

# ARIZONA'S BEST BUSINESS LEADERS

**W**e asked Arizona companies to offer up their leaders in the hopes of defining our own ideas of great leadership. For us, the criteria revolved around someone who could grow their companies and profits, inspire employees, keep investors happy, and impact their communities. As proof positive, finalists were verified through follow-up interviews with employees, customers, investors and community affiliations. They were then handed off to our panel of expert judges made up of syndicated business columnist Dale Dauten, MicroAge founder and entrepreneur Alan Hald, executive recruiter Bill Swartz of Swartz & Associates Inc., and Ginger Ward, founder and executive director of local nonprofit organization Southwest Human Development. At the end, five winners were left standing as Arizona's Best Business Leaders—each with a standout factor all their own.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN FISKE

STEVE SANGHI » KEVIN HICKEY

**J**im Weisman doesn't want to change the world . . . just his world. For the last decade, Weisman, along with business partner Linda Zimmerman, has been leading a resistance against the nightmare paradigm of the home-remodeling industry. One where the customer gets the short end of the stick while contractors try to control costs. "Listen to what the marketplace is trying to tell you," says Weisman. "My partner and I wanted to set up a business that was very different in its approach to the customer. The method of getting them to the end result was as important as the end result itself." Translation: Republic West customers will never have to deal with the endless parade of subcontractors, a lack of accountability, project delays, and questionable on-site behavior. Instead, they interact only with Republic West employees who are rewarded through the company's "Previous Customer and Referral Program," ensuring that clients get the best possible service in a timely and professional manner.

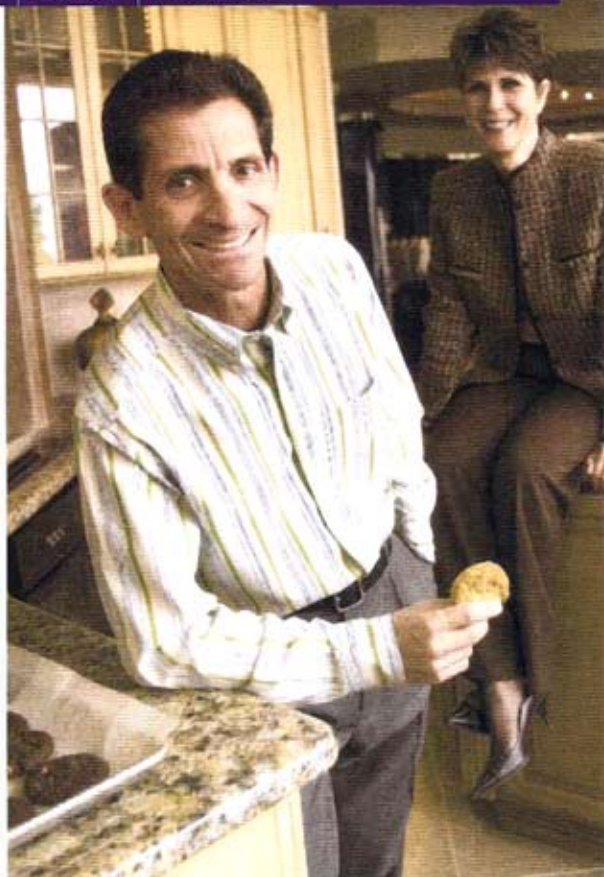
Weisman's leadership of his people is a roll-up-your-sleeves type approach. "Typically in this industry, if you give 100 hours they'll take it," says Danny Wood, Republic West's design department manager. "I'm a workaholic and if I turn in a time sheet with 80 hours, Jim calls me in to say this is not what we're about and asks how he can assist me in managing my department."

Weisman's vision and leadership has resulted in a new 18,000-square-foot building and 5,000-square-foot showroom, revenue growth of

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## THE CHANGE AGENT

Jim Weisman | President | Republic West



### COVER STORY

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Being a strong business leader is much more than bringing in top revenue numbers. Meet five of Arizona's best who grow revenues, inspire employees, keep investors happy, and impact their communities—all at the same time.

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more than \$1 million every year to current year, and a jump in employees from three in 1995 to 70 currently. "Having a clear definition of what we're going to give the marketplace and how we're going to conduct ourselves made the foundation of this business solid," says Weisman.

This business leader is also passionate about his leadership in the community. The City of Scottsdale was invited in to share its vision for the McDowell Road corridor when the company was planning an expansion in the area, and Home Base Youth Services (a nonprofit dedicated to helping troubled youth ages 18 to 20) has seen the company donate \$20,000 worth of goods and services to their cause.

**LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY:** Create an atmosphere where there is no judgment and communication is safe.

**WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM HIM:** "We've never set a growth number for the company. Our goal is to achieve whatever level of excellence we can achieve to maximize efforts," says Weisman. What that translates to is a growth model based on closing ratios instead of sales numbers. For example, if the ratio for new customers is 20%, Weisman's goal is to hit 30% through a team-driven, as opposed to a performance-driven, environment.—HK