

# CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS



## JAMI MOORE

President

### JEM Computers Inc.

Mt. Clemens

40 UNDER FORTY

**Biggest achievement:** Not having any small-business experience and taking over a family business with less than \$2 million in revenue and taking it to \$7 million despite ongoing troubles with the state economy.

**Current goal:** Finding ways to grow the business by holding her own against much bigger national competitors, such as IBM and Dell.

In 2000, then - Jami Miller was a manager in pharmaceutical sales and tired of the sales rat race. Her father, James, wanted to retire and was looking to sell his business, a reseller of computer equipment and provider of IT services.

Although Miller, who was married in August and is now Jami Moore, had no experience in running a business, it clicked: She'd take it over. Which was perhaps more of a leap than it might seem at first glance.

Her father founded JEM Computers in 1986, selling printer ribbons and backup storage media. Two years later, Moore, a college student, went to work for him. But he fired her for a lack of dedication and focus.

She's been focused ever since.

When she took the company over, it had less than \$2 million in sales. In 2008, revenue had grown to \$7.4 million, thanks to a change in focus by Moore.

As data storage centers have grown, with companies realizing the need to store crucial data off-site — so too have opportunities for companies to supply the vast amount of equipment the centers need.



That equipment runs the gamut from servers to the steel racks that hold them, to miles of cabling, to powerful cooling systems, to switches, to power strips. For example, JEM recently won a \$600,000 contract to provide just the power strips for a new University of Michigan data center.

"Nine years ago, I was lucky enough to not focus on auto. I took this business over at 30 and I thought, 'I can't go against this old-boy network.' What a blessing that turned out to be," she said.

This didn't stop her from eventually taking on the auto sector — and in 2008 getting a vendor ID from Ford Motor Co. to supply computer equipment.

After years of steady growth, JEM ran into the same economic turbulence in 2008 that affected everyone. Data centers require enormous capital expense, and with capital hard or impossible to come by, that market came to a standstill.

Moore says that there aren't many small players for her to compete with. But she said the big national players don't scare her. She said she just has to work harder to find suppliers the big boys have overlooked and are eager to have her business.

Or, as her favorite saying expresses it: "Who says the Chihuahua can't compete against the Great Dane?"