

CEO Profile

Personal information

Name: Liz Thomas

Title: CEO

Company: Thomas/Boyd Communications LLC.

Type of Company: Mount Laurel, N.J.-based public relations firm specializing in strategic and crisis communications, media relations and special-event planning.

Recent projects: Coordinating media coverage of the passage of the Battleship New Jersey through the Panama Canal and working with Save Ellis Island to publicize efforts relating to the restoration of 30 remaining buildings on Ellis Island.

Education: BA, English, Moravian College.

First job: Making and selling costume jewelry "with a lifetime guarantee" at 7 years old.

Little known fact: I lined up celebrities for the introduction of the "NJ and You Perfect Together" tourism campaign. While preparing for a TV shoot, I was asked to select Brooke Shields' wardrobe from her vast closet in her downtown Princeton apartment.

Home: Moorestown, N.J.

Business philosophy

Essential business philosophy: I'm a hands-on owner-manager and I maintain close contact with my clients. My colleagues and I share the philosophy that we never take no for an answer when pitching a story.

Best way to keep a competitive edge: Knowing your clients' needs before they do.

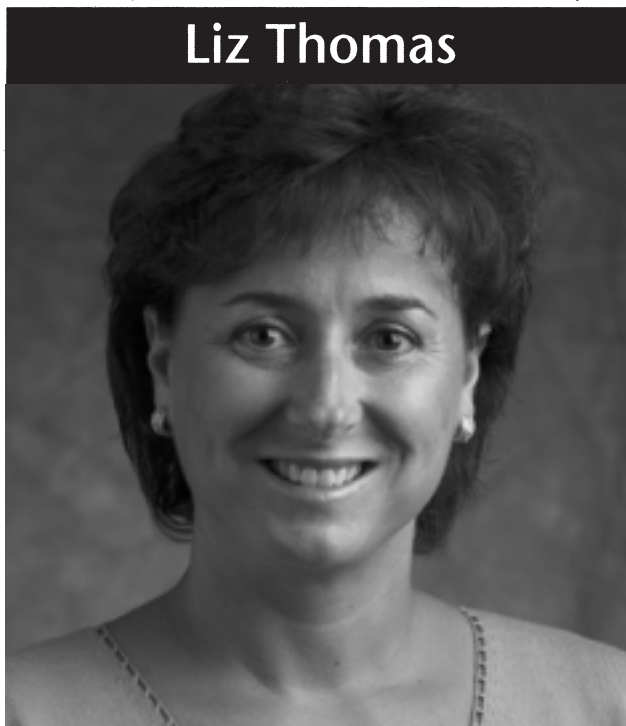
Yardstick of success: Our clients. We're a success because they're a success.

Goal yet to be achieved: Landing a PR job for a Caribbean island or resort.

Judgment calls

Best decision: Taking a job in the press office of (gubernatorial candidate) Tom Kean, with eight weeks to go until Election Day. This decision led me to a permanent position in the governor's press office, which ultimately set the direction for my entire career path. I was fortunate to receive daily, on-the-job training from some of the best communications and

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political strategists in the business.

Worst decision: I should have purchased a property to house my business years ago. I shudder to think all I've spent in rent over the course of 14 years.

Toughest decision: Resigning an account when it became clear that the client's philosophy didn't match ours.

Mentor: Carl Golden (press secretary to Gov. Tom Kean and Gov. Christine Todd Whitman). Carl took a chance on a kid right out of college who had no formal communications training — just a college degree in English and a willingness to learn. He taught me the ropes and, especially, how to engage members of the media in an open and honest dialogue. His guidance has helped me manage some of my clients' toughest assignments.

True confessions

Word that best describes you: Energetic.

Like best about your job: The diversity of day-to-day activities.

Like least about your job: Daily hours that run late into the night.

Most important business lesson learned: At the end of the day, your reputation is all you've got.

Life motto: Work hard and play hard.

Greatest fear: One of the keys to being a successful small-business owner is to not allow fear to ever enter the equation.

Person most interested in meeting: President Bush. This would bring to five the number of presidents I have met over the years. Shortly after returning from a trip to China, I met President Nixon at a Giants game. Following our conversation, I received an autographed copy of his book, "Real Peace." I consider it a great treasure.

Most respected competitor: Steph Rosenfeld, owner of Identity Advisors, based in Philadelphia.

First choice for a new career: H.A. Winston, to be the person who selects and delivers the jewelry for the stars to wear on Oscar night.

Greatest extravagance: Staying at five-star hotels when traveling.

Etc.

Most proud of: Being selected to chair a \$5 million building campaign for Family Services' Center for Children and Families.

Favorite movie: "The Sound of Music."

Favorite Restaurant: The Rainbow Room in New York City.

Favorite vacation spot: Any island in the Caribbean.

Favorite way to spend free time: Entertaining a big crowd on the deck in Avalon.

Automobile: 2003 Lexus ES300. •

— Mia Geiger