



# WOMEN IN BUSINESS WEDNESDAYS INTERVIEW

SUSAN SPECTOR MCPHERSON  
FOUNDER AND CEO  
MCPHERSON STRATEGIES

**WF: How did you get your idea or concept for McPherson Strategies?**

**SUSAN:** It was actually a placeholder until I found a new job!! I was working at a consulting firm that was facing an exodus of talent and I knew I needed to move on. A couple of organizations, Girl Rising and Global Citizen Year told me that if I left, they would bring me on a consultant for 3-4 months each. That gave me the financial cushion to make the very challenging decision to leave. After all, I had received a regular paycheck since I was 15 and the thought of going without was daunting.

**WF: What motivates you each day?**

**SUSAN:** The work my firm conducts (social impact), our clients, and my brilliant and passionate team at McPherson Strategies.

**WF: What was the hardest sacrifice (if any) you had to make for your business?**

**SUSAN:** Getting over my fear of founding and running an actual entity. I never thought I had the skill set to do it properly.

**WF: Who were your support groups during your career, and how and why were they important to you?**

**SUSAN:** In the past few years, it has been the rise of communities in which I belong to such as The List, The WIE Suite, The Riveter, Executive Women on Boards (EWOB) and Kindred that have provided me support, friendships and guidance, but former managers, colleagues and leaders I so deeply admire have also played an invaluable role: Ruth Ann Harnisch, Lisa Witter, Jacki Zehner, Kara Goldin, Adaora Udoji, Mona Sinha and many more. Now that I'm a new member of the Women's Forum, I'm looking to meet and connect with many visionaries and leaders.

**WF: How long have you been investing in women-led tech start-ups?**

**SUSAN:** I started about 9 years ago and have invested in 19 women-led start-ups to date

**WF: Many companies have had to make major changes during the COVID Pandemic, what changes did you have to make?**

**SUSAN:** The good news, my firm had been operating remotely since we were founded in 2013. Given that, we were not as impacted when March 2020 hit. Of course, onboarding has changed drastically as we have not been able to meet people in real life but as a solution, we worked to get to a place of "over communication" to insure people felt included, seen, and heard.

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**WF: What would you consider your biggest career mistake and how did you learn from it?**

**SUSAN:** Waiting until I was 48 to launch my company. Thanks to my own insecurities, I never thought I had the brains to do such a thing!

**WF: What life experience has had the greatest impact on you?**

**SUSAN:** Sadly, my mother's tragic death when I had just turned 22. She was killed along with 96 others in the Dupont Plaza Hotel Fire on New Year's Eve in 1986. Nothing would ever be the same. She was my guiding light, mentor, and North Star.

**WF: How do you define success?**

**SUSAN:** When you wake up in the morning, you are excited about the day ahead and continuously grateful.

**WF: What exhausts you? What do you do about it?**

**SUSAN:** Negative-behavior and vitriol that is plaguing our society. I'm doing everything I can as a communications executive to create and distribute positive content, shine lights on those doing whatever they can to help others and truly improve our world.

**WF: Can you give me any examples of women you've supported and why?**

**SUSAN:** All the women founder I have funded! When I write angel investment checks, I want to insure I'm adding more value than just the financial support. So I make sure I'm also helping with introductions, potential media visibility and highlights on the various social channels where I have a presence.

**WF: When you think about the Gather, Ask, Do – why is the ASK part harder for women?**

**SUSAN:** In the book, the overarching theme of ASK is learning to ask the meaningful questions of others so that we can be of best support to those we meet. With regards to "asking" for what WE need and want, I believe is the fear of rejection that often prevents us from making such an ask.

**WF: What do you think is the greatest issue or obstacle facing women today?**

**SUSAN:** Unparalleled expectations on women to "have it all" while not having the systems in place to even begin to support them finding such a thing. We are one of the only developed countries in the world without universal childcare which puts enormous burdens on women.