



BY JOANNE CLEAVER

# PINK'S TOP 15 WOMEN IN BUSINESS THE INNOVATORS

THEIR TALENT FOR TURNING IDEAS INTO EARNINGS TOOK THESE 15 WOMEN TO THE HEIGHTS OF CORPORATE AMERICA — AND THE TOP OF PINK'S EXCLUSIVE LIST.

Idea people are a dime a dozen. Action people can be had by the metric ton. Marry insightful ideas and purposeful action, though, and you've got innovation. And in business, there aren't many people who are true innovators.

That's because it takes as much imagination to get

ideas *done* as it does to get ideas to begin with. We started combing the corporate landscape for a crop of innovators thinking we'd get some da Vinci-level idea machines. Instead, we learned from these 15 women that a good idea only becomes a business-changing innovation when it makes evangelists of them; when it galvanizes their teams

to create new ways of working together and even new definitions of success; and, most importantly, when it resonates with customers. When customers like it, they buy it.

Innovation is too often cast only in terms of engineering or marketing – snazzy new products, jazzy ad campaigns. But we saw this as an opportunity to look beyond the white lab coats and Madison Avenue, to search deep inside some of America's largest and most successful companies to find women who drive deep change – cultural change, process change, technological change – the kind of change that births new generations of products and services *and* has a here-and-now impact on the bottom line. We found 15 remarkable women innovators who aren't necessarily household names. Yet.

Aetna's Laurie Brubaker (page 70), for example, was a mid-manager in a region far from her company headquarters when she responded to a companywide casting call for innovative business ideas. Others probably laughed it off, but she took it seriously. Now she's running a fast-growing new line of business. "I can't think of another job where I have this much fun," she says.

Any one of our 15 innovators could have said that. Heck, each of our 15 *did* say that. Perhaps their greatest innovations have been the ways that they've grown confident in their own skins as they've pursued fresh ways of growing their businesses. Their confidence alone makes PINK's Top Women in Business role models for us all.



**CATHY AVGIRIS**  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT  
AND GENERAL MANAGER,  
VOICE SERVICES,  
COMCAST CORP.

**HER INNOVATION:** She's changing the way you get – and use – your telephone.

**HER MANTRA:** "Start with what is most intuitive for customers."

You can be your own cable guy.

Soon, if you sign up for digital telephone service with Comcast Cable, you'll be handed a two-page set of directions so you can install your own phone if you choose. And if you find that it takes all of five minutes to accomplish, you have Cathy Avgiris to thank.

When she joined the cable giant in 1992, cable was a one-way chute that delivered programming to TVs. Now it's a television-Internet-telephone triple threat, and the data flows both ways. This hardly seems like an innovation anymore – which is the point, Avgiris says. She disciplined her company's tech troops to test and test again until broadband and digital phone became so simple that, well, her own husband could set them up. "When I work with developers, I always ask, 'Can a layperson do it?'" she says.

When Comcast applied its digital capacity to broadband Internet and phone service, it changed its approach to customers. Suddenly, Avgiris's division was providing essential household services. Lose your cable TV feed and you're facing a boring night. Lose your digital phone and you're disconnected from the world. Installation and troubleshooting were too important for some customers to wait for a service truck, Avgiris realized.

That's why, instead of jumping headlong into digital phone, Avgiris waited to roll it out until every nuance was smooth, down to the simple customer installation – which is already in place in certain regional markets prior to nationwide implementation. Comcast is now the country's fourth-largest phone provider, with 4.1 million subscribers. Revenue for digital telephone nearly doubled in the first three quarters of 2007, to \$1.2 billion. And the cable guy has more time on his hands.

**BARBARA BECK**

PRESIDENT OF EUROPE,  
THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA,  
MANPOWER INC.

