

GENxyz Buzz Companies

These upstarts are driving the next generation of business in Colorado

By Eric Peterson

Age is just a number, sure, and CEO is just three letters. In the business world, the notion that age brings wisdom has been upended by the tenet that youth brings innovation and energy. And in the 21st century, stubborn adherence to tradition can quickly lose you the race.

The following standouts of Colorado's next generation of business leaders do more than make decisions and count nickels - they practice what they preach and live - and thrive on the cutting edge. Their careers are not their lives, but extensions of their passions, from the great outdoors to community service. Here's a tip of the ColoradoBiz cap to these standard bearers for generations X, Y and Z.

Julia Leach, 33 **CEO of Clay Pot Creative and Toddy, Fort Collins**

After a stint with another agency, Leach went out on her own at the tender age of 22 and started Clay Pot Creative in 2000. "I felt there was a better way to serve clients," she says. Focusing on contract Web-development and marketing, Leach fostered the company through the lean years after the dot-com era.

Now home to eight employees who handle branding, Web and app development, and marketing in-house, Clay Pot Creative has seen its clients grow with it. "We still have a passion for small businesses, but we do more work with medium-sized businesses," Leach says. "We like to partner and build a long-term relationship." The mother of two is also involved in several child-oriented charities, and invites her employees to bring in pro bono accounts they are passionate about promoting.

While it sometimes was a detriment in her 20s, Leach's age is currently in something of a sweet spot. "A client recently told me, 'You're old enough to know what you're talking about, but you're young enough that using technology is innate to you.' Now we can use our age to our advantage and our youth to our advantage."

In a career curveball, Leach bought a client in Toddy, a manufacturer of cold-brew coffeemakers, with her husband, Andy, last year and relocated the company from Houston to Fort Collins. "They're two very different companies, but they have a unique relationship," says Leach, noting that Clay Pot still handles Toddy's Internet presence and marketing. "I divide my time between the two companies."

Leach says Toddy's revenues are up more than 50 percent year-to-date - and she's a big fan of the product. "It brews with time instead of heat," she says. "It tastes the way coffee smells."



ON THE WEB: <http://www.claypotcreative.com> & www.toddycafe.com