly elected state superintendent of education, Inez Tenenbaum, can be said to represent two worlds—that of government and of education. As the government official responsible for the education of children grades K through 12, Tenenbaum is charged with ensuring that South Carolina's public schools are preparing tomorrow's workers to take their rightful place as part of the state's economy.

"We've made great strides in educating young men and women in a way that is tied to the real world," Tenenbaum says. She adds that since taking office in January of this year, all of her first five initiatives for education have won approval through the legislature. These initiatives are: academic standards; early childhood education—the First Steps program; infrastructure, i.e., buildings; leadership for our schools and quality.

Tenenbaum's background lends itself to her ability to achieve her objectives. She worked both as a schoolteacher and as an attorney before creating the Center for Family Policy, a key advocacy organization for children.

Tenenbaum received her bachelor of science degree in education in 1972 and her master's degree from the University of Georgia. Twelve years later, she graduated from law school at the University of South Carolina, having served as associate editor-in-chief of the South Carolina Law Review.

In addition to these professional achievements, Tenenbaum has taken the time to be actively involved in the community. She resides in Lexington with

her husband, Samuel J. Tenenbaum, and she is a member of the Allen University Board of Trustees, and a former board member of United Way, the South Carolina Cystic Fibrosis foundation, and the Martin Luther King Foundation, to name a few.

"I've always seen it to be my personal mission to help children and to be an advocate."

Inez Tenenbaum

"I've always seen it to be my personal mission to help children and to be an advocate," Tenenbaum says. Because of her belief and commitment to children's issues, she willingly entered the world of politics and government, which can often be brutal. She says that the scandals and investigations of politicians coupled with the tremendous amount of money needed to run for elected office deter some women from attempting to follow in her footsteps.

"People will vote for women, but women can be reluctant to raise money," Tenenbaum says. She acknowledges that, traditionally, women have not had to raise the amount and kind of

money that is needed for politics. In support of women in politics, Tenenbaum often gives speeches and she meets with potential female candidates to lend advice and support.

To achieve a measure of success in a chosen field, Tenenbaum advises women to first get an education and then to find something that motivates them—something they love to do.

"You can't be afraid to take risks, to ask for money and to get out there," she says. "I try to encourage as many women as possible to run for elected office."

Strategies for Success in Business

Diane Sumpter, Inez Tenenbaum, Dr. Lucy Reuben, and Ann Milligan offer the following additional advice for women in business:

- A. Gain practical experience through internships or volunteer work.** Not only can volunteer work and internships give you experience, according to Reuben, but these experiences can also lead to employment opportunities and valuable contacts.
- B. Obtain a graduate degree in a business-related field.** Both Reuben and Milligan supplemented their undergraduate degrees with MBAs. Executive MBA programs, such as the one offered by the University of South Carolina, allow women from non-business fields to obtain their master's degrees in business through a combination of practical work experience and theoretic education.
- C. Network beyond your comfort zone.** While you may prefer to attend meetings with your peers, your career may be better served by extending beyond your comfort zone. Attend seminars and conferences that allow you to network with people in executive and management positions whenever possible.
- D. Embrace change and technology.** As the business world continues to change, being computer-literate, i.e., able to operate basic word processing, database, and spreadsheet programs, is a must for success in business.



Dr. Lucy J. Reuben *Dean, School of Business, South Carolina State University*

Dr. Lucy J. Reuben's path to becoming dean of the School of Business at South Carolina State University was not one of the straight and narrow. Before assuming her current position in 1995, Reuben worked in community development, she continued her education, and she operated her own business.

Reuben, a native of Sumter, S.C., graduated from Oberlin College in Ohio with a degree in economics. Her first job was with Huff Development through a cooperative program in Cleveland during her college years.

"I got interested in business when I moved to Michigan, and I studied it," Reuben explains. At the University of Michigan, she completed both her Ph.D. in business administration and her M.B.A. in finance. Her educational credentials enabled her to run her own consulting firm and to be selected as a member of the Black Enterprise Board of Economists.

In reflecting on how she got from where she was to where she is today, Reuben credits role models. "I've had the privilege to work with a number of excellent deans, such as Dr. Sybil Mobley of Florida A&M," she says. "I've also been blessed with a number of mentors in business and management education."

Reuben acknowledges that there needs to be a bridge and alliances formed between academia and business. "I want my professors to not only know theory and to have formal expertise, but also to know and feel comfortable about how business operates," Reuben says.

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Dr. Lucy Reuben

Through the creation of an Executive Speakers series, Reuben has recruited top notch business talent to lecture at the school, including such notables as Earl G. Graves, Jr. of *Black Enterprise* magazine, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor Bernard Anderson and local corporate leaders, such as Cathy Novinger, former SCANA senior vice president of administration.