**HER INNOVATION:** She smashed an old business model to solve a talent crisis.

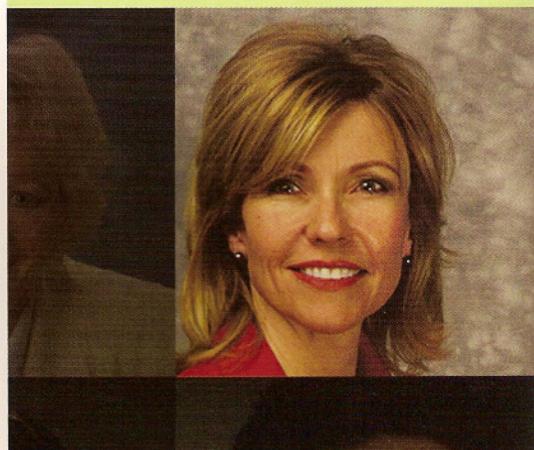
**HER MANTRA:** "Set a goal so significant, it requires a completely different approach."

Barbara Beck's latest challenge – staying ahead of Europe's escalating shortage of workers – couldn't be met by doing what staffing services provider Manpower Inc. already did well: placing workers one at a time. She had to figure out how to get *platoons* of workers with complementary skills from one country to another, to staff whole departments in one fell swoop. With European companies losing business daily because they don't have enough qualified workers, Beck pushed ahead with a new Manpower process called Cross Border Connections, which identifies where workers are needed and works with Manpower offices in various locations to facilitate their migration.

The program's first assignment was to figure out where to get hundreds of engineers for needy Norwegian employers. It turns out that Polish universities graduate lots of engineers, so Manpower navigated the red tape to move new Polish engineers to Norway. The very idea broke the old Manpower mold by applying the company's brand – framed in American assumptions of personal mobility – to older cultures where people expect to work their whole lives within miles of where they were born.

"This is an opportunity for the European marketplace – to find workers with appropriate skills and get them to the right jobs," says Beck, whose \$6 billion division spans more than 30 nations.

Giving globalization a shot in the arm has done wonders for the bottom line too. In the third quarter of 2007, revenue for Beck's territory saw a 19.1 percent increase.





**IRENE CHANG BRITT**

VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL  
MANAGER, SAUCES AND BEVERAGES,  
CAMPBELL USA,  
CAMPBELL SOUP CO.

**HER INNOVATION:** She juiced up V8 to help health-conscious consumers close the “vegetable gap.”

**HER MANTRA:** “Constantly challenge the status quo.”

The typical adult consumes less than half the daily recommended portion of vegetables – something Irene Chang Britt calls the “vegetable gap.” Within that gap Britt saw a multimillion-dollar growth opportunity for Campbell’s V8 vegetable juice cocktail.

When Britt arrived at Campbell in 2005, the V in V8 stood for “venerable.” Sales were steady and slow. Squeezing more growth from V8 became part of her mission. Britt started not by conducting strategy sessions but by going to consumers directly to find out why some people liked V8 and others didn’t.

Britt’s teams of researchers invaded American kitchens and grocery store aisles to watch how people ate – or didn’t eat – vegetables and V8. “The best insight is the convergence of qualitative with quantitative,” she says. The answer was to play up the brand’s historic image and introduce new versions that would reconcile two seemingly opposing consumer goals: to find food that is both healthy and convenient.

The creative team’s part of the three-pronged strategy was to reinvigorate the brand through an ad campaign with a comic twist on the old “I could’ve had a V8” slogan, with consumers hitting themselves in the forehead with vegetables. The product development team invented V8 Fusion, a lighter nutritional fruit juice blend that appeals to younger consumers. And Britt engineered a deal with Coca-Cola North America and Coca-Cola Enterprises to distribute single-serve V8 products more broadly. The result: double-digit sales growth in 2006 and 2007.

# ideas: *the new currency*

BY JOEY REIMAN

True innovation requires wonder. This is the first step toward discovery – the purest form of innovation. A discovery can’t be mandated or given a deadline. It comes about through passion, percolation and perseverance. In other words, before ideas can be put into action – that rare combination that PINK’s Top Women exhibit so gracefully – the ideas first have to crystallize from the ether of personal experience. Easier said than done.

