

## Step Ahead in Limelight at Small Business Forum

How to choose – and be – a good mentor was one of the themes covered at a special Women’s Forum held for the first time as part of *Enterprise Toronto’s Annual Small Business Forum* this fall. *Step Ahead* had a strong presence at the Forum, both as an exhibitor and speaker. “Working together as a team really made it a successful day,” said **Diane McGee**, Founder and Director of WINGS ([www.wingscanada.com](http://www.wingscanada.com)), who organized the day, featuring various women’s business associations.



[above] *Step Ahead*'s Donene Lashbrook [seated left] of Lashbrook Marketing, who has mentored nine protégées over the past decade, participated in the panel discussion on mentoring, along with Diane McGee [standing right]. “Look for someone as a mentor who will help lead you in the direction you want to grow,” Donene told the audience, adding that, in her experience, “Mentors give...and it comes back tenfold.” For more on mentors, visit [www.stepaheadonline.com](http://www.stepaheadonline.com)



[far left photo] Patti McGuigan [l] and Donene Lashbrook [r] and Cicily Brewer [centre, at left photo] volunteered to be part of the *Step Ahead* exhibit table at the Forum. A number of *Step Ahead* mentors and protégées donated their products and services for the basket we gave away as a door prize. “A tremendous team effort!” is how Donene summed up the day, adding that “Participation increased *Step Ahead*'s profile and showcased the rich and beneficial growth opportunities available through mentoring.”

### NEED A BRUSH-UP?

If you are part of *Step Ahead*'s alumni, you can register for a single workshop anytime to brush up on skills and re-acquaint with other participants. Contact Jennifer at 416.410.5802.



Susan Wright shared strategies on work-life balance with *Step Ahead* participants at our stimulating summer roundtable, generously hosted by the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC).

### LOOKING FOR A MENTOR?

JOIN US IN 2006!

Potential protégées can apply for acceptance into the 12-month *Step Ahead* program at any time during the course of the year. The program includes a year-long one-on-one mentoring relationship with an assigned mentor and 10 educational workshops. Here are workshop details for 2006:

- **January 19: New Beginnings**
- **February 2: Aligning Your Business to a Changing Marketplace**
- **March 2: Marketing Power Boost**
- **April 6: Projecting a Professional Image**
- **May 4: Accessing Capital**
- **June 1: Human Resource Strategies**
- **September 13: Creative Financial Management**
- **October 4: Strategies for Growth**
- **November 1: Ethics for Entrepreneurs**
- **December 6: Work-Life Balance**

We encourage present and past participants to refer others to the program. Please contact Jennifer Frank at 416.410.5802 for details on becoming a protégée. If you are interested in volunteering your time to be a mentor, please contact Wendy Banting at 905.763.7428. For more on *Step Ahead*, visit [www.stepaheadonline.com](http://www.stepaheadonline.com)

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**step ahead**

Women Business Owners Mentoring for Success

## Protégée

### Profile

#### SHELLY PURDY

The Shelly Purdy Studio

416.340.7581

info@shellypurdy.com

www.shellypurdy.com

Year Started: 1992

Number of Employees: 3



Protégée Shelly Purdy (l) and her mentor, Linda Wilson.

**Business Snapshot:** The Shelly Purdy Studio designs platinum and gold diamond jewellery that is both functional and symbolic. It is created with personal relevance to the owner, with sophistication, elegance and fun in mind.

**Background:** After one year of university, Shelly realized that she wanted to explore her artistic side. She finished a three-year Jewellery Arts program at George Brown College. A self-directed apprenticeship brought her work to the Harbourfront Craft Studio, to wholesalers and to higher-end boutiques in Yorkville. In 1992 she gained her first media coverage when her work was featured in fashion magazines. And 1995 was a big year for Shelly personally and professionally. Her first child was born and she won the internationally coveted De Beers Award.

**Future Plans:** “To focus on an internet retail web site which will enhance our branding, along with selected print advertising to showcase our original designs.”

**Why Joined Step Ahead:** “I wanted to hear what other women experience in both developing and growing their businesses and I looked forward to sharing business strategies. Business can be very overwhelming. Just coming and asking for help and getting it from *Step Ahead* has been wonderful. It has given me a real boost and inspiration to reposition my business at a time when I needed it. It also made me realize that everyone makes blunders and I’m not alone.”

**Biggest Benefits:** Shelly has learned to set boundaries, working her business around her lifestyle. “Determine the lifestyle you want, then set your work days and hours... and stick to it,” she recommends. The financial end of business intimidated her initially. Through *Step Ahead*, she has gained confidence in money matters, financing and accounting. Working with her mentor, Linda, she has learned to cut costs and to view things differently and is developing a computer system to manage her sales in retail and wholesale more efficiently. “Linda gave me direction and welcomed encouragement. Together we set deadlines to resolve the issues that were a challenge for me to tackle alone.”

