

From Scratch to Success

AlphaGraphics is a family-run business that treats staff (and clients!) like their own family.

In 2000, Bill and Clare Meehan moved from Boston and relocated to downtown Pittsburgh to open a design and printing franchise called AlphaGraphics. Bill was armed with business savvy from years of C-suite experience. Clare brought robust volunteering and fundraising experience. Together, they formed a dynamic duo, and—despite opening their doors with zero revenue—their different yet complementary talents soon proved a formidable force.

Clare first tackled the nonprofit sector, selling the firm's strong graphic design skills. "No matter what board I served on in the past, I was always the go-to person for any type of solicitation or fundraising. It was a perfect segue into heading the sales team here," she says.

Over the years, AlphaGraphics' services expanded to include full-scope branding and marketing campaigns. Today, their hip, three-floor urban office space includes an agency floor, a production floor, and signage space—their fastest-growing business area.

In 2007, AlphaGraphics officially became a woman-owned business. The firm has had double-digit growth every year since its founding, and it's ranked in the top five out of 270 franchise locations worldwide for revenue. Not bad for starting from scratch less than two decades ago.

"Our strongest vertical markets are health care, education, the arts, nonprofits, corporations, and technology," says Clare. "We're proud to work with an elite list of clients, the 'who's who' of Pittsburgh. We're truly thought-leaders in the industry."

All in the Family

While her parents were building AlphaGraphics, Sarah Meehan Parker was honing her business and management skills with a major financial institution for 13 years. In 2013, with her father's and brother's encouragement, Sarah joined the family business, co-leading with her mother and becoming CEO.

"I'm a good mix of my parents," says Sarah. "I have the strategy and vision of my father, and I love the people aspect, like my mother." Together, the mother-daughter duo has perfected the art of



Clare Meehan and Sarah Meehan Parker

"dividing and conquering" the management of AlphaGraphics, yielding an efficient and cohesive operation for both clients and employees. "I love getting to work with really dynamic companies in Pittsburgh that have such wonderful missions," adds Sarah.

AlphaGraphics has its own "wonderful" mission, too. From the very beginning, the goal was to "not only make a living but also make a difference in our employees' lives," Clare says.

"We believe that if you take care of the team first, they'll take care of the client," says Sarah, noting a diverse calendar of employee engagement activities—from golf and ax-throwing to lavish holiday parties and family-friendly summer picnics. "We're firm, and we're fair. We have a culture of continuous improvement—we're never satisfied with complacency. Putting the average in always gets you the average out."

The Meehans also champion transparency; every employee has full access

to the firm's balance sheet. And instead of a managerial hierarchy, they abide by a flat organizational chart so that "ideas don't get stifled or stuck in middle management," Sarah explains.

Going forward, the AlphaGraphics team will undoubtedly continue to be a pivotal fulcrum in Pittsburgh, from the clients it serves, to the employees it nurtures, to the community it's proud to uplift through volunteer efforts.

"Our vision statement says it all," Sarah concludes. "We're on a relentless pursuit of innovative, relevant, and agile communication solutions that drive our clients' success."

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