Whether we’re trying to find a cure, invent the next big product or improve a service, our goal is to discover something transformative. We used to think that currency was the big idea, but today big ideas are our currency. The profits go to the prophets. With that in mind, here are eight ways to strike it rich.

- 1 DARE TO BE A CHILD, AGAIN.** Most of us are “degeniused” by the time we get out of grammar school. Einstein said what distinguished him from others was his ability to ask childlike questions. Creativity is intelligence having *fun*.
- 2 BE A “POSSIBILITARIAN.”** Never say never. Say no to no. Think the unthinkable. Then do it! Never lose in your imagination. Thoughts have wings.
- 3 CHANGE YOUR ROUTINE.** Take a different route to work. Rearrange the furniture in your office. A new perspective will improve your vision.
- 4 LOSE YOURSELF.** Spontaneous invention is a myth. Incubation, marination, reflection and patience are the brew for great ideas. Slow down and you’ll get to the idea faster.
- 5 IMPARA L’ARTE, E MITTILA DA PARTE.** This old Italian saying means, “Learn your craft, then walk away.” If you’ve been working to crack a problem, step away. The answer will find you.
- 6 THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX.** Your office is a box. Go outside and breathe. The word “inspire” means to “breathe life into.” Inspiration is oxygen for ideation.
- 7 EXERCISE YOUR BRAIN.** Endorphins are the spark plugs of creativity. So engaging in a daily regimen of exercise will get those ideas jumping.
- 8 BRING OUTSIDERS IN.** Like minds think alike, so we don’t need them in the room. Divergent thinkers with unique perspectives will create novel solutions.

*Joey Reiman is founder and CEO of BrightHouse, the global marketing consultancy that created the concept of ideation. He is an adjunct professor at Emory University’s Goizueta School of Business and is the author of Thinking for a Living (Longstreet Press, 2001).*



**LAURIE BRUBAKER**

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,  
INDIVIDUAL MARKETS AND MEDICARE,  
AETNA INC.

**HER INNOVATION:** She rewrote an entire business category others had written off.

**HER MANTRA:** "We have to meet the future needs of consumers."

One of the conundrums of the health-care industry is how to make money selling coverage to small businesses and individuals. As a regional manager for Aetna, Laurie Brubaker hadn't thought much about the individual market – until she was searching for an idea to develop for an innovation challenge.

Brubaker realized that Aetna already had enough providers to serve the individual market. What it didn't have was a way to let consumers sign up, pay for coverage and become full-fledged customers. So Brubaker wrote a business plan to sell individual policies, using Aetna's existing healthcare providers, through brokers and a consumer-friendly website. Her big chance came when she presented her consumer plan to a group of executives. They yawned.

A handful of true believers helped Brubaker revamp the presentation, and a month later she got another chance. This time, Aetna's president heard her and gave Brubaker responsibility for turning her big idea into a business. She had 20 employees, a small budget and the requirement of making money in a year. At that point, February 2005, Aetna had a tiny, orphaned consumer business left over from an acquisition. Brubaker and her team used it to construct a profitable new channel.

Today Aetna Individual Advantage has grown to more than 278,000 members in 26 states and is among Aetna's fastest-growing businesses. Many of the 20 who helped Brubaker develop her idea are now her executive team. "They were rebels with a cause," she says. "Now we're the cool group."



**DIANE DUREN**

VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL  
MANAGER – MARKETING & SALES,  
UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD

**HER INNOVATION:** She invented a train route to connect farmers and consumers.

**HER MANTRA:** "The fun part is coming up with an idea we aren't looking for."

There's not a lot to see on the stretch of Interstate 80 between Omaha and North Platte, Neb. Diane Duren was making that four-hour drive one day when she realized she was in the midst of a legion of refrigerated produce trucks, all heading from West Coast farms to East Coast markets. She started to count the trucks. "When I got to 200, I realized there was a significant opportunity here for us," she says. "If we only got 20 percent of this market, it could be huge."

