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Outstanding Women in Business 2011

Theresa Szczurek committed to make a change in communication

Winner - Small Business Owner

Premium content from Denver Business Journal - by Kyle Grabowski

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Theresa Szczurek founded Boulder-based Radish Systems LLC in 2009, with the idea of changing simultaneous voice and visual communication.

The result was ChoiceView, a software and mobile app combination that allows smartphone users to both receive visual information from, and speak with, someone on the phone. ChoiceView also can eliminate the traditional “press one for sales, press two for marketing” method of response with a visual, touchscreen approach.

“We believe it can transform communication,” Szczurek said. “It stimulates multiple senses, which makes it much easier to understand, make decisions and learn.”

Szczurek grew up in Chicago, and graduated from the University of Western Illinois with a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics, and minors in statistics and finance.

AT&T Bell Laboratories hired her and brought her out to work in Colorado, before sending her to Stanford University, where she got a Master of Science degree in operations research in the College of Engineering.

Later, Szczurek obtained an MBA from the University of Colorado at Denver, with a focus in information systems.

She also earned a doctorate degree in business administration, with a focus in marketing and organization development, from the University of Colorado Boulder.

In 1990, Szczurek founded Radish Communications Systems Inc. with **Richard A. Davis** in Boulder. The company, now referred to as Radish 1.0, developed a modem function that allowed both voice and data to be transmitted through a regular phone line.

Microsoft licensed the protocol in 1994 and shipped it standard with the Windows operating system.

Davis and Szczurek got married in 1991 and sold the company in 1996. Szczurek then started her own management consulting firm, Technology and Management Solutions, to help technology companies with marketing and strategic planning.

Szczurek said clients asked her about how she achieved her success, so she decided to write a book about it.

"Pursuit of Passionate Purpose" (Wiley, \$24.95, 304 pages) was released in January 2005 and became an Amazon best-seller. "I wanted to help others learn from our experiences," Szczurek said.

She originally intended to just tell the story of Radish 1.0, but ended up performing a major research study — interviewing 80 people from across the country to find out what made them successful.

"I found out there were four stages," Szczurek said. "The first is finding out who you are and what your passion is. Stage two is aligning your passion with purpose, stage three is pursuing your passionate purpose with all of your soul, and the last stage is to assess progress."

She then experienced what she called the "perfect storm in terms of the mobile market," and founded the second version of Radish in 2009.

"We recycled the name and the logo," Szczurek said. "As a Colorado company, we liked the thought of recycling."

Out of the office, Szczurek is an adviser to Colorado MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science and Achievement), a nonprofit run by the Colorado Minority Engineering Association, which helps Colorado's K-12 youth pursue education in math, engineering and other technical areas.

The program focuses on low-income, minority and female students — demographics that are under-represented in those fields, Szczurek said.

She also has served as a leader with the Girl Scouts for 10 years.

"I want to help these young girls have courage, confidence and character," Szczurek said.

She started in New Jersey when she was working for AT&T Bell Laboratories, and now helps with her daughter Annie's troop in Colorado.

"We actually just got back from a 10-day canoe trip down the Buffalo River in Arkansas," Szczurek said. "It was 102 degrees out with 90 percent humidity, but it was amazing to see these girls out in the wilderness surviving with the skills they learned."

Szczurek understands the importance of finding balance in life and taking care of herself.

"I'm a firm believer in meditation. I meditate every day, I exercise every day," she said. "I guess that just fits in with the Boulder lifestyle."

Theresa Szczurek

Title: CEO and co-founder

Company: Radish Systems LLC

Location: Boulder

Phone: 720-440-7560

Website: www.radishsystems.com