



Canadian Executive Quarterly

"For over 23 years Trumps has been the product behind the brand of major corporations. Now, the company would like to create its own brand products to sell world wide".



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- 24 **PROMATION ENGINEERING, LTD.** expanded into the nuclear-energy market when the automotive industry faltered and has since expanded to include a specialized, service-focused division, all while maintaining steady growth.

Food & Beverage

- 58 **TRUMPS FINE FOOD MERCHANTS & WHOLESALE** started supplying baked goods to a local coffee outlet in 1987. Now Starbucks is still among the Vancouver-based company's 300 clients.

Telecommunications & IT

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Heather Angel, hands-on chef and owner of Trumps Fine Food Merchants & Wholesalers.

TRUMPS FINE FOOD MERCHANTS & WHOLESALERS

Persistent entrepreneur overcomes long-standing bias to become leader in baked goods

BY ZACH BALIVA

AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
VANCOUVER, BC

FOUNDED:
1987

EMPLOYEES:
40

AREA OF SPECIALTY:
BAKED GOODS

ANNUAL REVENUE:
\$4 MILLION

HEATHER ANGEL SAYS THAT AT AGE SEVEN, SHE knew what direction her career would take after she opened her first retail outlet: a sidewalk lemonade stand. Unlike other, more simplistic budding entrepreneurs, Angel sold several types of cookies and miniature cakes and gave her customers two beverage choices.

Angel, who credits this early business venture to being raised in a "foodie-conscious" family that exposed her to a varied cuisine, now operates Trumps Fine Food Merchants & Wholesalers, a Vancouver-based business that sells more

than 200 bakery products to more than 300 clients, which Angel has owned since 1987.

The road to success has not been easy for Angel, who faced early gender-bias struggles. After reviewing her business plan, a banker forced the unwed entrepreneur's father to co-sign the loan in place of a husband. "Sixty-five percent of capital wasn't enough for the bank," Angel recalls. "They said women lack business acumen and told me most restaurants fail in the first year, but I wasn't even opening a restaurant." The loan was repaid in less than two years.

Although Trumps' primary service is that of a wholesaler, Angel started by offering retail and catering services. "Everyone said I would fail, so I picked three areas of business to give myself a better chance at success," she says. At the time, little competition existed in the wholesale market, but Angel made one fortuitous connection that would completely alter the course of her business life.

Back in 1987, Angel approached a manager of a fledgling coffee company that had 3 local stores and 20 locations in Seattle. She offered to supply baked goods for a trial period, and when they sold out in two hours, the owner hired Trumps to provide deserts and salads and cater corporate meetings. Twenty-three years later, Starbucks still is a Trumps client—Angel's company bakes banana bread for the Alberta and British Columbia stores and furnishes other products for additional licensee locations.

Though Starbucks may be Trumps' most famous client, other customers include hotels, country clubs, restaurants, food distributors, and grocery stores. By focusing her efforts on the wholesale world, Angel has grown her company to 40 employees and \$4 million in annual sales. Trumps' products stand out as high-quality alternatives in a market flooded with subpar goods.

Angel's next step is to make Trumps a household name. Her first retail product, Banana Slims, is about to hit shelves across the nation. The 100-calorie snack food is made without trans fats or preservatives and has a yearlong shelf-life. The idea, Angel explains, is to market a global brand. "For 23 years, Trumps has been the product

Founder and managing director Heather Angel.



Trumps' busy GMP-accredited facility.



behind the brand for major corporations. Now, the company would like to create its own brand of products to sell worldwide," she says, adding that Trumps still will service clients with products to sell as their own.

Though some owners are tempted to quickly fill large orders, Angel believes that a slower, more calculated approach offers several benefits. By spending money to get the right packaging and the right product, Angel can work out any manufacturing problems early to ensure that her product is well received. "I don't want someone to be disappointed the first time they try a product because I was too eager to get it to market," Angel says. She plans to launch Banana Slims with a select group of stores—with which she has an existing relationship—before expanding to other locations and promoting at trade shows.

Angel's profits are subject to a seasonal cycle but enjoyed a 13-percent increase last year. She attributes her success to a non-complacent approach that keeps her on the cutting edge. "I'm always trying to improve and find new ways to be faster, or save money, or get more product out for a lower price while keeping a high standard of quality," she says.

It's an approach that she has maintained from the very beginning. While the other kids simply sold lemonade, Angel found a way to stand out. Years later, she's still at the top of her game—only on a much larger scale. *CEQ*

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