



MARY ANN O'BRIEN

CEO AND FOUNDER

A nationally recognized branding and marketing thought leader, Mary Ann has been entrusted by some of the most successful brands in the world to help steer their strategic direction. Recognized as a pioneer in the world of marketing and technology, Mary Ann and her team have worked with some of the most respected and admired brands in the retail, educational, real estate, financial, medical, digital convergence and wireless industries, helping them to craft everything from big picture strategy to tactical integration and world-class advertising campaigns.

She has led national and global strategic initiatives for Intel, Microsoft, Sony, Gateway, Stericycle, Viewsonic, Creighton Heider College of Business, Advanced Auto Parts, SAC Federal Credit Union, Borsheims Fine Jewelry, Nebraska Crossing Outlets and Miller Electric among others.

Her insatiable drive to find new and better ways to market is matched only by her reverence for understanding the customer. As a pioneer in the study of customers, she authored the O'Brien Voice of the Customer™ study, which has served as the foundation for numerous business success stories globally, nationally and locally.

Entrepreneurship runs in the family. Her grandfather opened the first color printer business west of the Mississippi and her father started and ran several businesses. Mary Ann regularly tagged along and soaked up every word of wisdom from her dad and grandpa that she could. She believes that you make your own luck and that there are no limits to what you can accomplish.

Mary Ann earned a world-class education in how to build marketing and advertising and how to connect with the customer during her tenure at Gateway. She worked in Mergers & Acquisitions, serving ultimately as Executive

Vice President of Marketing during a time when Gateway was one of the most recognized consumer brands in the world.

In the late 1990s, Mary Ann was recruited by a Silicon Valley software startup called Hotpaper.com that developed one of the first mobile apps in the world. As Vice President of Sales & Marketing, she negotiated the acquisition of the company by GoAmerica Communication and stayed on as Vice President of Sales & Marketing with the parent company.

Mary Ann lives by the mantra "Be Brave" so when the Chairman of Gateway called with a vision for technology convergence, multimedia content and the Digital Home, Mary Ann accepted the challenge and ran with it. She assembled a crack team of strategists, researchers and big-time creative talent and launched OBI Creative in 2001 with a pilot program for the Digital Home as their first project. It was a success.

An Iowa native, Mary Ann gravitated back to the Midwest and decided to put down roots in Omaha. She served for six years on the board of the Omaha Chamber, was the Chairperson of the Small Business Council for the Executive Committee, sits on the cabinet for the University of Nebraska Omaha Business School, and is on the Board of Trustees for Creighton University's Business Ethics Alliance as well as the Board Director for the Halo Institute. Most recently, Mary Ann led OBI to win a Stevie International Business Award for Company of the Year in the Advertising, Marketing and PR category (small) and won a Stevie Award for Women in Business, again for Company of the Year in Business Services (10+ employees). Mary Ann was selected as a "40 Under 40" winner by the *Midlands Business Journal* and regularly speaks to business groups on marketing, convergence, entrepreneurialism, omni-channel strategy and branding topics.