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Small Business Person of the Year 2009 Finalist Carlisle drives Tailfin to succeed

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Staff Writer



Lola Carlisle is an accidental entrepreneur. Founding Tailfin Marketing Communications in 1999 with her partner, Greg Abel, she said she started her own business as a way to take control of her career.

“For me, it was a time when I had a young daughter and I wanted to have more control over my schedule and had been through some painful mergers,” Carlisle said. “I decided I was ready to be my own boss and establish my career the way I wanted it to be.”

Co-owner and executive creative director of Tailfin Marketing, Carlisle said the marketing firm’s success is due to the relationships her team establishes with its clients.

“We work hand-in-hand with marketing directors in helping them set strategies and establish positioning for new products and services and follow through with creative,” she said. “Many other agencies are executional. We are more relationship-oriented with these types of big brands.”

Serving major international consumer brands such as The Coca-Cola Co. and Hilton Hotels Corp., as well as midsized and business-to-business brands, many of Tailfin’s clients have remained loyal even during tough times. Carlisle said during the difficult advertising climate that followed Sept. 11, the firm was able to keep all its clients by adjusting rates and service offerings.

“It’s our relationships with our clients that helped us maintain through [Sept. 11] and come out on the other end strong,” Carlisle said. “Those clients are still with us today and know they can count on us.”

Offering everything from advertising to broadcast to tradeshow design, Tailfin is an active member of the National Women Business Owners Corp. and a big player in the nonprofit community.

Providing pro bono marketing services to organizations such as Kate’s Club, serving children who have lost a parent or sibling, and The Girl’s Collaborative, Carlisle is also actively involved in her neighborhood.

A business owner and resident of Virginia-Highland, Carlisle is co-founder of Protect Livable Atlanta Neighborhoods (PLAN), which aids in the revision of zoning ordinances to protect and maintain the character of the Virginia-Highland neighborhood. Mary Norwood, an Atlanta city councilwoman, said Carlisle’s design work and leadership on PLAN has been exemplary.

Her work in the community doesn’t stop there. Carlisle has volunteered with Virginia-Highland Parents Association since 1995 and is a part of the Virginia-Highland Civic Association Neighborhood Preservation Committee.

