



REPUBLIC WEST

REPUBLIC WEST REMODELS HOME-IMPROVEMENT INDUSTRY, FINDS SUCCESS

WHEN CO-OWNERS LINDA Zimmerman and Jim Weisman founded Republic West in 1995, they were seeking to break the mold of home-improvement companies.

"Our company is very operationally driven, rather than sales and marketing driven," Weisman says. What that means is that only about 13% of Republic West's 60-employee staff is devoted to sales, and the rest do the remodeling projects. In most home-improvement companies, those percentages are pretty much reversed, Weisman says.

In addition, the sales force would normally be on commission and most of the work in people's homes

would be done by subcontractors, so that the remodeling company was paid out money only when there was a contract.

That business model wasn't for Zimmerman and Weisman because putting the focus on sales rather than operations led to poor execution. "[It] became the home-improvement nightmare that everybody has lived or been aware of: the project that should take six weeks, but then takes three months, with plenty of change orders and fights," Weisman says.

"I don't think people see an alternative, but we set out to provide one," Zimmerman says.

The Phoenix-based company uses its in-house people to execute the projects. That's rewarded Zimmerman and Weisman's faith in their business instincts with a company that's enjoyed 20% annual growth over the past four years and racked up \$8 million in revenue.

"Forty percent of our business comes from previous customers and referrals," Weisman says.

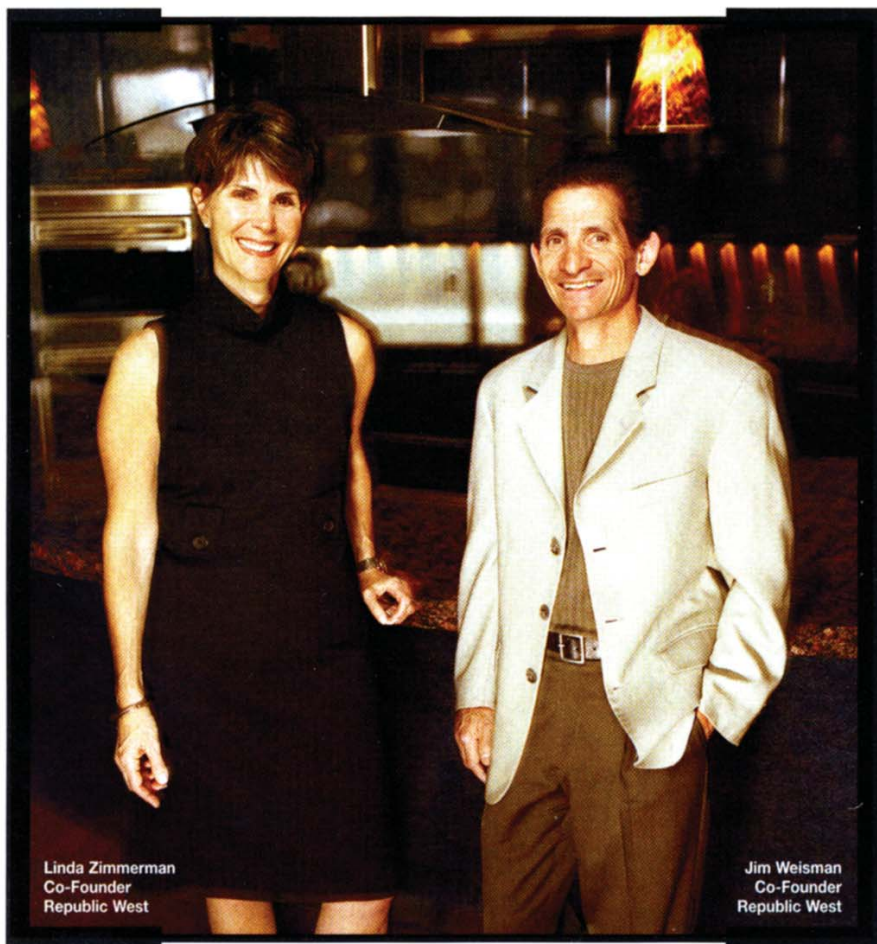
Friends since high school, the pair decided to become business partners and moved their families to Arizona in 1995 intent on buying a window company. Not finding one worth buying, they decided to start from scratch.

The company started with one employee in Zimmerman's back yard, but now is housed in an 18,000-square-foot building that Republic West built and opened in 2003, featuring a large showroom to allow customers to sample remodeling ideas and furnishings for different rooms.

The coolest thing, Zimmerman says, is that Republic West's business model proved successful not only with customers, but also with employees.

As subcontractors, the workers who actually do the remodeling would go through periods of feast and famine, with fluctuating income and no commitment for future work. As employees, they have a steady income and a career path.

"One of the coolest things about being here is having so many employees tell me how happy they are here, and how special this job is," she says. In fact, she recently had an employee tell her, holding back tears, "It's been a gift to be here." —Salvatore Caputo



Linda Zimmerman
Co-Founder
Republic West

Jim Weisman
Co-Founder
Republic West

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