



Laura Araneda*

Age 42

Sussex, New Brunswick

PRESIDENT

Vic Progressive Diamond Drilling, providing contract drilling for the mining industry

2011 REVENUE

\$5-\$10 million; sales are up 21 percent from 2010

EMPLOYEES

Started with four in 1987, growing to more than 100 today

WHY WE LOVE HER

Because she wasn't afraid to go underground and ended up on top

Treat employees the way you'd like to be treated."

Power Driller

WHILE STUDYING BUSINESS in university, Laura Araneda asked her dad to take her into one of his mines. "He was a bit surprised that I'd want to go, you know, because I'm a girl. But I come from a long line of miners and grew up with the lore and the adventure." Once underground, "I was hooked," she says. So Laura convinced her dad to let her become a driller's helper deep in the mine. "It was cold and wet, and you had to keep moving to stay warm—it was a different world. At the end of the shift I would drive the tractor up the tunnel, which was an adventure in itself." She completed her degree and worked her way up in the company, becoming president in 2005.

TRADE SECRET "I ask for multiple offers for each financing deal I do. I don't assume that one financial institution will always give me the best rate."

LESSON LEARNED In 2009, when the economy tanked, Laura rallied the management team and developed a strategy. "We focused on our existing customers to help them find efficiencies and get good results in a very tough market." It worked. "Our financials suffered, but not catastrophically as so many other companies' did."

FORWARD THINKING Laura is the driving force behind the company's eco-policies, developing equipment that minimizes environmental impact and adopting less disruptive exploratory-drilling practices. "Mining has a bad rap. Our goal is to leave no footprint. You shouldn't be able to see where we've been."