Each year Scotiabank sponsors one deserving client for the *Step Ahead* program. Shelly Purdy was this past year’s choice.

## Mentor

### Profile

#### LINDA WILSON

Precision Management Catalysts Ltd. and  
Last Minute Decorator

705.495.6814

linda@precisionstrategy.ca

www.precisionstrategy.ca www.precisionfocus.com

Year Started: Precision Management Catalysts Ltd. 1992

Last Minute Decorator, 2004

Number of Employees: 1

(Linda engages colleagues for various contracts.)

**Business Snapshot:** Precision Management Catalysts Ltd. streamlines businesses and creates strategies for marketing, finance, and growth. Last Minute Decorator transforms people’s homes with their own ‘stuff.’

**Background:** With an undergraduate business degree and MBA, Linda has been in business for 25 years with successful ventures in clothing, shoes, fitness, decorating, and business consulting. “I enjoy doing many things,” explains this passionate entrepreneur, “and I find opportunities in the most interesting places.” Highly creative and energetic, Linda has shared her thinking power as a mentor with various programs for over 15 years and is also an accomplished facilitator and speaker.

**Business Advice:** “Plan for the worst-case scenario, but anticipate the best.”

**Why Mentor:** “A mentor is an advisor, a sounding board and ultimately a friend and confidante.” Linda would have loved *Step Ahead* when she was growing her businesses. “*Step Ahead* allows less-experienced entrepreneurs to fast track learning, and it rewards mentors by allowing them to give back to the community and society at large. I drive 3-1/2 hours to get here...and it’s more than worth it.”

Precision  
MANAGEMENT CATALYSTS

### PROTÉGÉES SPEAK

*“I always come away from these meetings re-energized about being an entrepreneur.”*

Susan Wright, Wright Momentum

*“The energy I get from Step Ahead gives me the persistence I need on those down days.”*

Jill Proud, JMP Associates



## Meeting

## Highlights

**Meeting Highlights:** Our meetings continue to be an excellent forum to hear about business trends and to network with dynamic entrepreneurs and speakers.

### January 2005 – New Beginnings

**Marilyn Brooks** ([www.marilynbrooks.com](http://www.marilynbrooks.com)) closed the doors of her last store and fashion operation in 2003 to explore art and painting after more than three decades as a fashion industrialist, designer, manufacturer and retailer. In her new career, she paints and exhibits, and twice each year she takes groups to Italy for art and architectural excursions.

- Don't ignore gut feelings. Women are blessed with this – don't forget this and don't second-guess.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Mentors are important. "I've had several – including my boss at Lerner's in the U.S. – who taught me detail in the early days of my career – as well as my grade school teachers who saw my love of design and let me stay late and make tulips!"



### March 2005 – Marketing Power Boost

**Bob Shaw**, Action International (416.487.0299) – a business professional and coach for 25 years – believes in keeping things simple and focusing on the fundamentals. He addressed these core questions:

- Where are you? Where are you going? How are you going to get there?
- And what are smart goals:
  - ▶ Specific Goals
  - ▶ Measurable Goals
  - ▶ Achievements
  - ▶ Results
  - ▶ Timeframe

### February 2005 – Planning for Change

Business and investment coach **Raymond Aaron** ([www.aaron.com](http://www.aaron.com)) shared his 'Seven Pillars for Successful Change': Total commitment; Give of yourself; Always learn; Obey your inner drive; Clean your messes; Surround yourself with a power team; Follow mentors in ALL areas of life.

A panel of mentors who welcomed change while growing their businesses provided these tips: From **Joanne Andreychuk** of Inter-Alia Originals ([www.interaliaoriginals.com](http://www.interaliaoriginals.com)): "Love what you

do." When she embraced this philosophy, her sales went up by 80%. From **Marg Hachey** of Duocom, ([www.duocom.ca](http://www.duocom.ca)): "Adapt to clients' needs." From comedienne **Tsufit**, ([followthatdream.ca](http://followthatdream.ca)) who helps entrepreneurs build and promote their businesses, these life rules: "Dream BIG, break the rules, and remember that life is to be fun." From **Freda Iordanous** of Freda's Originals ([www.fredas.com](http://www.fredas.com)): "Maintain your focus and believe in yourself and keep a financial cushion for the bad times."

### April 2005 – Projecting a Professional Image

**Theresa Syer**, Hospitality Solutions ([www.hsolutions.com](http://www.hsolutions.com)), recommends building self-confidence, style, and character for a 'winning edge.' To enhance your presentation skills, remember these first impression tips:

- Dress for success, smile, and be aware of your posture, handshake and communication.
- Body language is more believable than what we say.
- People tend to forget 98% of what you've said, so be passionate and find a way to be different.

### May 11, 2005 – Accessing Capital

**Lucy Falco**, Account Manager with Scotiabank ([lucy.falco@scotiabank.com](mailto:lucy.falco@scotiabank.com)), gave insights into what you should expect from a banker:

- The attention that you deserve
- Quick responses
- Suggested options if the bank cannot help you.