Trains are an iconic American business, but the industry doesn't benefit from much off-the-tracks thinking. Usually growth is achieved by pushing more stuff along existing routes. But Duren realized that it was time to resurrect a century-old idea lost over decades of corporate mergers: a "fresh express" produce route that would take small (for Union Pacific) loads of fruits and vegetables straight from the producers in the West to key distribution points in Eastern metro areas.

It took a lot of cajoling. She quickly assembled a team to work with farmers to figure out a local pickup system that would still deliver a 30 percent savings over shipping by truck. After months of negotiation, the fresh express route was underway. In its first year, it captured \$20 million in revenue with just one destination. Third-quarter 2007 agricultural products revenue from shipping commodities, including produce, rose 12 percent over 2006, boosting Union Pacific's third-quarter revenue by 5 percent to \$4.2 billion. Now Duren is expanding the routes – on track to \$200 million in annual revenue.



**JULIE ENGLAND**

VICE PRESIDENT,  
TEXAS INSTRUMENTS INC.

**HER INNOVATION:** Her unit's "smart IDs" will change the way we move around the globe.

**HER MANTRA:** "The way to pay today's bills is to let your customers know that you're investing in their future needs."

The little plastic tags that more of us use every day – as wave-and-pay credit cards or parking passes – could be the next key to international security. Soon, if you breeze through customs thanks to a wave-and-go passport, Julie England will have made your day.

Radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology involves data tags read by RFID readers and is currently used in business supply chains, library inventory and even livestock tracking. England realized that marrying RFID mobility with a new memory technology and a processor developed by a different group within TI created an entirely new product: RFID tags that could hold enough information and be read fast enough to reinvent national security.

TI is already the world's largest manufacturer of RFID chips and readers. But England had to persuade top brass to buy into the electronic government ID investment project by demonstrating ways that the technologies could be worked into other TI product lines. And she forged relationships with the State Department and the Government Printing Office, which will oversee the production, installation and use of the smart electronic passports.

The total market for RFID security documents could reach \$1 billion by 2012. England has made sure that the payback for TI starts even sooner. Sharing the new memory technology with other TI product teams is reducing its cost. "Elements of this are going to be integrated into other products," she says. "Any big risk has to be balanced with the total reward."

## MICHELLE GASS

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,  
GLOBAL STRATEGY,  
STARBUCKS CORP.

**HER INNOVATION:** She makes our daily cup o' joe anything but ordinary.

**HER MANTRA:** "I get buy-in by painting the picture of the dream."

Creating something original out of a universal commodity like coffee isn't easy, for starters. But a new Starbucks product, be it a coffee drink, a breakfast sandwich or a travel mug, also has to fit the company's image, pleasantly surprise customers *and* fit cleanly into the organized chaos of a typical store. In short, the real innovation at Starbucks is the action between the lab and the customer. And that's where Michelle Gass, who in January assumed her elevated role as captain of the company's transformation plan, really shines.

Case in point: Gass joined the company as the marketing manager for Frappuccinos, then a two-flavor line. The cold drink tasted great, but its pedestrian presentation contradicted the Starbucks brand experience. Her idea was to replace the whipped-cream-squashing flat lid with a domed lid that would create a moment of anticipation for the drinker. That single change demanded months of diplomacy with product developers and store managers, who had to figure out how to fit the lid into their stores' systems. "It took the business in a whole new trajectory," Gass says.

Following similar deliberations, Gass recently added to the Starbucks lineup at select stores hot breakfast sandwiches, which bring in about \$35,000 per store each year, and lunches, which bring in approximately \$30,000 annually. And in January, Starbucks introduced non-fat lattes made with lighter ingredients like sugar-free syrup.

"Sometimes innovation can be re-thinking your core product," Gass says, "in ways that make it more relevant to your core consumer."



