

Susan Stern's Story

Susan Stern always had a passion for learning and was a very motivated student. She received a BA in French literature and European history from Tufts University but had no specific career plan in mind during her college years. She loved non-fiction writing and upon graduation focused on pursuing an editorial career path in the publishing industry in New York City.

She spent her first three years in the work force at *Cosmopolitan* magazine, taking the opportunity to explore various aspects of the editorial profession. She held positions from art department assistant to office manager to editorial assistant which provided her the opportunity to gain an understanding of what it takes to produce a successful publication. In her position as editorial assistant, she was responsible for reviewing the public relations materials that were sent to her department on a daily basis which sparked her interest in the public relations field. Discovering that Public Relations a field offering more growth potential, she decided to pursue a new career direction in the public relations department at a financial technology corporation. She also worked for a major international public relations firm before launching her own public relations firm in 1985. Today, Stern + Associates is a thriving organization serving clients in a range of industries including architecture and interior design, healthcare and medical technology, and thought leadership and management consulting.

Susan's greatest challenge throughout her career has been managing the gradual loss of her hearing. It was in her mid-20's that her hearing started to deteriorate. She had no other choice but to find ways to cope both psychologically and professionally. Despite hearing aids and the benefits of cochlear implant technology, she struggled to communicate on the phone and in group settings. She has since become more focused on the operations of the company and client strategy instead of attending client meetings and conference calls.

When asked what Susan's greatest accomplishments have been, she replies that she "is most proud of the unusual and highly supportive work culture she has created at Stern + Associates. When she formed the company nearly 24 years ago her goal was to ensure that

every employee would be treated with respect, that their ideas would always be considered and that talented and dedicated people would have the opportunity for continual growth.”

Susan, despite the challenges with her loss of hearing, has accomplished so much in her career, never using her disability as a reason not to succeed. Her business has grown to include offices in Nashville, TN and Cambridge, MA in addition to their headquarters in New Jersey. Susan says her recipe for success is three key ingredients: trust and rely on your intuition; establish and follow squeaky clean ethical practices; and share the limelight with everyone who deserves to be applauded for their contributions.

More of Susan Stern's story may be featured in the Pink Ladder's book in the near future.

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