



## Lessons from the Lab

by Susan Goldsberry



When I started working in the cosmetic industry in the '80s, there was little to no outsourcing or transparency, and the industry was dominated mainly by "big players". Everyone worked in their own lane. Major companies had their own internal R&D laboratories and product development departments, and innovation was rarely outsourced. Today, the lines between the "lanes" are blurred and some might say that barriers have been completely eroded. Companies promote themselves to be "one-stop shops," and no matter the years of experience or level of accomplishment, everyone is now an "expert."

Small labs, such as Benchmark, have found a unique space in the industry – we work with big corporations and also with entrepreneurs, scientists, physicians, celebrities, and others who 30 years ago would not have been able to bring a product to market. Today, the spectrum of our clients spans the gamut and might include the inspired new mother who wants to create an all-natural baby line or a young, fresh-out-of-college entrepreneur with a great idea for a CBD line. It's these new customers that require our chemists to be able to "talk technical", and then an hour later speak in pure layman's terms about the benefits of stem cells, without using words such as "senescence". Today, more than ever, anyone with an idea, drive, and a small budget can enter the marketplace. While to some it may be a frustration, it's an exciting time to be in the industry! So how can a company survive the challenges of a rapidly-changing industry?

**Be willing to work with others.** Outsourcing today is very collaborative, and to be successful, collaboration must be on a high plane -- from the raw material suppliers to those who distribute the final product to the customer, and everyone in between. We all need to be vested in the success of a project. Because of technological advances,

our business processes must be elastic to meet the demands of a customer base that wants things instantaneously.

**Be steadfast in your commitment to safety.**

As an R&D and formulation laboratory, Benchmark receives a high number of inquiries from prospects that range from serious companies to visionaries, to the simply curious. The world seems to assume that everything can be done "on-demand" -- exactly what the customer wants, when the customer wants it. The pace at which we have to conduct business has changed drastically. In the past, the process for creating a product from concept to launch could take 18 to 24 months. This would be considered a standard and reasonable time frame. Today, clients want to be ready to launch in six to nine months. It's an unusual market where clients have suggested that they need to fail fast, so that they can succeed fast!

Formula turn-around time has become highly compressed, and there is so much pressure to find ways to accelerate safety and stability testing. My lifelong training has been to never shortcut safety testing and I find this request to break the rules very concerning and challenging. While we understand the need for speed to market, we must caution that true success is built on quality and a pathway that minimizes risk. Safety and product integrity must never be compromised, and these need to be taken seriously in order to build lasting success.

**Be multi-faceted and flexible.** It means really getting on board with your clients. At Benchmark, we have learned that in addition to continually developing our technical prowess, we must keep growing in other dimensions as well. As formulators, my team and I work behind the scenes to constantly create and innovate and support our clients' needs.

**Be a team player.** A great team to execute and deliver excellent service is essential to success. A company is only as good as its people – this cannot be overstated! At Benchmark, my dedicated team is the core to our success and little things matter in big ways to inspire best performance - we have innovation competitions, incentive programs, field trips, brainstorming sessions, and lots of "boba" breaks.

Finally, **love what you do!** I've always had a passion for science and beauty and feel so thankful to have found a career I love. I've had the immense fortune of working for companies that provided growth and advancement, a mentor who inspired me to strive for excellence, and many friendships along the way. It is an amazing journey and I'm grateful every day for the opportunities I've received.

To quote David Frost, "Don't aim for success if you want it; just do what you love and believe in, and it will come naturally." I can happily say that I feel as if I've never worked a day in my life; I've pursued my passion. I hope that many of you feel the same way!

A creative force behind many award-winning skin care and hair care formulas, **Susan Goldsberry** is the President/CEO of Benchmark Cosmetic Laboratories based in Irvine, CA. Founded in 2007, Benchmark is widely recognized as a leading R&D lab in the beauty industry, delivering cutting-edge technology and specialized formula development services. A graduate of UC Berkeley, Susan has been a distinguished innovator in the health and beauty industry for over 30 years.