## MONA SIU-KAN LAU, PH.D.

GROUP HEAD OF DIVERSITY,  
UBS AG

**HER INNOVATION:** She increases diversity by measuring it from every angle.

**HER MANTRA:** "It's not about the number. It's about making diversity work for the business."

Twenty years ago, Mona Lau refused to participate in a diversity discussion group. She thought the idea was patronizing and didn't see how businesses directly benefited from efforts to include women, minorities and others.

Her unlikely conversion from opponent to advocate occurred as she scrutinized the business case for diversity. As Lau probed her own resistance to formal programs, she realized that a performance-driven culture is a sham unless there are different performers.

"When people realize that, it aligns diversity with their personal values," she explains. "No woman or person of color wants to be recognized just for being female or of color. It's an insult. They want to be recognized for their performance."

Plenty of companies have diversity initiatives, but few can quantify the results enough to know what really works. Lau wanted to *prove* that programs she helped develop, such as UBS Career Comeback for women re-entering the workforce, result in a rising number of qualified and diverse employees.

At first, her index showed only how the numbers of diverse employees were changing. Over time it's evolved to measure almost everything that affects diversity – such as which recruiting firms consistently bring UBS the most qualified diverse candidates. As a result Lau can identify, for example, what adds up to a 7 to 8 percent increase in women employees for each of the past five years.

## DIJUANA LEWIS

EVP AND CEO, COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH  
SOLUTIONS BUSINESS UNIT,  
WELLPOINT INC.

**HER INNOVATION:** She developed a way to anticipate illnesses so doctors can take action.

**HER MANTRA:** "There isn't one silver bullet. There are lots of bullets."

Anyone who has schleppeded medical records from one specialist to another has wondered, "Can't these people talk to each other?" Coordinating healthcare providers isn't easy, which is why DiJuana Lewis's innovation is so impressive. She persuaded doctors, pharmacies and labs to join a WellPoint program that pools patients' records, detects patterns that indicate emerging problems, and alerts providers to impending heart attacks, escalating diabetes complications and other problems that can be averted – but only with the right information at the right time.

The better the outcomes – fewer deaths, fewer hospital readmissions – the better the return for providers.

Indicators such as blood pressure, results of eye exams and weight have completed the circle. Now doctors in WellPoint's system can head off problems before they emerge. To date, the system has generated more than 90,000 "clinical alerts" for doctors on behalf of their patients. And it's saving lives.

Early in her career, Lewis got immersed in hard-knuckle tactics when she took responsibility for negotiating the insurer's contracts with hospitals and doctors' groups. "I had to find my feet, be strong and be my own person," she recalls. "I remember one meeting, full of men, and I cut loose. I laughed out loud and was totally myself, and it resonated. I got a better response."

Her personality communicated the kind of trust that insurers and healthcare providers needed. After all, Lewis points out, they enter long-term contracts with life-or-death consequences.





**MARGERY MAYER**  
PRESIDENT,  
SCHOLASTIC EDUCATION

**HER INNOVATION:** She used technology to help teens become better readers.

**HER MANTRA:** "Change the whole dynamic with the customer."

Harry Potter has left the stage, taking his marketing juggernaut with him. How could Scholastic, publisher of the Potter series, possibly follow that act?

While Harry and his entourage delivered enough revenue to fill Gringotts Bank, Scholastic was converting an educational black hole into a new line of software that's grown from less than \$40 million in 2001 to more than \$160 million last year. Back in 2001, Margery Mayer saw No Child Left Behind as a golden opportunity, especially if her division could come up with a winning solution for the hardest cases – under-achieving teens. But given the dismal track record for reviving those students' abilities, "It was an act of optimism," Mayer says.

Scholastic was best known for its elementary school books and youth magazines. Its brand influence stopped well short of teens, yet nobody else had an authoritative plan for getting wayward teens back on track.

By watching teachers interact with kids frustrated because they couldn't get better at reading, Mayer's team created software called Read 180 that's proven to be a quadruple win: Kids learn to read; teachers get tools that work for them; administrators get statistics to feed the federal demand for progress; and Scholastic locks up an overlooked market with the sales of software and consulting services.

