

by Irene Hurst

• Director

USF Small Business Development Center  
www.sbdc.usf.edu • hurst@coba.usf.edu

## Haller Industries

LEIGH ANN HALLER had no interest in taking over her father's business. After college she built her career as a geologist until her father's health changed suddenly in 1994. Family duty called for her to run her father's company, Haller Industries. For the next several years, Haller concentrated on getting the Tampa company ([www.haller-ind.com](http://www.haller-ind.com)) in compliance with a myriad of government rules and regulations that govern the electronic contract manufacturing industry. She also completed an Executive MBA degree at the University of South Florida.

As a female executive in a male-dominated industry, Haller says she never pays attention to whether she has been treated differently. She has quickly become a leader in the Bay Area Manufacturing Association, or BAMA.

The contract manufacturing field has gone through major changes with offshore outsourcing, especially to geographic areas where labor is significantly cheaper. The industry has experienced a cycle of outsourcing (domestically and offshore) and insourcing, all of which Haller Industries has felt.

In 2003, Haller took over ownership of the company, which specializes in prototyping and manufacturing of medical devices, testing instruments and electronics. She has changed the business model to include marketing efforts that help keep the pipeline of sales filled. Another strategy that Haller employs is to buy the rights to end-of-life products and develop a service program for them.

As a contract manufacturer, Haller Industries, which employs 14, does not have control over the design of a product it manufactures and is fully dependent on its part suppliers to deliver as scheduled to meet manufacturing deadlines. To meet deadlines, Haller carefully selects excellent suppliers she can depend on. She keeps her schedule very flexible to accommodate her clients' needs and to solve any crisis that can arise any time.

Haller's worst decision in business, she says: "I did not pull a credit line from a nonpaying customer sooner. I let this customer do business with my money." The best decision so far is to get her company certified under ISO 9001 and ISO 13485, for medical device manufacturing. "With these certifications, we can prepare the company to go to the next level."

She offers this advice for family-run businesses: have clear job descriptions and an organizational chart; develop professional relationships in the workplace; and have a succession plan in order. You never know when you will need it. ■