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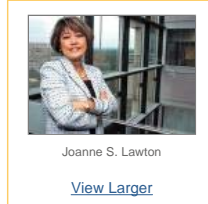
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Sources Revealed - Michelle Lee

Libraries, science

Washington Business Journal - June 1, 2007 by [Neil Adler](#) Staff Reporter

Michelle Lee, who started out as a librarian, founded government contractor STG International Inc. in her basement a decade ago. Lee began her company with a single client, and that customer remains an integral part of STG International's business today. A big believer in feng shui, Lee says 'good luck' comes when the environment is right.



Joanne S. Lawton

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STG International has 1,200 people and almost \$100 million in sales. Did you ever imagine the company would be this successful? I like big things. I am a fearless woman. I'm not surprised. If you put your heart into it, \$100 million is just one part of the dotted line. Great things are yet to come.

How big do you see the company getting? Ten years from now, we could be generating \$500 million in annual revenue. You never know. We're seeking steady growth.

What was your biggest worry when STG International was getting off the ground? I was worried there wouldn't be enough business, that no one would want to do business with me. But then I realized people do business with whom they like. I was able to overcome that fear.

And today? Talent acquisition is my big worry now. I'm focused on a particular type of person. It's all about a good match. Fitting in with our culture. I hire people and ... empower them. We work as a team. It needs to be nonterritorial.

There's a STG Inc. in Reston. Do people confuse the two companies? People do get us confused. When I started my company, I never knew STG was such a popular name. I was thinking of the name Science and Technology Group International Inc., but that's long. I thought I should be like NASA and HHS (the Department of Health and Human Services). So I decided on STG International.

Did you ever think getting a master's degree in library and information sciences from Texas Woman's University would lead to STG International? No. I wasn't even planning to stay in the country [Lee is from Taiwan]. We came here to go to school and then move on. Life is such an unexpected journey sometimes. Because my husband and I ended up in Maryland, I heard about government contracting. I might not have started STG International if I stayed in Texas.

If you weren't running this company, what would you be doing? I would probably still be in a library setting. I was very content in the library.

Librarians are so under-appreciated. They are fun, energetic people. I was a librarian for 10 years. I started at the bottom and worked my way up.

What's your favorite library? The [U.S.] Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's library in Rockville. It's a really cool place. State of the art.

The role of libraries in the federal government has diminished. It's sad.

How is the Internet affecting libraries? The Web is good for general information to get started. You can't diminish the role of librarians in getting more comprehensive information. But people want things quick these days.

How do you juggle a business with family life? I make sure we have dinner every night together. Nothing starts until I get home.

What's your advice to other would-be entrepreneurs? Know the landscape, your competitors and yourself, and you will win every battle.

How has your family helped you in your career? My father had three boys and two girls. He thought girls were the best thing ever. He would tell me, "You can do anything and everything." Growing up, I really had no fear. I never had a doubt in my mind.

Who has been a mentor to you? Donald Watts. He was an executive officer for the office of general counsel at HHS, which awarded me my first contract. He was always able to tell me if I was overdoing this or could do more of that. He has retired, but we continue to talk. He's been such a good influence on me.

What's your favorite thing about the D.C. area? I love the four seasons. It's incredible.

How many e-mails in a day? Maybe 500.

How do you relax? Traveling. My BlackBerry works too well here. When you go away, it's a total temporary cutoff from work life. I really do believe in work-life balance. *All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.*

How do you relay that balance to your workers? I tell my employees that if you're staying here all day and all night, maybe you're doing too much work. I want to give employees an environment where they can be successful, where they can thrive. I ask for an honest workday. Then go do your thing and enjoy life. We like people with outside interests. We have musicians here, soccer players.

What is one thing your employees would be shocked to know? If it was up to me, I would have 10 children in my household instead of three. Two basketball teams would be great.

Favorite vacation spot? Bali. It's a beautiful place. Good food. The people are so nice. Every time I go there, I think it's a paradise of its own.

Favorite food? Chinese hot pot. It's like fondue. Lamb and beef that you dip in special sauces. It's perfect for the winter time.

If you had to sing karaoke, what would you pick? "Wind Beneath My Wings."

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