

INDIAN COUNTRY BUSINESS TODAY

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TRACY STANHOFF,
PRESIDENT AND CREATIVE
DIRECTOR OF AD PRO

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From kitchen table to global market –



growing a successful Native-owned business

Long hours, knowledge and passion are keys to Stanhoff's entrepreneurial endeavor

By Brenda Austin
TODAY CORRESPONDENT

Tracy Stanhoff, president and creative director of AD PRO, makes everything look easy. However, behind the smile and "can do" attitude is a strong entrepreneurial spirit and the grit it takes to accomplish amazing things.

A competitive swimmer and triathlon runner, Stanhoff made the decision to go into business for herself at the

age of 26. Working for a medium-sized advertising firm in L.A. right out of college, Stanhoff rapidly moved into a managerial position. With encouragement from her athletic triathlon friends, she borrowed a used computer and with \$1,500 in the bank started a home-based business – AD PRO. A year later she was able to move into a professional office space and today offers services to clients around the globe.

AD PRO specializes in advertising and graphic design services, convention exhibits, promotional items,

PHOTO COURTESY TRACY STANHOFF
Tracy Stanhoff, president and creative director of AD PRO.



PHOTO COURTESY AD PRO

This is AD PRO's large format and digital press printing production studio. AD PRO specializes in advertising and graphic design services, convention exhibits, promotional items, large format graphics, printing and web services. With their own in-house graphic manufacturing processes, AD PRO offers strategic marketing programs and is TL 9000 and ISO 9001 quality certified.

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"We are a small firm but we are pretty mighty," Stanhoff said. "We have been blessed and fortunate, but we work really hard. You have to really put in the time and make it happen."

Some of AD PRO's clients include Boeing Co., American Honda Motor Company, utility companies, the National Congress of American Indians, American Indian tribes and organizations.

Stanhoff said she has seen businesses fail because the owners didn't educate themselves in the industry before starting their own business. "A lot of smart people are not good entrepreneurs, you have to think a little differently and look inward and build yourself before you can build your team."

Stanhoff, a member of the Prairie Band of Potawatomi Nation in Mayetta, Kan., served as the tribe's chairman from January 2006 until July 2007. During her time as chairman, she helped the tribe's casino move from being managed by Harrah's Entertainment Corp. to being solely managed by the tribe. She also saw the tribe open a new health center, worked on a historic agreement with the State of Kansas and played an important role in the reacquisition of a portion of the tribe's reservation in DeKalb County in Illinois.

Making the connection to her roots in California, Stanhoff said her grandparents were removed from their reservation during the Great Depression and placed on the Navajo reservation. During the encouraged relocation of the 1950s, her parents decided to move to Los Angeles.

A woman who wears many hats, Stanhoff is also

the president of the American Indian Chamber of Commerce and was instrumental in the funding and development of the chamber's Education Fund Procurement Technical Assistance Center. The center serves California, Arizona, Nevada and parts of Utah.

"We are very proud of our program, in our first year we really did affect some change with Indian enterprises and help a lot of people attain contracts and certification," she said. The procurement center is funded by a grant from the Department of Defense, which allowed the chamber to hire an expert business consultant to help businesses obtain their certifications, business planning and loan documents.

Leading by example, Stanhoff was recently recognized as one of the first graduates of AT&T's Women of Color Businesses Mentoring Program. The year-long program mentored minority women

owners of small businesses to help them develop the tools and expertise to win large corporate contracts. As part of that program, Stanhoff received a scholarship from AT&T to attend executive training programs at leading business schools and also obtained TL 9000 certification for her business – an internationally recognized quality system requirement for telecom suppliers.

AD PRO employs 10 people and uses state-of-the-art equipment – computers, graphics and software. "There are a lot of resources for American Indian women who would like to start their own business including initiatives with major corporations. To be a successful entrepreneur, you have to be willing to take risks and make them work out for you. An entrepreneur has to be a leader and sometimes a little hard-nosed because you often have to take a lot of rejection before you get those big wins," Stanhoff said. "I

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 **AD-PRO**
www.adproweb.com



PHOTO COURTESY AD PRO

Tracy Stanhoff, president and creative director of AD PRO (center) received an Entrepreneurial Excellence Award from the Southern California Regional Purchasing Councils.


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have never faced any barriers I could not overcome.*

Stanhoff graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from California State University, Long Beach, and was named Outstanding Graduate in the journalism/public relations department. Other training she has completed includes the Minority Business Executive Program at Amos Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College; the Managerial Development for Entrepreneurs Program at the Anderson School of Management at the University of California; the Financial Management Success Program at Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California; and the Advanced Management Education Program at the Kellogg School

of Management at Northwestern University.

Stanhoff and AD PRO have received many awards, including: 1998 Native American Entrepreneur of the Year by Minorities in Business Magazine; 2000 Indian Business Owner of the Year from The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development; 2001 Class I Supplier of the Year Award from the Southern California Minority Business Development Council; Top 10 Native Businesses in the Country from Native Peoples Magazine; 2004 Wall Street West Leadership Award (awarded by The Rev. Jesse Jackson and Rainbow PUSH) for AD PRO's work as a minority supplier in the automotive industry; 2004 Certificate of Commendation presented by City of Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn; 2005 Small Business Association Los Angeles Region Ethnic Chamber Champion of the Year; Star Supplier from American Honda Motor Co., Inc., Coca-Cola Enterprises and Southern California Gas Company; 2005 Class I Supplier of the Year from the Southern California Minority Business Development Council; 2007 Indian Business Owner of the Year from NCAIED; and the 2008, 2009 and 2010 Winners Circle Awards from the Southern California Minority Business Development Council.

For more information about AD PRO, visit the website at www.adproweb.com. Stanhoff can also be contacted by phone at (714) 898-6364 and e-mail at tracy@adproweb.com. 

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