

# WDM

Women of Distinction Magazine



**Carri M. Garrison**

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President, Fabrication Technologies - FABTEK  
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**V**enturing back into the business world in 1976 after her children went off to school, Carri M. Garrison, who had previously attended the Minnesota School of Business, made the decision to look into careers in larger corporations. Finding work as an expeditor in the procurement department at the Control Data Aerospace Division in Minneapolis, Minnesota, she was quickly advised by her boss to apply for a buyer's position that had become available. Hesitant because she didn't quite feel she was qualified enough for the role, Carri turned in her resume and landed the position. Soon after she was promoted into more complex purchasing positions, boosting her knowledge base and spending numerous hours on the manufacturing floor. It was the beginning of a long and successful career in supply chain management, program management, proposal management, and project management.

As Carri's career progressed, she eventually found herself working in California in numerous upper management positions with General Dynamics, Rockwell and Douglas Aircraft (now Boeing). Retiring in 2006 as a director on the Future Combat Systems Program, Carri and her husband moved to the San Juan Islands.

Fabrication Technologies, or FabTek, although small, is a highly sophisticated precision metal fabrication shop maintaining an aerospace quality system.

While Carri oversees the administration and oversight of all activities, including establishing the strategic vision of the company, developing systems, managing costs, fostering customer relationships, managing all equipment purchases, and ensuring that operations align with company policies and procedures, she is eager to create a sophisticated business environment that can benefit the community and open doors for the younger population.

Enjoying the warm weather of the San Juan's, Carri loves to hike, sail, kayak, and garden. She also loves to knit, read, and frequently entertain friends and family with home cooked meals. She has been a volunteer CASA Guardian ad Litem for Island County since 2008, taking on cases when a child has been removed from their home. She will soon be celebrating her 30-year anniversary with her husband, of which they share their home with their furry cat, Max. They also have a blended family with two sons and a daughter, as well as five grandchildren.

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***"While managing a two-year remodeling project of our home on the island, a local medical spa in town was in need of a business manager. The opportunity to understand the inner workings of a small business was enlightening. By 2014, I decided to start my own business that would serve as a premiere metal fabrication business," Carri acknowledged, noting that retirement wasn't meant for her just yet.***

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# Q&A

**Q:** What sets you apart from other small metal fabrication companies?

**A:** *We have brought together the highest technology, digital design/analysis/machine programming capabilities with very sophisticated CNC machining, welding, and assembly equipment, to satisfy ISO 9000/AS9100.*

**Q:** Why do you feel your business is important?

**A:** We believe by integrating technology, training, sophisticated equipment, and systematic controls we can compete on a world class level and provide the well-paying skilled jobs our country is in desperate need of while rejuvenating the Made-in-America pride.

**Q:** What types of products do you make?

**A:** *With our diverse capabilities it ranges from CNC machined components and assemblies for aircraft and satellites to commercial products and welded assemblies.*

**Q:** Where do you see your company in 10 years?

**A:** *I would like FabTek to be the premiere high technology metal fabrication business in the Puget Sound area with a reputation of cooperation, knowledge, and overall excellence.*

**Q:** Is it difficult to be a small business contracting with large aerospace corporations?

**A:** *A solid basis of knowledge with the appropriate systems in place can open many doors.*

*My experience as a director at Boeing leading large teams on high technology programs, including classified programs, has provided me with insights into the real needs and objectives of large aerospace customers.*

**Q:** How will your business benefit the community?

**A:** *FabTek will open doors for some of the younger generation on the island offering a path to gaining skills that will provide them with living wage career futures. Our goal is to provide an environment of continued learning and expertise.*

**Q:** How are educational requirements changing in this field?

**A:** *Technology has changed over the years and advanced computer skills are absolutely necessary for any potential employee. Sophisticated software programs are being utilized within most areas of the company, not just engineering but fabrication as well as inspection.*

**Q:** What are keys to a successful relationship between your company and your customers?

**A:** *Communications are critical with regular reporting and ongoing conversations. Our systems provide the controls and objective evidence that allow our customers to develop faith and trust. Understanding a customer's needs and demonstrating the flexibility to satisfy those needs is paramount.*

**Q:** Is it difficult being a women owner in a Metal Fabrication environment?

**A:** *Not at all! It has taken years of hard work, dedication, and success to overcome some of the prejudices that exist in corporate America. I have taken that confidence with me upon creating this small business. It generally takes a few minutes of chatting when first meeting new folks, but before long they realize I'm the real deal.*

**Q:** Do you see women viewed differently from when you began your career?

**A:** *Yes! The young women of today are more confident and comfortable in leadership roles and aren't afraid to tackle anything that interests them. I see them thriving without the stigma of being female.*



**FABTEK**  
FABRICATION TECHNOLOGIES