

MEET THE INFLUENCERS

A GALLERY OF THE BAY AREA'S MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN

HEATHER KERNAHAN

CEO OF NORTH AMERICA, HOTWIRE

Education:
MBA from Dominican University of California, B.A. from St. Mary's University

Corporate boards:
Board member of the PR Council

Community involvement:
SF-Marin Food Bank

Biggest accomplishment:
Aspiring to a CEO position and achieving it

Biggest challenge or setback:
My biggest challenges have been in roles where I have felt limited by the structure of the business or the values of the company. Every time I have felt frustrated it's been a chance for me to evaluate what I want to do next or how I want to contribute. Those moments, though maddening, have all led me to get closer to where I want to take my career next.

Inspirational mentor:

My mother, who was a single mother until she married my stepdad, taught me that life is 90% attitude and that I can do anything I set my mind too. Barbara Bates, also a winner of this award, inspired me to focus on people and to not ride the highs and lows. My friend and leadership executive, Steven Hoffman inspired me to ask for what I want – even if it sounds crazy.

Most passionate cause:
Issues of hunger and building skills to get people to work and women in leadership.

Covid-19 response:

The uncertainty of the economy and what lies ahead for the tech community has impacted our company the most. We've worked hard to reduce every expense we can so that we can keep our entire team working in the business. Instead of worrying about what I can't control, I've responded by discussing widely what we can control each day. ❌



HEATHER KESNER

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF BUSINESS AND CONSUMER BANKING MARKET LEADER, U.S. BANK

Education:
Youngstown State University and Western Governors University. While I was attending Youngstown State, I took a leave of absence to help my father's carpentry business stay afloat while he medically recovered. It's been 26 years now, but I am currently working to finally complete my degree.

Community involvement:
Habitat for Humanity, March of Dimes, American Cancer Society, Junior Achievement, Carry The Load, Toys for Tots, United Way, Dress For Success for Women

Biggest accomplishment:
The number of individuals I have helped really achieve the next level in their professional career. I've always enjoyed being a mentor, and have many mentors in my own life to thank as well.

Biggest challenge or setback:

The biggest challenge I faced is when my job was eliminated. It wasn't something I was anticipating in any way and it's a very humbling experience when you are part of a layoff. What I learned is that it really doesn't matter what your title is. We all have to help each other. I really didn't realize it, but I had created such a strong network in my industry that people really showed up to help me. I try to do the same thing today.

Inspirational mentor:

I had a manager about 20 years ago in Youngstown, Ohio, who taught me to think bigger, bigger than I ever thought. I really embraced that and that's how I got out of Youngstown and grew my career.

Most passionate cause:
Premature babies. I've had two premature children – one survived and one didn't. ❌

