



CJ STAFFORD
President and Owner

Stafford Communications Group, Inc.

Location: New Providence, NJ
Founded: 1995
Industry: Customer service

In 1995, CJ Stafford decided to end a 20-year career with Johnson & Johnson. She had spent years working on the safety and efficacy of wound closures, then moved on to the marketing and PR side of the business. "When it came time to do something different, I formed Stafford Communications Group, Inc.," she says.

As a toxicologist, Stafford brings a scientific eye to customer care programs in regulated industries such as healthcare, food and cosmetics. At the same time, she has worked to build a company where fun is the norm. "Our goal is to be the best place you've ever worked, and our employees' attitude passes on to the customers," she says.

Fun Fact Stafford's grandmother cooked for priests at the Shrine of St. Joseph in Stirling, NJ, for more than 40 years. Today, Stafford actively participates in fundraisers there.

Stafford's first challenge in launching Stafford Communications was getting clients outside the pharmaceutical industry, which she was most familiar with. "Leveraging that expertise and translating it to a value-add in food and beauty care took creative positioning, strategy and execution," she says. The second challenge was cash flow. "I started my business as a labor of love and learned about human resources, benefits, overhead and all of the related costs along the way. It's much less expensive and in many ways easier to be a company of one, but it doesn't allow for personal or business growth," says Stafford.



KAREN ROSSILLI-KIEFER
President

TeamPAR, Inc.

Location: Morristown, NJ
Founded: 1992
Industry: Commercial construction

"My husband and I, on the same day many years ago, decided to take control of our lives. Both of us quit our New York City corporate jobs, and both started our own companies," says Karen Rossilli-Kiefer, president of TeamPAR, Inc. "I chose TeamPAR, which in its inception was just known as PARflooding, because I grew up in the commercial flooring industry, and I thought that I could take my commercial interiors vision and design background and really carve a path that would make a difference in this industry."

Lacking funds to start the business, Rossilli-Kiefer turned to her mother. "The two of us together embarked on this journey as a mother-and-daughter team," she says. In a predominantly male industry, Rossilli-Kiefer had to overcome stereotypes, including being perceived as someone's assistant or secretary. "I felt that by taking the high road, respect would eventually be earned by those willing to give it," she says, noting that TeamPAR is now strong and competitive in its field.

TeamPAR is one of the largest donors to Jersey Battered Women's Service as a result of its annual toy drive. "In this toy drive, we have now solicited the help of many others in the commercial real estate community who are our 'corporate elves,'" says Rossilli-Kiefer.

Quick Tip "Leadership is always showing your best self, every day."



AVIS YATES RIVERS
CEO

Technology Concepts Group International

Location: Somerset, NJ
Founded: 2008
Industry: IT and supply chain management

Technology Concepts Group International (TCGI) is an IT asset, procurement and expense management firm. "We help large buying organizations streamline their procurement processes, consolidate their supply chain and better leverage the dollars they spend," says CEO Avis Yates Rivers. "I am always looking for opportunities to add value."

Quick Tip "Leadership requires that the team of people who are working with you not only see, but embrace your vision."

TCGI had initially focused on equipment leasing but, in the face of the recession, it became apparent that the company would need to diversify. "That's when we opened our IT asset-management practice," says Rivers. "We realized that corporations weren't doing a good job in managing their software license portfolio. That's an area that is ripe for overspending, non-compliance and risk. Companies need the right information at all times to understand not just how many software licenses they own, but rather how those assets are being used." Over the years, TCGL has also added IT procurement and expense management to its suite of services.

TCGI supports Elijah's Promise, a local soup kitchen that also teaches residents how to grow and prepare food. "Once a month, we go and serve those who are hungry and who come there to get a good, hot meal," says Rivers. "It gives us great pride to be able to give back." Rivers also serves on the board of the National Center for Women & Information Technology, whose mission is to increase the meaningful participation of girls, women and people of color in technology.



POONAM KHUBANI
CEO

TeleBrands International

Location: Fairfield, NJ
Founded: 1983
Industry: Electronic retail marketing

TeleBrands International offers products such as Star Shower laser-light decorations and the Ped Egg callus remover. "Our products solve everyday problems for the consumer by saving them time and money," says CEO Poonam Khubani. TeleBrands manufactures its products, produces commercials for them, and sells them in the U.S. and more than 140 countries around the world.

"Our founding vision was to create new, innovative products at a reasonable price for the consumer," says Khubani. "We wanted to give them the opportunity to have a quality product without spending a lot of money." Last Christmas, the company's biggest success was the Star Shower. "Star Shower was so successful at Walmart that we outsold bananas in the last week of November," says Khubani.

Among the company's biggest challenges was taking its products from the As Seen On TV category into retail. "Initially, [retailers] couldn't understand how a product that's selling well on TV could have the same success at retail," says Khubani. However, TeleBrands remained persistent and its products are now carried by major retailers such as Target, Walgreens and Kohl's.

Fun Fact TeleBrands supports Children's Hope India. The company's contribution has set up a school in a village called Ajmer.