

FIVE QUESTIONS

CJ HUESTON

Interview by Candace Rotolo

CJ HUESTON IS USED TO "PLAYING WITH THE BOYS." As the former president and CEO of a fleet-management company whose clients included the country's major oil companies, Hueston rose to the top in a male-dominated industry. Now, as owner of Corporate Dimensions, the Naples-based recruitment and placement firm she started in 1998, Hueston is mastering the keys to success as a small business owner and sharing her skills with other women.

1 How has the business climate changed for women in the last 10 years?

After I started working for a fleet-management company, I had two meetings that included women during my 13 years there. When I started my current business, I didn't think being a female-owned business was a positive. Since we have recently expanded our executive recruitment services nationally, I've found it to be extremely helpful. Companies are trying to diversify. I think it's a great time to be an entrepreneurial woman.

2 What is the value of networking for women?

I believe the real factor between success and failure in business is networking. It doesn't matter what your gender. I was already established when I started my company, but I found that women in this area, especially women in decision-making positions, have tried to help my business grow by either using my services or passing my name to other companies. It's been my experience that men tend to network with other men. I don't mean that in a negative way. It's just the way it is.

3 How important are mentors for women in the business world?

Mentors are everything as you're coming through the ranks. I've realized that in my career, many women have reached out to me to help me be successful. That isn't always the case. Sometimes women are not supportive of each other. Many of my mentors have been men. What's important is finding someone who's really in a position to help you navigate your career. Women should look for the person who can give



MANCY DENIKE

them a hand up. It doesn't do you any good to have a mentor who is only one or two levels above you, because they're struggling to get to the top as well. Women also shouldn't be afraid to ask someone to be their mentor.

4 In what ways should women prepare for the workplace?

Women need to make their own road map and do a lot of research. They need to acquaint themselves with all the different aspects of their field. If you want to own a business, learn how to make a business plan and do market analysis. There's more security in the corporate world. If you want to take the risk, and start out on your own, be prepared to work hard.

5 What other advice do you have for women?

Get involved in your community. It's a great way to improve your networking skills and meet people who can support your company and/or career. Consider joining the local chamber of commerce or economic development council. There are also several female-oriented business organizations that will offer contacts, support and career development.