

Cinnabar

WINERY

SUZANNE FRONTZ BIO

When Suzanne Frontz checks into the office each morning, her first stop is the company hat rack. Will she wear the practical financial cap, the sociable marketing hat, or the no-nonsense general manager beret? ... It all depends. If she chooses the latter, for instance, her day may begin with a walk of the vineyards or an evaluative wine tasting with the winemaker.

Known as the “woman with many hats,” Suzanne is responsible for keeping Cinnabar Winery on track. “Suzanne has been a driving force in setting our direction,” said Cinnabar Founder Tom Mudd. “She encouraged us to make long-range plans and document goals.” This take-charge approach to management stems from the earliest of role models.

Born and raised in Columbus, Ohio, Suzanne remembers her mother turning a family tragedy into a story of remarkable recovery. “My dad died when my mother was 45 years old,” says Suzanne. “After 20 years as a stay-at-home mom, she became a widow with four kids, three under 12.” Suzanne’s mom reacted decisively. “She sold the family service station business, moved us into town from the country, and took a job on the second shift packing tools,” says Suzanne. Her mom was eventually hired by Ohio’s department of energy, working her way to a position managing the strategic petroleum reserve for the Buckeye State.

Suzanne’s love of small animals inspired her to join 4H in middle school while an interest in drama would carry all the way through high school, college and community theater.

She attended Ohio University, Ohio State and later earned an undergraduate degree in finance at Cal State, Northridge in California’s San Fernando Valley. Her studies were an invaluable resource while directing sales and marketing for a New York City publisher in the late 1970s. Suzanne transferred to their Southern California office in 1981, eventually leaving for a product management position in their small lingerie division. She spent several years as a commercial/industrial property manager and leasing agent, but a move to the beverage industry in the early 90s would dramatically change her lifestyle.

Suzanne served as vice-president of the American Brandy Association (ABA) from 1993 to 1996 before joining Cinnabar in a multi-task role of sales and marketing, accounting and office management. Her work with the ABA included international sales and marketing in Mexico, China, Canada and the UK. That experience, coupled with a profound instinct for “personal selling,” would propel sales at Cinnabar.

She met her goals the first year and tripled winery sales by 2002. Initially, Suzanne collaborated with a wine broker who fulfilled the role of national sales director, but she assumed all sales and marketing responsibilities by 2000. “Suzanne has sold everything we have ever asked her to sell,” said Tom.

Suzanne was promoted to general manager and chief financial officer in 1999. With her at the helm, Cinnabar now focuses on just 14 states to best serve its customers. “She helped change our approach to marketing,” said Tom. “Formerly, our efforts were a mile wide and an inch deep. Now our puddles are small, but they are deep.”

“Suzanne brought a level of professionalism to Cinnabar,” says Winemaker George Troquato. “She elevated the entire company by building positive relationships with wholesalers, retailers and restaurateurs.” Her brand of personal selling comes at a premium as she spends an amazing six-to-seven months of the year on the road.

Suzanne believes in offering a well-made product at a fair price. “We give customers more wine quality than they’re paying for,” she says.

Away from Cinnabar, Suzanne enjoys cooking, traveling and sailing with her husband Doug in the Caribbean, Chesapeake Bay and Southern California. She is a former chairperson of Family Winemakers of California, a member of the Wine Institute’s policy committee, a member of Women Chefs and Restaurateurs, and a former board member of Women for Winesense.

Going forward, Suzanne would like Cinnabar and its people to reach their full potential and enjoy the ride. “Our future at Cinnabar is so exciting and bright,” says Suzanne. “I’m thrilled to be associated with a phenomenal organization, fantastic products and wonderful customers.”

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