

## Creating a Healthier Planet

**An Interview with Sarah Edelston Hiner,  
Chief Executive Officer and President, Boardroom Inc./Bottom Line Publications**

**EDITORS' NOTE** *When it comes to her customers, Sarah Hiner calls herself a “care-aholic,” who is committed to changing the planet and giving people the necessary information to make wise choices about their lives. She has held her current post since January 2013. Prior to this, she was the COO and Publisher for Boardroom Inc./Bottom Line Publications. In addition to her work at Boardroom, Hiner has owned her own marketing consultancy and hosted a weekly radio show, Bottom Line on Your Health. She started her career in general advertising at Grey Advertising, and at boutique agencies in New York and Colorado. Hiner received her B.A. in Psychology from Hamilton College and an M.B.A. from Regis University.*



*Sarah Edelston Hiner*

**COMPANY BRIEF** *Founded in 1972 by Martin Edelston, Boardroom Inc./Bottom Line Publications (mybottomline.com), provides people with tools, information, and answers to help them have more control over their lives. Bottom Line/Personal is the most widely read consumer newsletter ever published. Bottom Line publishes two print periodicals, many e-letters, and dozens of books dedicated to providing the best, most useful, and easy-to-read answers to the challenges of life, reaching over a million people each year. Its succinct, to-the-point information is suited for today's fleeting attention spans and high demand for immediate solutions. Contributing to Bottom Line are thousands of experts at the top of their fields who bring readers their insider perspectives. Bottom Line/Personal has over a half million readers, and covers topics such as investment advice, family relationships, buying and selling a home, avoiding illness, building careers, retirement planning, taxes, and more. Bottom Line/Health does the same in the areas of health, both mainstream and alternative.*

**After more than 40 years, your father's creation is still tremendously popular, and you are leading its evolution into the digital age. To what do you attribute this success?**

My father was visionary in creating Bottom Line's tight quick-read editorial style and mix of topics that provides an assortment of informational “gems” on every page. While print needs

to make room for digital content delivery, people still have the same challenges they did 40 years ago. We're drowning in information. People today want quick, easy answers they can trust. Bottom Line's expert-sourced information gives that to them.

**How broad is the market you're trying to reach?**

My customer is anyone who wants to be better in his or her life and likes to take action to get there. Demographically, our customer is 50-plus because this group knows they

need more wisdom and are young enough to act on that information. Additionally, much of our information is health-based – older people are getting “achy and breaky,” whereas the younger group still believes they're immortal.

**How do you hone in and provide concise information on issues that have such a broad focus?**

We have a team of talented editors who have expertise in selecting an interesting mix of topics, carefully vetting the best experts, and writing concisely and precisely. Then, we make it very actionable. In addition, our stories are focused on single topics from individual experts. This means sometimes different experts may give different advice on a given topic. It's not our job to make decisions for our readers; it's our job to give our readers information that allows them to make decisions for themselves.

**Is there still a value to a print component today?**

Yes. I often joke that print is going to be the savior for all of us drowning in e-mail. In all seriousness, I have a readership that loves what I do exactly as I do it, and we continue to provide our print products for them. The challenge is to deliver our great content in ways that our new customers want it. Sometimes that's digital. It's also reformatting our print into smaller, more accessible products that fit with how people digest information now. Our 16-page newsletters are actually very portable, and in fact, there are a number of digital-first companies who are creating print publications.

**Is part of your role also providing your vision and expertise on these topics to your readers?**

I see myself as my customers' advocate, as is everybody in the company. I am “chief advocate.” My editors are advocates for our readers.

They ask the questions of the experts that people might want to ask but they don't have access to do it or the courage to ask it. Things like pressing a doctor for treatment options that are natural rather than prescriptive medications, or challenging them on the necessity of tests that have been requested; or even how to negotiate a better price on just about anything. Our role is to be a voice to get the information to the world that they need.

Our marketers find and/or create products that help make our customers' lives better. For instance, we've built an online store where we have taken the confusion out of purchasing vitamins and other supplements by working with our experts to select products that we know are professional grade, high quality, and safe dosing. Similarly, we offer body and household products that are toxin free, healthful organic snacks, and many other products that make it easy for people to follow a healthy lifestyle. We take the confusion out of purchasing.

**Is there a higher purpose in trying to enhance lives?**

I'm trying to create a healthier planet through our information and products. People have more power over their lives than they give themselves credit for. However, they don't know what to do or where to go. We give them the tools so they know how to be physically, financially, and emotionally healthier.

**Do you take the time to enjoy the wins?**

Oh gosh, yes. The biggest wins come in the form of customer feedback, telling us about how we have helped them. We share those letters with everyone in the company on a regular basis. Many CEOs are workaholics. I am a care-aholic.

**What advice do you have for women who want to become leaders?**

Women spend far too much time worrying about the fact that they are women, and being concerned with who is and isn't being fair to them because they are women. Instead, they should simply worry about being the best leaders they can be, acquiring skills and knowledge, and doing the best job they can. If a woman does that, the rewards come – the monetary rewards, the growth, the personal satisfaction, and the enjoyment of what one is doing. Just do what you love and do it to the best of your ability – the results will come. ●