The results of this blend of actual work experience and academia, according to Reuben, have been increases in the number, quality and diversity of students entering the business program at South Carolina State University.

Like many professional women, Reuben balances a private life and marriage (to John Cole, Ph.D.) with work and community involvement. She holds lifetime memberships in several organizations, including the National Association of Black MBAs, the National Council of Negro Women and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. In addition, the former governor appointed Reuben to the South Carolina Science and Technology Council.

With her faculty of 30, which includes the Small Business Development Center the college operates in conjunction with the Small Business Association and the state of South Carolina, she has revamped the entire curriculum at the college's School of Business.

Beginning with the class of 2000, all business students will be required to successfully complete an approved internship in order to graduate. In addition, international study is being encouraged because, according to Reuben, these skills make the difference in global competition. She has, therefore, formulated her school's mission in global terms and she considers a student's progression and development in those terms as well.

Reuben feels that the School of Business at South Carolina State University leads the state and region in its agribusiness curriculum. At the college, students study finance, management, logistics and production as well as agriculture. Since agricultural products are traded at the Chicago Stock Exchange, Reuben has placed students in internships there.

"We still don't have that many African Americans who are trained in business management," Reuben says. She knows this from running her own consulting firm for five years. Reuben also feels that the more trained managers are, whether they are running corporations or small businesses, the better are their chances for success.

To succeed in a chosen field, Reuben advises women to make the most of each opportunity that is given to them.



Ann Milligan Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, SCANA

As vice president and chief marketing officer at SCANA and a member of the executive management team, Ann Milligan has achieved what many would describe as a breakthrough in the "glass ceiling."

And although many corporations deny that such a ceiling exists, the U.S. Department of Labor commissioned a report and found that for a variety of reasons, including barriers to access, information, experience and training, a line or "glass ceiling" did exist, above which minorities and women rarely crossed.

Milligan, who reports directly to the CEO of SCANA, is by her own admission an example that in South Carolina, there are now "fissures in the glass."

"I think women are making inroads in certain industries, particularly service industries such as health care and utilities," she says. As proof, she cites the fact that SCANA recruited her and hired her while she was pregnant. Their willingness to give her the time she needed and their benefits program influenced her decision to move here.

"This position is symbolic of how SCANA is embracing diversity in its various forms," Milligan says. She adds that having people of varying skill sets and styles of leadership better enables the company to serve a diverse population. "Rather than setting specific goals, I think this company is absolutely looking for people who can bring fresh perspectives and different experiences," she says.

Before coming to SCANA, Milligan worked at Barnett Banks in Florida.

Milligan was attracted to SCANA because of the opportunity to work in an industry at the beginning of the deregulation process in natural gas and to be a part of SCANA's expansion into Georgia, and pending approval, in North Carolina as well.

"I think women are making inroads in certain industries, particularly service industries such as health care and utilities."

Ann Milligan

With the help of seven senior staff members who report directly to her, including her assistant, Milligan oversees a division of hundreds of people. In addition, after only being on the job since October 1998, Milligan has become active in a mentoring program that was begun in April of this year under her direction. This program features informal networking sessions with 37 women participants.

"We cover the full range of career development issues for women in cor-

porate America in general and SCANA, in particular," Milligan says of the program.

Coming in as a new senior manager, Milligan says that she has sought to gain the support of leadership and the buy-in of her subordinates for change. "You achieve change by making a compelling argument about the risks and benefits," she explains.

Although new to the job and to the area, Milligan says that she has been impressed by the hospitality and warmth that she has received.

Balancing a career, a marriage and being the mother of a six-year-old child as well as a nine-month-old child requires management skills that are similar to those required by her job with SCANA. She adds, however, that having a supportive husband makes a big difference.

Her advice to women who seek to reach the highest echelons of the corporate world is to study hard, find a mentor, and to get as much diverse experience as possible.

"We're making strong inroads, but there is still an opportunity to improve," Milligan says. **V**

Women-in-Business Facts

- Women-owned businesses generate \$3.1 trillion in revenue, an increase of 209 percent in the past decade, after adjusting for inflation.
- By the year 2000, it is estimated that women-owned sole proprietorships will number 7.1 million, or 35 percent of all sole proprietorships.
- Almost 4.7 million women will be self-employed by 2005. This is an increase of 77 percent since 1983, compared with a 6 percent increase in the number of self-employed men.
- Some 23.8 million employees work for women-owned firms, an increase of 262 percent in the past decade.

Source: The Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy, Economic Statistics and Research on Small Business: Women in Business Report.