



# Straightforward

In this edition, FLORIDA TREND takes its annual look into the world of small business. Those companies with fewer than 100 employees are the backbone of Florida's economy. Both innovation and employment growth typically stem from these smaller, entrepreneurial businesses that grow organically over the years.

That's why chambers of commerce put such focus on small business — just look at the celebrations when a company of even a dozen employees opens its doors in our state. That's why so many banks and service companies offer specialized support for growing businesses. And that's why state government officials want a renewed emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math. They see innovation coming mainly from the STEM fronts.

So as the calendar page turned into 2012, I wondered where fledgling executives can find good advice on running a complex organization and wringing the most out of each dollar. FLORIDA TREND has great advice in this edition as well as on our FloridaSmallBusiness.com website, which includes a small-business toolbox as well as regulatory/filing information provided in conjunction with the Florida Division of Corporations.

For more general direction on running a business, I recommend a slim volume just published from an unlikely source. It's titled "Straightforward: Ways to Live and Lead" by Pam Iorio, Tampa's mayor from 2003 through last March. You may not think that a mayor has much to offer by way of business advice, but you will be surprised. In fact, this is the best business book of 2011.

Iorio opines that our leaders, both governmental and corporate, are "falling short" because they are entrenched in ideological struggles to acquire power rather than to solve our communal problems. She proposes a "straightforward" style of direct, honest, respectful dialog. She believes leaders should be role models filled with humility. She preaches pragmatism and compromise

because in her view the answers "are usually found in the middle."

In terms of straight business advice, Iorio believes leaders need to be positive, seeing opportunities not hurdles, and she worries that negativity is contagious. Moreover, she says that a true leader needs to carefully weigh all sides and facts before taking a thoughtful, measured approach. And then true leaders need to communicate their goals or decisions, empowering others to solve the problems and sharing the credit with those actually performing the jobs.

Who are Pam Iorio's role models? She praises Jeff Vinik, hedge fund manager and owner of the Tampa Bay Lightning. She praises Gen. David Petraeus, now director of the CIA and known in Florida for leading the Central Command. She praises former U.S. Sen. and Florida Gov. Bob Graham.

These three leaders are all talented, carry deep knowledge of their fields, are endlessly curious for facts and work respectfully with others to solve problems. Pragmatists all. None of them abuses power. None of them displays excessive partisanship.

Finally, in terms of business advice, Mayor Iorio says that leaders need to embrace change, always making sure that benefits outweigh any short-term disruptions. In fact, leaner organizations are often more effective ones. The strong leader hires the right people with greater skills than the boss, sets priorities and then lets them run.

One more thing. In her book, Iorio credits Leadership Florida for showing her how to live a centered life. That healthy lifestyle includes eating right and exercising daily. Having slipped a bit in 2011, I'm entering 2012 with renewed goals for weight loss and exercise. Reports forthcoming.

— *Andy Corty*  
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