

A Woman's Touch

IN A MALE-DOMINATED BUSINESS, ASPEN LOGISTICS PRESIDENT CONNIE ANDERSON GREW THE COMPANY INTO A THRIVING PROVIDER.

> ASPEN LOGISTICS INC.

BY KATHRYN JONES

Like many successful third-party logistics companies, Aspen Logistics Inc. provides supply chain services in the areas of warehousing, distribution, transportation and consultation for manufacturers across the country. But what distinguishes the Temecula, Calif., firm from its competitors is the dynamic leadership of President Connie Anderson.

Anderson not only has positioned Aspen to be one of the top logistics leaders in its market, she has paved the way for future generations of females to achieve management positions in an industry that, for the most part, continues to be dominated by men.

"I personally never had any major problems because I am pretty outspoken and assertive," she admits. "I was 'one of the guys,' so to speak. But there is no question that when I started in this industry, women didn't get paid as much as men did for the same type of job.

PROFILE

Aspen Logistics Inc.

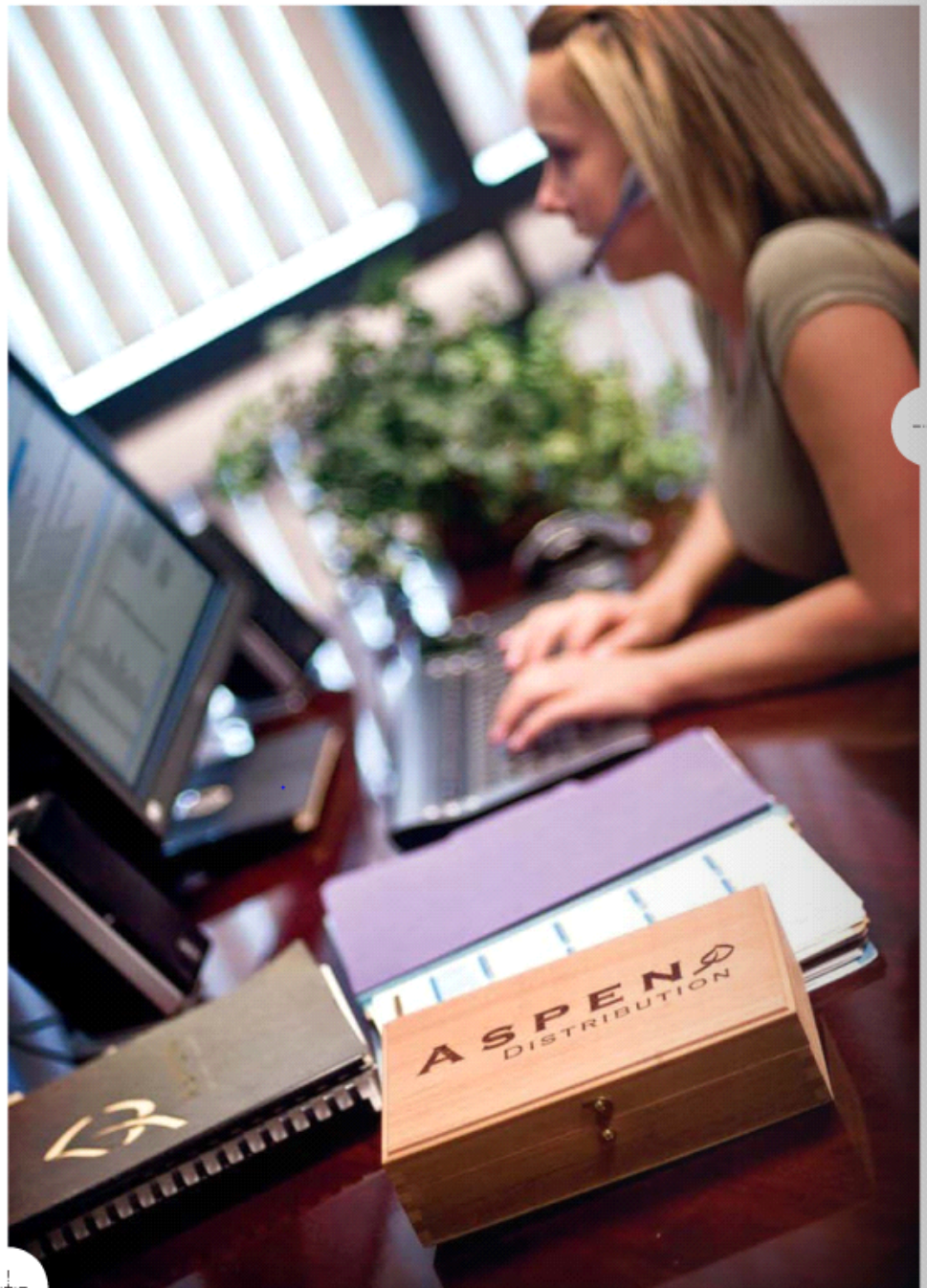
www.aspenlogistics.com

Annual revenues: \$55 million

Headquarters: Temecula, Calif.

