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News

NATIONAL MAGAZINE HONORS ALDRIDGE CompuNet chief earns Working Woman award

By ANDI ANDERSON

A nationally recognized entrepreneur, Cindy Aldridge knows what it takes to keep her customers happy and satisfied. Aldridge is the president and chief operating officer of CompuNet, a Lake Havasu City company that reports on commercial credit for trucking companies. Aldridge said the company has more than 2,500 clients in North America, and experiences a yearly growth of about 20 to 30 percent.

Aldridge recently received an award from Working Woman magazine, the 2001 Entrepreneurial Excellence Award for Customer Service and Client Relations. She said although she has received local and state awards, this is the first national award she has earned.

The Working Woman article reads: "Deep in the heart of Lake Havasu City, Ariz., Aldridge, 41, runs a high-tech service used by truckers across the country to access critical credit information that protects them from getting ripped off on the road."

It takes one of two characteristics to create a successful business, Aldridge said: a person must possess either creativity or great organizational skills. The successful businesswoman credited her staff with helping make the business as good as it is today. "We work together as a team on everything," Aldridge noted. "Everybody here has real important information to bring to the table." She added that she thinks the key to her success is the great customer service her company provides. "You have to ask the customer and then listen to them," Aldridge explained. She said CompuNet is constantly surveying customers to determine their needs and then striving to fulfill those needs. "This award is just as much this company's as it is mine," Aldridge added. The biggest payoff for Aldridge is when an employee receives a compliment from a customer and shares the story with her.

Aldridge was inspired by a Wall Street Journal article explaining how much money trucking companies lose when a load is delivered and the shipping bill is never paid. Aldridge said as she was reading the article, she realized the similarities between her previous job, working for an oil company, and the need in the trucking industry to check the credit of the companies to which the goods are being delivered were close enough for her to know how to approach the idea of starting the business. Her next step was acquiring a list of the top trucking companies in the nation, and then calling the firms and pitching her idea to set up a network to check credit.

"We still have our first customer," Aldridge said. That was back in 1984 in Ft. Worth, Tex. In 1991, Aldridge decided to move the company to Lake Havasu City because this was somewhere she had wanted to be for a long time. Aldridge explained that she moved here for the same reasons other people do — it's a great place to raise a family, has a low crime rate and the overall lifestyle is pleasing. She and her husband, Jerry, have four children between them, and she said family always comes first. The move came at a time when CompuNet outgrew the offices in Ft. Worth and Aldridge and was looking for another set of offices. When her mother's car was broken into as it was parked right in front of her house, Aldridge said it was time to look elsewhere to set up offices. So, for more than a year, two sets of offices were open, one in Ft. Worth and one in Lake Havasu City, to ensure there was no gap in customer service. Aldridge said when the company polled the customers after the move, most of them said they didn't even realize the company had changed locations. She said customers reported that the service had only gotten better; the success of which Aldridge contributed to extra, intense training the new employees had gone through.

"I am a leader who looks for all the input I can get," Aldridge said. The entrepreneur added that she has a whole list of ideas she would like to put into action, but it's all about timing. For now, Aldridge said she looks forward to her plans for a new building — 25,000 square feet with covered parking she had promised her employees. "Happy employees give really good customer service."