

## Wendi Goldsmith, CEO, BioEngineering Group, Salem

Wednesday, March 16, 2011

# 2011 Women to Watch: Wendi



# Goldsmith

By [James M. Connolly](#)

**Wendi Goldsmith**

**CEO**

**BioEngineering Group, Salem**

When Wendi Goldsmith set out to build a company that provided sustainable landscape and construction designs in 1992, sustainability wasn't the buzzword it is today. A geologist by training, she noted, "I saw a lot of scientific research being done, but very little was being turned into change on the ground." Her firm took on a huge engineering project in a set of New Orleans flood control and navigation projects in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Education: Bachelor's degree in geology and geophysics, Yale University; masters degree in ecological land planning and design, Conway School of Landscape Design; masters degree in plant and soil science, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Her path to her own company: Coming from a family where entrepreneurship was accepted, she decided to start her own company. "The thought seemed natural enough and nobody intervened to say I shouldn't start my own company. I always knew that I wanted to grow the business, and in the first year we had a half-dozen employees."

Getting buy in at the start: "The reception couldn't be more different than it would be today. We were constantly reminded that we were not the bread and butter of the industry. A lot of people thought we were crazy. The construction industry was often characterized as the bad guys when in fact they can be the very best agents for change in sustainability, restoration and resource management."

The learning curve: "When we started I had a very good handle on the science part of it. The pieces that I didn't know anything about were things like taxes, labor laws, government purchase cycles and

cash flow. I didn't recognize how continuous the challenges would be. I thought early on that there would be a process of learning, and that the rest would be smooth sailing, but I learned that you are never done learning about government contracting, cash flow and financing."

In the community: She is a member of the National Women's Business Council, which advises the president and Congress.

What she's most proud of: "The echo effect where people, including people who started out being skeptical or resistant, end up being allied and supporters of the company, and become true advocates for sustainable development practices."