**Carmel Bielinski**, "Owe\$ and Ca\$h" Accounts Receivable Management ([micarmel@rogers.com](mailto:micarmel@rogers.com)), emphasized the importance of accounts receivables to any company, big or small:

- It's your money, don't be afraid to ask for it.
- Call businesses early and keep on top of your invoices.
- Be polite and courteous while showing persistence and determination

**Jasmin Ganie-Hobbs**, Account Manager, Entrepreneurship Centre of the Business Development Bank of Canada ([jasmin.ganiehobbs@bdc.ca](mailto:jasmin.ganiehobbs@bdc.ca)), addressed the importance of a business plan:

- It should be short and simple, and show viability, financial strength and why you'll succeed.
- Attach your resume.
- Go to the bank prepared. Do your research.



[l-r] Lucy Falco, Carmel Bielinski, Jasmin Ganie-Hobbs and Carol Slama

**Carol Slama** ([carol.slama@nrc.gc.ca](mailto:carol.slama@nrc.gc.ca)), Industrial Technical Advisor with the National Research Council's Industrial Research Assistance Program, outlined this innovation assistance program for SMEs looking to enhance their innovation capability and technical aspects. IRAP (<http://irap.nrc.gc.ca>) provides:

- Cost-shared financial assistance
- Field advisory service on technical, market and business areas

**Shelley Drayton-Hyndman** ([www.theliterarymidwife.com](http://www.theliterarymidwife.com)) has motivated thousands of individuals as a workshop facilitator and an inspiring life coach. Her tips:

- Share the knowledge that you have.
- Present yourself past your business cards.

Certified Image Management Consultant **Carol Robichaud**, ([www.kcrimage.com](http://www.kcrimage.com)) shared these strategies for developing self-image:

- You are your biggest communications tool. People buy you, not your brochure or web site.
- Remember the power of coloured clothing. The darkest colour suited to you is a sign of power. Warm colours are friendly.





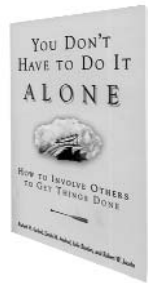


## Resources

### Book Reviews



**To Thine Own Self Be True – Body Image Redefined:** To help dispel beauty stereotypes, former protégée **Nora Camps** of DUO Strategy & Design Inc., asked 21 women what they like best about their bodies. The stunning photographs in this book symbolize every woman's natural beauty. The accompanying stories highlight the truth behind body image. Proceeds go to Sheena's Place, a support centre for eating disorders.  
Cost: \$35. Visit [www.noraspicks.com](http://www.noraspicks.com) to order.



**You Don't Have to Do It Alone:** Involving others to accomplish tasks can often seem like more trouble than it's worth. Authors Richard H. Axelrod, Emily M. Axelrod, Julie Beedon and Robert W. Jacobs lay out a straightforward, practical five-step process to involve others to help achieve your goals. (Berrett-Koehler, 2004) Cost: \$24.

## Quotable

### Quotes

*"Thanks for being here, Step Ahead, and for the role you play in business. My entire career has been built on networking with groups like yours."*

Jasmin Ganie-Hobbs, Business Development Bank of Canada

*"Programs like Step Ahead...are a good idea as they offer an organized approach to receiving help from others who have been before you."*

Anne Day, Company of Women



Kudos to the 2004 *Step Ahead* graduating protégées shown here with their mentors! [l to r]: **Jennifer Hough**, **Esther Okaumura**, **Annabelle Wood**, **Jean Price**, **Heather Mascaren**, **Stephanie Fletcher**, **Dorothy Kizoff**, **Cicily Brewer**, **Stefania Joy** and **Jane Tattersall**.

Season's Greetings  
& Happy Holidays

Step Ahead gratefully acknowledges our 2005 sponsors Scotiabank and PricewaterhouseCoopers and a big thanks also to Export Development Corporation (EDC) and Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) for sponsoring a session, to Duocom for A/V support and to Secural Datashred for office support.



## Brag

### Book

**Jean Price**, a *Step Ahead* mentor, is one of the 36 women entrepreneurs featured in a new book titled "*The Courage to Succeed*." This Canadian book by Company of Women shares the diverse backgrounds of those who have taken personal and professional leaps of faith. Although each story tells a different tale, these women find the courage to follow their dream, and plant the seeds to grow a successful business. Jean

shares with readers her story of surviving the ups and downs of 23 years in the fashion business as owner of Clew's Clothing – a business built on hard work, creativity, and enthusiasm. Cost: \$20. To order, visit [www.companyofwomen.ca](http://www.companyofwomen.ca)... Congratulations to *Step Ahead* alumni **Paula Bass** and **Susan Wright** on becoming proud new parents this past spring.



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## step ahead

Women Business Owners Mentoring for Success

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