Currently Read 180 is in 12,000 classrooms nationally, and the Education Division's annual revenue of \$413 million represents 20 percent of Scholastic's total. In fiscal 2007, educational technology sales – driven by Read 180 – jumped more than 14 percent.

**SEONG OHM**

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, SAM'S CLUB,  
WAL-MART STORES INC.

**HER INNOVATION:** She reached women consumers by giving big-box electronics sales a personal touch.

**HER MANTRA:** "Stay in love with the customers, not with what you sell."

If you walk through a Sam's Club store and plop on a sofa in front of a wide-screen television – and savor the little oasis you just discovered – you'll experience the beginning of a big-box revolution engineered by Seong Ohm, senior vice president of technology and office products. Then there's the chain's website with its cheery fires frozen on the TV screens. That's Ohm's touch, too – an attempt to convey a welcoming, homey image. "The experience has to speak for itself," she says.

Electronics occupy prime front-of-store real estate at the \$41 billion Sam's Club chain. There Ohm's innovations are more likely to be championed by a woman than by a man, which is no accident. Women now spend millions more than men in consumer electronics and influence 90 percent of all household electronics purchases, according to the Consumer Electronics Association.

The old (male) way of selling electronics was to list endless features and dazzle with the bells and whistles, regardless of how useful those features actually were. Ohm's (female) way is to create an invitation for consumers to learn how they could enjoy the device right away, with minimal hassle. Straight-forward design and easy-to-follow directions are two elements she expects her suppliers to improve constantly. Product packaging needs to have a simple, compelling presentation that tells consumers what enjoyment they'll get with little time spent learning how to use the product.

Her next challenge? Evolving the way that technology services, such as cell phone contracts, are sold.



**LINDA SANFORD**

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, ENTERPRISE  
ON DEMAND TRANSFORMATION  
AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY,  
IBM CORP.

**HER INNOVATION:** She helped Big Blue loosen up with the latest Web tools.

**HER MANTRA:** "Globalization requires innovative connections."

Old-line solutions like online company directories and shared files were far too cumbersome and isolated to handle the exploding array of information that IBM researchers, engineers and salespeople needed. Then Linda Sanford realized that the untamable spirit of the Web was precisely the dynamic she needed to invent new ways for IBM staffers to find each other.

For example, an engineer might have the technical fix required by a salesman's customer, but how would they find each other if the engineer were in Ireland and the salesperson in China? Through blogs – more than 4,000 of them. Through WikiCentral – open-source software with 125,000 users of 6,300 wikis. And through the IBM Metaverse, a Second Life-style virtual world that enables R&D staffers on different continents to collaborate in simulations in the same virtual space.

It wasn't easy to get buy-in. The traditional IBM culture was "squeamish" about letting go, Sanford says. But she helped top executives reach deeper, and when they did, they realized that their shared culture was based on trust and mutual respect – the key criteria for handing control of employee communication to the employees.

For Sanford, the global communications project was a chance to lead change, not react to it. "Maybe it's not as neat and tidy and controllable as old techniques, but if you don't take risks, you'll stay in the 20th century," she says. "These technologies have unleashed a vast amount of new ideas that would've taken years to get to in the past."

**NOR RAE SPOHN**  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,  
LASERJET BUSINESS, IMAGING  
AND PRINTING GROUP,  
HEWLETT-PACKARD

**HER INNOVATION:** She reinvented laser printers – twice.

**HER MANTRA:** “Somebody has to empower your team, and that’s you.”

The paradox of technology is that it gets easier to use as it gets smarter. That doesn’t happen naturally. It happens because people like Nor Rae Spohn purge complicated and expensive out of the machines so that average users can turn them on and figure out how to use them. Without the manuals.

