

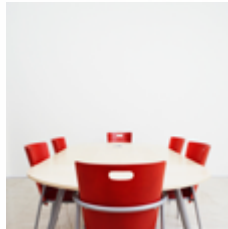


Debbie Smook

Turbofil Packaging Machines, LLC
Mount Vernon, NY

Member Since: 2007

“Every big corporation has a board...they’re insider-outsiders; they know your business and what’s going on, but they’re not so close they lose sight of the big picture.”



Being a small business owner in a competitive industry can sometimes feel like a “David versus Goliath” struggle. When your competitors are much bigger than you, with seemingly vast resources at their disposal, it may be hard to see how you can win the fight (let alone the battle).

“Growing a business organically, self-funded, in an industry with much bigger players, it’s really hard,” admits business owner Deborah Smook. “Getting the company known is also hard. I don’t think we could have done it without the Internet and the availability of websites and online marketing.”

Since 1999 Smook has worked with her husband, Eli Uriel, founder of TurboFil Packaging Machines in Mount Vernon, NY. They started small with one customer and one machine, with Smook working for TurboFil only at night until the business started taking off.

Twelve years later, TurboFil has 11 employees and has more than held its own against international packaging giants. Although liquid filling and assembly is the company’s mainstay, TurboFil specializes in custom machine design for customers in the pharmaceutical, cosmetics, diagnostics and chemical industries. Smook says the company tries to fit “as much innovation as we can fit in a small package.” Whether the resulting product is easier to use, clean or changeover, TurboFil’s attention to design detail is one reason it is able to



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compete with much bigger companies that have lower cost base.

In addition to the competitive arena, TurboFil has been dealt stinging blows from other giants. When the company had a chance to secure a major international contract, it asked for a letter of credit from its bank (one of the top three “big banks” in the U.S.). “They wouldn’t even meet with us about it,” says Smook, “even though we had been a customer for years.

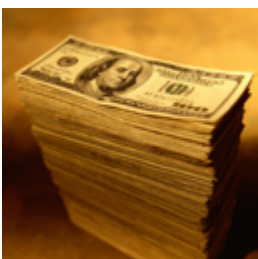
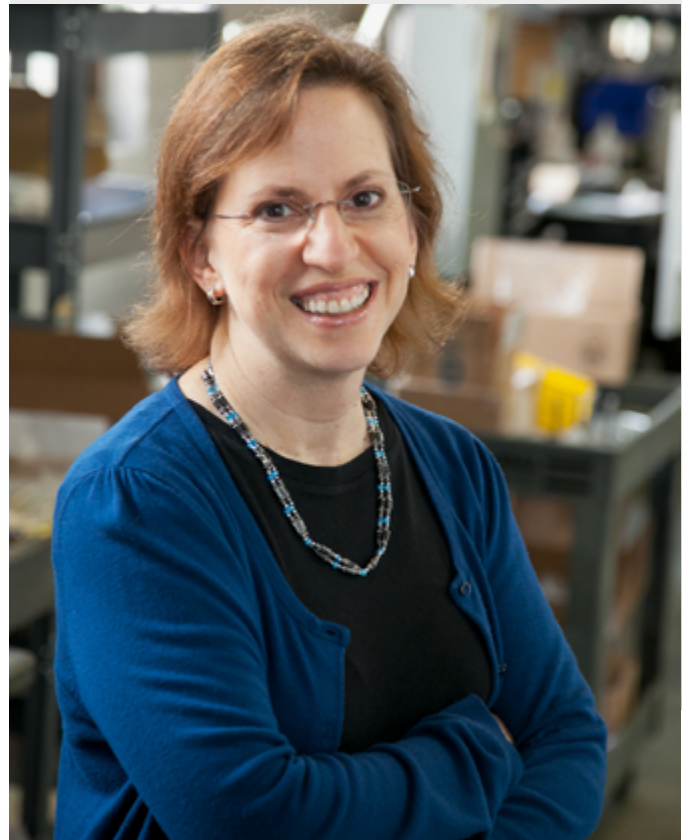
A member of TAB since 2007, Smook turned to her fellow TAB Board members for advice. “When things are really tough, it’s nice to have someone you can talk to,” she recalls. Armed with the Board’s suggestions, her facilitator’s support, and help from the SBA, TurboFil successfully secured the letter of credit – from a different bank.

Whether it’s during a crisis or every day operations, Smook says the Board helps her keep the business in perspective. “You do need objective views of your business,” she believes. “Someone to say ‘You’re stuck in a rut, do something else.’ Or ‘you’re missing an opportunity,’ or ‘don’t worry about spending the money.’”

“Every big corporation has a board,” she points out. “They’re insider-outsiders; they know your business and what’s going on, but they’re not so close they lose sight of the big picture.”

Peer boards become a way to level the playing field. When you’re staring down Goliath, it’s nice to have a slingshot in your pocket – and the backing of others who know what you’re going through.

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About The Alternative Board

The Alternative Board® (TAB) helps forward-thinking business owners grow their businesses, increase profitability and improve their lives by leveraging local business advisory boards, private business coaching and proprietary strategic services.

TAB works with successful business owners who feel that their current practices are not elevating their businesses to the next level. We bring together owners, CEOs and presidents of non-competing companies to meet in a relaxed, confidential setting to give and gain practical, real-world advice on their specific business issues and opportunities.