

**FASTEST
GROWING
COMPANIES**



SANDOR FIZLI

small business

A company of her own

A former champion bodybuilder bulks up her security business

No. 10

Bourque Security Services
Security
Halifax, N.S.

Jessica Weidenfeld is not what she seems. She answers phones, does administrative paperwork, and has the title "office manager" written on her business card. Yet beneath this mild-mannered, pencil-pushing facade lurks the owner and president of Bourque Security Services.

"I tell people I'm the office manager so they won't know I'm the president," she says, explaining that because she's female, only 36, and operating in an industry dominated by males, she isn't always taken seriously. Her seven-year-old, Halifax-based company provides private guard service, and some of its biggest clients are in the construction industry. "The men out there are often shocked," she says with a laugh. "So I just like to blend in and watch and learn."

Weidenfeld certainly knows a thing or two about hard work. The former bodybuilder was the Atlantic middleweight bodybuilding champion and competed on a national level for several years. The dedication and commitment she needed to stay in top physical shape has been refocused to building and growing her compa-

ny, which is bulking up: Last year, Bourque Security Services almost doubled its revenues and the company recently branched out into traffic control.

Hurricane Juan, in September of 2003, really got the company rolling. "It was chaos out there," remembers Weidenfeld. "Everyone needed security. From the hurricane on, we've been going non-stop." Last year, the company reached a high point with 70 guards.

Weidenfeld talks a lot about the thrill and importance of pleasing customers. She also praises the work of her operations manager, Bill Brandow, 43. "He's dedicated and out there with clients and employees," she says. "Customer service is No. 1, and he understands that." Brandow throws the credit back at Weidenfeld. "She has a real interest in her company," he says. "I don't want to be stagnant, and from day one, Jessica gave me room to progress."

Future plans include a venture that partners Bourque Security Services with other businesses. Weidenfeld also wants her company to move out of her basement and into a more formal office in Halifax that will accommodate a training facility for guards. But the big question is, will she ever put "owner and president" on her business card? "Yes, that's coming," she says. —Paula Adamski