Service: Logistics

Employees: 600



"It takes a different kind of person to do this type of work because it's certainly not an easy industry." -Connie Anderson, president



// Under the leadership of President Connie Anderson, Aspen Logistics has grown into a leading supply chain services provider.



her husband, who worked for Duracell at the time, was transferred to its corporate headquarters in Connecticut.

Anderson's experience at Aspen landed her a position with a large, national logistics firm. "It was the best thing that ever happened to me because that company allowed me to learn different things about a lot of different industries," she recalls. "It was a great training ground for when I went back to Aspen.

"For a long period of time, I was the only female on the sales force," she says. "But the thing that's interesting about that organization is that the president at the time also had daughters."

He, along with Anderson's father and husband, played a key role in Anderson's career and her ability to make executive decisions down the road.

"He was a great role model, and he took me under his wing and showed me how I should present myself," Anderson says. "While it's great to be one of the guys, they should still treat you like a lady. He was good at helping me understand what that meant in a large company."

After working there for eight years, changes in the company prompted Anderson to search for a new employer. Then, when Gillette purchased Duracell, her husband faced a similar dilemma, and the couple was unsure of what to do or where to go next.

By then, Aspen had expanded into California and was offering new services in copacking, plant support and information technology. "One day, my dad called and said, 'You know, what about coming back in a sales capacity for us?'" Anderson says. "I never thought I would go back to Aspen because that was never a part of the plan, but it just happened."

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"You didn't see women in any type of leadership role; they were all customer service representatives," she recalls.

"When it comes to warehousing and transportation, I don't think a lot of women wanted to be in that business anyway," she notes. "It was pretty raw. I

tried to leave the industry for three years and ended up going right back into it because I have a passion for it. I'm not sure why. It takes a different kind of person to do this type of work because it's certainly not an easy industry."

Coming Full Circle

Anderson's father, Dan Sample, established Aspen in 1978 when he acquired the assets and business of Wycoff Warehouse Co. in Salt Lake City. He then transformed the company into an asset-based transportation organization.

Anderson, who was attending college at the University of Utah for a marketing degree, worked for the company in her spare time, but she did not intend to work in the industry after she graduated.

After less than a year of being married,



Strategic Approach

When Anderson became president in 2002, she decided to separate Aspen's services into different divisions. Aspen Logistics provides shared services in warehousing and transportation, while Aspen Alliance Group offers IT and consulting services.

When Sample formerly retired in 2006, Anderson purchased the company with the goal to continue her father's legacy.

He left her with some pretty sound advice. "My dad worked for Trammel Crow and they had products like Whirlpool appliances, and when you got into the 1970s with the big recession, that stuff bottomed out," Anderson notes.

"One of the things he was always pushing was to look for so-called 'recession-proof' products so that if another recession hit, your business won't go under because of it.

"We have diversified into a couple of areas, but in most cases, our products align in that type of category."

Most of Aspen's clients are associated with the food production industry and include Hershey's, Cadbury, Mars, Campbell's, as well as pharmaceutical corporations and large pet food providers that are still doing fairly well, she says.

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// Aspen Logistics thrives because of the team approach it takes to decision-making, Anderson says.

"Even though the economy has tanked, people still feed their pets, buy medicine and buy candy bars, so these products are a little more recession-proof," Anderson acknowledges.

Team Environment

Anderson believes in taking a team approach when it comes to decision-making. "I have no problem making decisions," she asserts.

"But I want to make sure I get everyone's input before I make decisions so they will feel they had some buy-in on the decision. I believe in continuous improvement. How are we going to do it better this year?"

"I also think it's healthy to challenge each other in an organization," she continues. "When I have six or seven people reporting to me, I am OK with them saying, 'I don't think you did that right.'"

"In fact, I expect them to challenge not

only me, but each other and their teams," Anderson continues.

"You need to have that open communication in order to grow and change. The more we challenge each other, the better decisions we will make. If you can't do that without feeling defensive, then it's never going to be good."

As a self-proclaimed soccer mom, Anderson understands the importance of maintaining equilibrium when it comes to work and family.

"That is a continuous thing I work at," she says. "There are times when you have to put the hours in, and then there are times when you don't."

"Sometimes you have to put your cell phone and your laptop aside and think about what's most important," she adds. "I ask that of my team when I see overtime being high because I want them to have a family life, too." *•mt*