

Women Making An Impact

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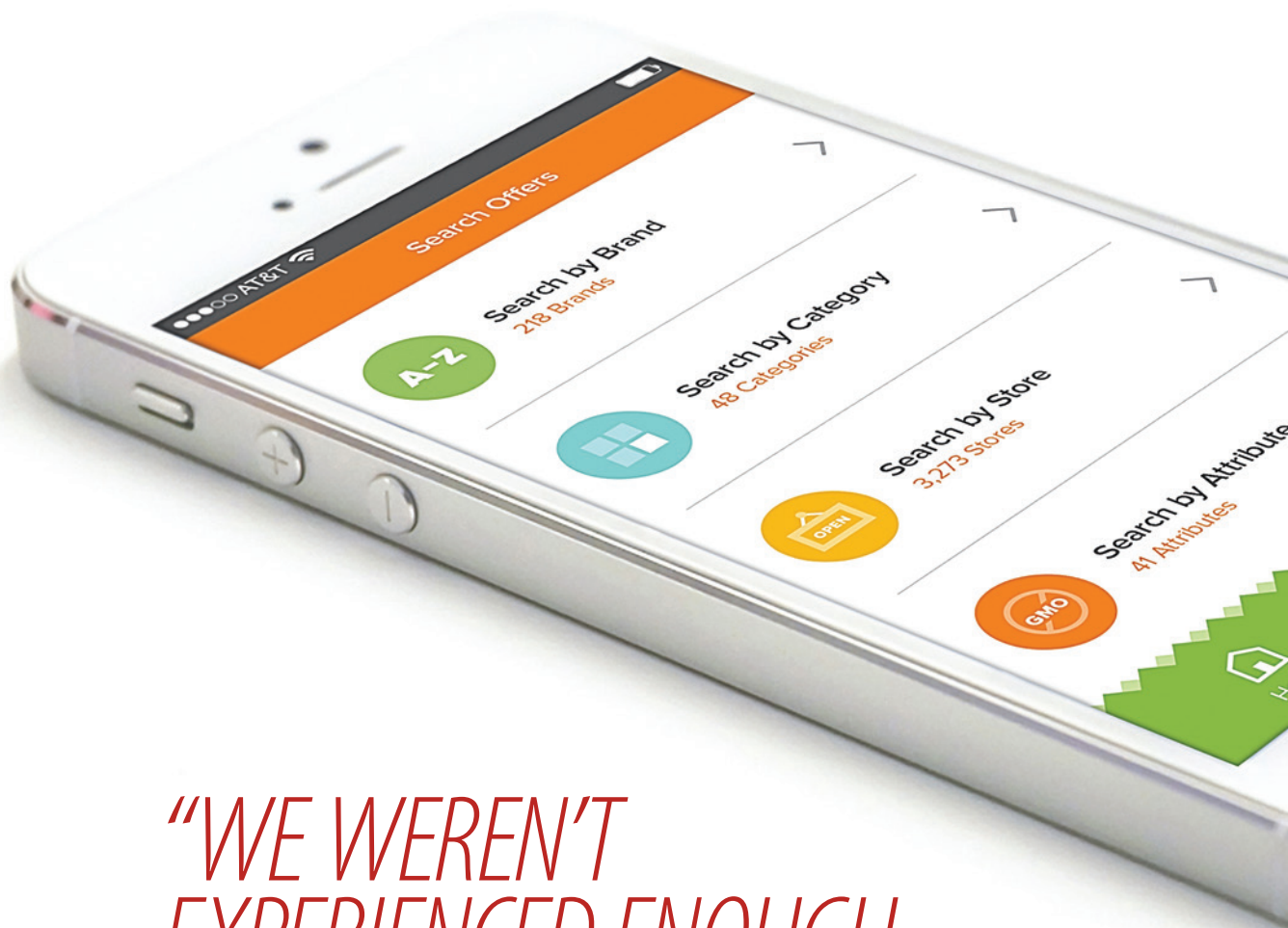
**Tips on Dealing
with Introverts**

AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson

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ONE SIZE
DOES NOT
FIT ALL

COURAGE, SACRIFICE AND PERSISTENCE **PRODUCE A WINNING IDEA**

By Sheryl Nash-Nance



*"WE WEREN'T
EXPERIENCED ENOUGH.
I WAS DEVASTATED
WHEN WE WOUND
THINGS UP."*

Sometimes it takes failure to push you forward. Back in the mid 90s, Karen Frame had an idea to place touch screen computer kiosks in natural food stores to make it easy for shoppers to research and learn about products.

