

CLIENT COMMIT

Linda McCulloch, owner of Design That Works Communications Inc., is a professional graphic designer. Her company's motto, "It's not creative unless it works," is a philosophy embraced by Linda since the firm's inception in 1986. "Creative marketing materials are only worth their investment if the *creativity* helps achieve the client's desired *results*, usually name recognition and brand equity," according to Linda. "Creative for the sake of being creative is not what marketing is all about."

While completing her degree in graphic design at the Ringling School of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida, Linda took a class field trip to Atlanta and fell in love with the city. Upon graduation she moved to Atlanta and went to work for a small design studio. As with many entrepreneurs, Linda started her business out of a love for what she does and disenchantment with the corporate world.

In the beginning, Linda operated her one-woman shop from her home, primarily as a freelancer for ad agencies. She developed a reputation for being reliable, fast, and an exceptional designer. In June of 1997, however, she realized she was not achieving the level of success she had hoped for, and after losing a major account that was taken in-house, which accounted for about 50 percent of her business, she started looking for assistance. Through a friend and business associate, she learned about the Georgia SBDC Network. When Linda first came to the SBDC, she met with consultant Sharon Macaluso. "It sounds odd. Although I am very good at helping my clients market their business, I feel less comfortable marketing my own business," Linda explained to Sharon.

After the first meeting, Sharon and Linda met every two weeks for the next several months and developed an aggressive marketing plan which involved reassessing her target markets, pricing strategies, and promotional tactics. "Linda is every consultant's dream client. She is open to suggestions, hard working, and follows through on what she needs to do to achieve results." After several months, Linda began seeing impact from her marketing plan and continued to meet with Sharon on a monthly basis to brainstorm new ideas and reassess current activities, and each year Sharon works with Linda to develop an annual marketing plan with a budget. "Sharon made me understand the importance of having a plan and sticking to



(l-r) Sharon Macaluso and Linda McCulloch

it. She gave me several great ideas, including a postcard campaign, which I continue to use today. Above all, she kept me focused and accountable."

Eventually Linda was off and running and over the years Linda has continued to call on Sharon and the SBDC for assistance in addressing a variety of business management issues. And how has the business changed? "I am very pleased with Design That Works' business growth. I now employ a bookkeeper and administrative assistant. I am able to charge four to five times the fee I was charging in 1997 for a logo design, and my sales have quadrupled!"

According to Sharon, "Linda has become a marketing machine." Today she is a sought after lecturer, an active member of the Atlanta business community, and has been featured in the Growth Strategies section of the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*.

Linda's relationship with Sharon and the SBDC continues. Most recently they met to discuss certification as a woman-owned business. "Linda has definitely developed a solid foundation for her business and a name for Design That Works in the Atlanta area," Sharon remarked. "With her tenacity, commitment to quality, and ongoing learning, I have no doubt Design That Works will continue to realize steady growth and success" (www.greatdesignthatworks.com).