



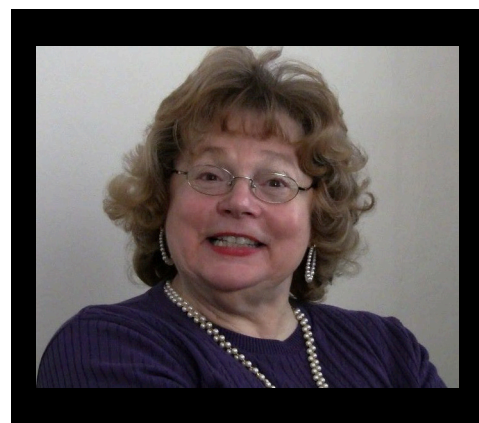
# alumni success stories:

i'll admit it, i like to win...

## JOANN R. FORRESTER

**FOUNDER OF SI BUSINESS ASSOCIATES**

**RUNNING FOR PUBLIC OFFICE, 2009**



JoAnn Forrester likes to win. And as a veteran of the gender wars in the early 1970s, she has seen her share of battles. For the past 35 years, she has fought diligently for the rights of small business owners -- especially women-owned businesses. "When I started off it was not a glass ceiling, it was a cement ceiling," says JoAnn. "We used sticks of dynamite just to make a few cracks in the concrete."

So when JoAnn participated in the Coro Center for Civic Leadership's "Running for Public Office" program, she knew what it took to develop a winning business, but she wanted to learn more about running a successful political campaign. She credits the Coro program for expanding the way she thinks about using her skills in business to be a more effective advocate in the community.

JoAnn is certainly no stranger to civic leadership, though. When the steel industry collapsed and many people left Pittsburgh, JoAnn was one of those who stayed, dug in and tried to rebuild the city. "I learned then," she says, "if we don't all work together, we don't make it."

It was a powerful and formative lesson for JoAnn, especially in light of what she says is happening in today's politics, where cooperation is scarce and compromise is rare. She was delighted that the Coro Center for Civic Leadership focused on fostering more collaboration among participants from different parties. "The Coro program was great, bringing together both republican and democratic participants," says JoAnn. "We learned that all parties in the process need work together to create an environment where Pittsburgh prospers. If we don't, this city doesn't make it."

Now that Pittsburgh has once again been named one of the U.S. most livable cities, JoAnn says it is a tribute to those who stayed to help revive the region. But she also warns that it is time to develop a younger generation of leaders, especially women in leadership roles, to broaden the diversity of talent in public office and to insure Pittsburgh has a future as a vibrant and thriving place.

"We don't have this great experiment and not keep it fresh. It is not whether you are red or blue, or pink or white," she says, "this is our nation and we must do what can to make life better for all of us."

JoAnn would like to see more leadership development programs specific to women considering running for public office. At Coro, JoAnn observed that even the brightest and most accomplished women in her cohort were hesitant to speak up and speak out. It reinforced her belief that if more good people don't participate in the political process, then people will get the kind of government they deserve, and one that does not represent their interests.

JoAnn notes that more women are breaking through barriers and making strides in the region, but she feels the number of women running for office is not nearly where it should be. "It's our time, it's our responsibility, it's our challenge and it's one of the most exciting things we can do," says JoAnn. "And frankly I don't like to lose, I like to win...and Coro helped me to say that."