

WORKING MOTHER

2006 WORKING MOTHER BEST Small COMPANIES

If you've ever dreamed of being your own boss, you'll easily relate to the passion that fuels the 25 businesses we've selected as our inaugural Working Mother Best Small Companies. Nationwide, companies launched by women are booming: 10.6 million women-owned businesses generate nearly \$2.5 trillion in sales, according to the Center for Women's Business Research in Washington, DC. Our winning companies diversify across a wide spectrum of industries, from travel and IT to architecture and special-ed therapy. What they share is innovative, family-friendly workplace practices that women value. Even without the deep pockets of major corporations, they've found creative ways to take care of their employees. Many provide lactation rooms, encourage moms to bring their infants to work, offer an expansive definition of "flexible schedules" and have programs that foster professional development. Some provide paid leave for both birth and adoptive parents, while others are on the cutting edge by allowing phased-in reentry. Most impressive is that many of our smaller winning companies opt to provide FMLA benefits, even though the law requires this only of companies with 50 or more employees. We're proud of the 17 women—including 16 working moms—and the eight men who helm these employers of choice. To salute mom-owned companies, we introduce our Entrepreneur Mom Awards honoring three enterprising women. We also share franchise ideas for moms interested in having some of the legwork of starting a business done for them. To learn how you can turn the spark of an idea into a red-hot company, read on.

COMPANY PROFILES BY SUSAN GERSTENZANG, KATHERINE LEE, TERESA PALAGANO, SUZANNE RISS AND CANDACE SHEPPARD
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Theraplay, Inc.

LOCATION West Chester, PA

EMPLOYEES/MOMS 91/54

FOUNDED 1991

WHAT THEY DO Offer physical, occupational and speech therapy as well as special-education services to children

HOW THEY FLEX Most employees create their own schedules; two telecommute. Theraplay pays those working 20 hours per week or more for continuing-ed classes and enables new staff to be mentored.

SOMETHING COOL Lisa, who has a young son and daughter, supports working moms: At last count, six staffers were pregnant.

* She's an entrepreneur mom



President
Lisa M. Mackell*



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METHODOLOGY We asked you to help us find small companies with family-friendly benefits and a culture that helps employees balance their work and family needs. Our only caveat was that companies have five to 100 employees. We received close to 250 nominations. Our editors scored applications based primarily on three areas of emphasis: work/life benefits, entrepreneurial spirit and programs to help women advance. The winning companies often were creative in finding ways to offer work perks to their employees. Each of the women chosen for our Working Mother Entrepreneur Mom Awards has succeeded in launching a promising business that helps her find balance in her own life and offers policies that benefit other moms as well.

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