"I remember shopping in natural products stores and never being able to find anything, and seeing items like quinoa and not knowing what it was," recalls Frame, whose business was called Natural Interactions.

She was able to get some kiosks in Wild Oats, but was unable to gain traction. The \$250,000 put into the business was not sufficient. "We weren't experienced enough. I was devastated when we wound things up," says Frame.

Frame, a CPA and lawyer, served as corporate and general counsel in various companies, but by 2010 was getting frustrated. "I didn't feel passionate about what I was doing."

In 2012 she started teaching an entrepreneurship class at the University of Boulder in Colorado. One day she had what she calls an "aha moment": "I realized that I understood business, technology, and about bringing something

from the past to the present."

Frame went back to her original idea and perfected it.

Fast forward. In 2013, her company – now called makeena – was one of just six companies accepted to the Telluride Venture Accelerator program, where she gained access to many mentors and learned much. She raised more than \$20,000 through crowd funding. In May of this year, makeena, a free app, became available for download at the Apple App store. makeena, which means happiness in Swahili, abundance in Hawaiian and machine in Arabic, helps shoppers find healthy and sustainable products and earn cash by purchasing their favorite brands. Shoppers take a smartphone photo of their receipt and send it to makeena. Money is deposited into their bank accounts. Users can share offers with friends through social media and email.

So far, 50 brands like Zevia, Barleaus, Lundberg Farms, Saffron Road and Quinn Popcorn have signed on. "We aren't only food, but products like sunscreen and sustainable condoms. Our products may be dairy-free, gluten-free, or no animal testing. We are conscious about quality. They should be high-standard products, solid, growing brands that you would find at Whole Foods," said Frame.

makeena is a winning proposition for brands, too. They can

engage with consumers before, during and after shopping. They can push multiple offers for no added fees.



Karen Frame

She is building her team, and recently brought on co-founder Sharaf Atakhanor, who has extensive experience in the natural products industry. "Our goal is to promote products that are good for you, your family and the planet. We want to be the chief health officer, to be a trusted curator of stores," said Frame.

Frame has big plans. Right now, makeena is only accessible through the iPhone; she plans

to make it web-based as well. Frame is a techie by birth. Her dad helped develop PLATO computer systems in the 60s and 70s. "I've always been intrigued by what technology can do to make the world a better place," she says.

While Frame is excited about makeena's success, she says launching makeena has taken courage and sacrifice. "There is a lot of pressure," she said. "I gave up general counsel positions at great companies with good money. I have a supportive husband. I'm taking a huge risk. It's taken a toll on sleep, exercise and many of my great girlfriends I've pushed by the wayside, but they still love me," said Frame, who gives her age as "over 50."

How far Frame will take makeena is yet to be seen, but she has her believers. Elizabeth Coker, principal of Aspenwood Consulting in Boulder, was introduced to Frame by a mutual friend at the Coolest Women We Know Holiday party three years ago. Now, she is one of her advisors. They hit it off immediately, and she asked Frame to present her new business model for feedback at one of her Profit Matters events.

Coker is impressed by Frame's tenacity. "She has risked a lot professionally and personally with makeena and has not given up. Karen cares deeply about sustainability and healthy choices and I've seen her bend over backward for difficult people, when others would have dismissed them much earlier."

Coker remembers Frame's first demo day presentation to prospective investors at the "graduation" from the Telluride Venture Accelerator program. "She was not afraid to practice in front of anyone who would listen or ask for help and receive critical feedback as she practiced," Coker recalled. "On minimal sleep, while dealing with some stressful personal issues, she nailed it and gave one of the best presentations of the day."

Hermine Ngnomire was given a leave-behind about makeena at the Natural Products Expo West. "I was immediately inspired," said Ngnomire, who for the last five months has served as makeena's vice president of sales. "What you get with Karen is what you see. I haven't been surprised, only pleasantly delighted. She is passionate and driven. I couldn't help but align my excitement with hers. She knows that her platform is truly a game changer for a category that is greatly in need of transformation." **|dMBA|**

Sheryl Nance-Nash is a freelance writer, specializing in personal finance, business and travel. Her work has appeared in The New York Times, Money, ABCNews.com, Forbes.com, AARP.org, Newsday, Essence, Black Enterprise and many other news outlets.