



CASEY COOPER OF BOTANICALS INC., CHICAGO



VETERANS OFFER ADVICE

Leaders share tips on finding staff, planning ahead

BY BARBARA BALLINGER BUCHHOLZ

Women-owned businesses are growing strong. There are more of them, and they have more financial clout. However, despite such progress, most women have a long way to go to become major players and break into the \$1-million-revenue realm. They still face hurdles such as securing financing from sources beyond family and angel investors, broadening their networks, managing growing companies and accessing international markets. Five veteran business owners share their challenges and advice.

CASEY COOPER, 35

PRESIDENT, BOTANICALS, INC., CHICAGO

LETTING GO SO THAT HER STAFF CAN assume more responsibility is proving tough for Ms. Cooper. As her floral design business has grown to 12 full-timers, Ms. Cooper has learned she can't arrange every bouquet or meet with every customer.

She tries to stay out of the design studio periodically and to "keep her mouth shut" unless something goes awry. "We've had glitches, a lot based on communication gaps,

but we learn from our mistakes," she says.

Recently, she hired a manager with strong communication and organizational skills to set up new systems.

"When you start your business, think through a five-year plan and how big your company might get," she advises. "If it's going to grow bigger and you can't handle everything, lay the groundwork early for others to step in." ■