

The art of promotion

profiles IN
power
Winner

Karen Frost draws from her journalism background to serve clients

SHELLEY ORMAN | STAFF WRITER

Karen Frost has a colorful work history, ranging from time spent working on Ross Perot's 1992 presidential campaign to work at national news networks. Despite her varied past, she couldn't seem to find a job that completely satisfied her, so she created her own.

Frost started her public relations consulting firm, Frost Media Relations, in February 1998.

She says it all began after a discussion with her father about her unhappiness with where her career was heading. He inspired her to do something about it, and less than six months later she started her business.

"It was exhilarating and scary, but my dad gave me the confidence that I could do this," she says.

Frost was raised in Houston, traveled after college and eventually made her way to Austin to be near family. The city's personality and welcoming environment attracted her.

"The beautiful thing about Austin is that they're accepting for who you are, no matter who you are," she says.

Frost chose to establish a PR business because it allowed her to combine her passion with the skills she had acquired through past jobs, particularly her time spent working in the media.

"Rarely do I talk to a journalist without telling them I used to be one. This way, I'm in the club," she says. "I know what they're looking for — controversy, two different sides — and sometimes I even help them find the other."

Frost has a knack for helping her clients achieve national recognition. She says her secret lies in keeping up with the news and pursuing broadcast opportunities in which her clients are the experts.

KAREN FROST

TITLE: Principal and owner

COMPANY: Frost Media Relations

EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree in journalism, Texas Christian University.

WORK HISTORY: Fleishman-Hillard International Communications, account executive, 1996-1998; Frost Media Relations, proprietor, 1998-present.

And Frost's success at promoting her clients stems from some well-thought-out business requirements. She decided from the beginning that she wouldn't take on a client unless she's nearly as passionate about their business as they are.

"It's challenging to sell yourself, and love it," she says. "I can't take on clients that I don't believe in as much as they do. I won't be able to sell it."

And this strategy has paid off.

Her first year in business, she matched her salary at a corporate PR firm. The second year, she doubled it.

Frost says her continued success comes from persistence and self-discipline.

"You can't work from home and show up for work every day without being self-disciplined," she says.

This is a trait that Frost has mastered. She gets up every morning at 5:05 a.m. to exercise and to be in her office ready to begin working by 8:30 a.m.

Frost says her days running her PR business vary from the extremely glamorous — flying to New York with a client meeting Barbara Walters or Katie Couric — to the mundane — putting together press kits in the middle of her living room floor until 2:00 in the morning.

As her company's only employee, she carries the entire workload herself.

"What people don't know about is the grunt work. Nobody sees that part of the



SARAH KERVER | ABJ

Karen Frost uses her expertise in public relations to provide services for clients like Kevin Connor, vice president of music and artist relations for ME Television.

job," she says.

Given her dedication, Frost is gaining quite the reputation in Austin, and not just for her PR firm. She's also prominently involved in several local charity organizations, including the Zachary Scott Theatre and LifeWorks.

She currently serves on the board of Impact Austin, a women's philanthropy organization that gives large grants to fund high-impact projects. The charity collects \$1,000 from each member to donate composite gifts of more than \$100,000 to area nonprofits.

Frost strongly believes in the importance of her volunteer work and giving, and says that her money is only good for what good she can do with it.

"I came to Austin with a purpose. I wanted to be in a city that was small enough to get involved in the community very easily, to call it home and to use whatever gifts I've been given," she says.

Q&A KAREN FROST

Q: How has being a woman in your industry helped or hindered your career?

A: Frankly, it hasn't. In the media relations business, the better questions might be as follows:

Is it better to be an introvert or extrovert? How thick is your skin? With more than 10 years of media and public relations work under my belt, I have yet to experience a project in which I've sensed gender as an issue.

Men and women in the industry tend to concentrate more on experience, knowledge, expertise, relationships and creativity.