Eight years after Spohn joined Hewlett-Packard as an engineer, she was charged with developing a totally new product: an inexpensive desktop laser printer. That was her first experience leading a design team, and the process taught her that the path to innovation often means inventing from scratch. That first product, the personal LaserJet printer, broke sales records and invented a new category of printer.

This decade, Spohn has been driving complicated and expensive out of HP’s color LaserJet printers. Before, users had to learn how to insert half a dozen print cartridges into different slots, and how to troubleshoot the printer’s often arcane operations.

Then Spohn redesigned the printers so cartridges could be replaced in a snap. She also redesigned the control panels so they were limited to just a few yes/no indicators, and improved copy quality along the way. By mid-2007, shipments of color laser printers were up 19 percent, and HP commanded 41 percent of the laser printer market worldwide.

Now Spohn has set her sights on small business owners, long accustomed to sending out printing jobs, ensuring sales growth for HP printers far into the future.



**DONNA STURGESS**  
GLOBAL HEAD OF INNOVATION,  
GLAXOSMITHKLINE PLC

**HER INNOVATION:** She packaged honesty into over-the-counter diet aids.

**HER MANTRA:** “Brands need to connect emotionally to people, not just rationally.”

Ideas aren’t much good if they aren’t brought to market, and the market validates those ideas with numbers: sales, profits and market share. But don’t mistake *measuring* innovation for innovation itself, says Donna Sturgess, who oversees Glaxo’s entire pipeline of new products. “Innovation takes a lot of hands-on work,” she explains. “It’s the rigor of observation, of conversation and learning what people value.”

That’s the point of view that she brought to the 2007 launch of Alli, the weight-loss drug with unfortunate side effects for users who don’t comply with low-fat diets. The point of taking Alli is to stay away from high-fat foods. Give in to temptation, and uncontrollable diarrhea can result.

Though the product and its launch were mocked by talk show hosts, those “easy shots,” Sturgess says, underscored the deep emotional frustration of women who are 50 or more pounds overweight and can’t seem to shed the extra load. To create a halo of honesty and full disclosure, everything about Alli’s presentation was designed to be transparent, from the see-through lid on the packaging to the painfully honest details about the effects of going off the low-fat diet.

So far, consumers have bought the idea that immediate consequences for straying from healthier diets can help them learn new eating habits quickly. The comedians may have had the first laugh, but Glaxo is getting the last one. Sales rose 16 percent in the third quarter of 2007 for Glaxo’s global consumer business, and Alli has contributed roughly \$70 million to total quarterly sales.

**PADMASREE WARRIOR**  
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER,  
CISCO SYSTEMS INC.

**HER INNOVATION:** She finds direct pathways for good ideas in search of markets.

**HER MANTRA:** “Create a way for innovation to be a counter to discipline.”

Padmasree Warrior’s reputation as an innovator needed no further confirmation after she twice made headlines – and turned heads on Wall Street – in early December of last year. First Motorola announced her resignation as chief technology officer following the replacement of CEO Ed Zander. Then, the very next day, Cisco Systems boasted that Warrior – a “technology visionary,” according to its chairman – would be its new CTO. Warrior’s track record in mobile communications at Motorola is certainly made to order for Cisco, which hopes to convert its market leadership in Internet networking into the next generation of collaborative Web 2.0 technologies.

At Motorola, Warrior excelled at detecting the most worthy ideas and getting them to market fast. Her Early Stage Accelerator (ESA) project set up an internal venture capital fund to fertilize the best ideas, though it wasn’t smooth sailing from the beginning. The first time she approached senior executives for the money, “They said, ‘Go away,’” she recalls. In time, though, the system took off. New products developed by the ESA have generated more than \$1 billion in commercial value for Motorola, and it’s become a major channel for transforming the \$4.1 billion spent in 2007 on R&D into products.

An early ESA win was Canopy, a wireless technology that hadn’t found its place in the market. Through the ESA process, Canopy filled a hole in the market – rural areas in the U.S. and wide swaths of emerging countries. Now Cisco will hope for an even bigger pipeline from Warrior in the future. ■

