

**PROFESSIONAL  
OF THE WEEK**  
June 29, 2010



# Laurel Cavalluzzo

President, Madison Marketing Communications

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**BIRTHPLACE**

Huntington, NY

**SPOUSE/PARTNER**

Ken Cavalluzzo

**BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

Shorewood Hills

School PTO Committee Chair

**ORGANIZATIONS**

Madison Area Business Consultants

Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce

**EDUCATION**

University of Pennsylvania MBA

Marketing/Strategic Management 1997

Georgetown University BS

Marketing/Management 1992

**HOBBIES**

Equestrian, Hiking/Outdoors, Travel

*Laurel, tell us about your company, your responsibilities, and then, because it's a marketing enterprise, give us your quick "elevator speech" about what it is you do for clients.*

I started my marketing and communications firm in late 2005. I am the founder, owner, president, and business development executive for the firm — and I am 100% fully entrenched in every client project. My objective is to help companies and non-profits find ways to cost-effectively achieve their business objectives through communication efforts. I work with clients to uncover their opportunities, identify their challenges, and determine how to best measure the results so that improvements are continuously made.

*Who most influenced your desire to own your own firm?*

My parents, who are entrepreneurs. I watched them, learned from them, and have admired them since I can remember; there is nothing as inspiring as watching your own family members successfully create and grow their own entity. I have wanted to be "just like mom and dad" for as long as I can remember.

*And that meant wanting to be in business from a young age?*

Yes. I decided to try to sell my "artwork" to friends and family as a little kid to make some pocket change. I would set up a table with my "portfolio" on our street on Long Island, where I was born and lived until age 7. I wasn't much of an artist in those days, and was very fortunate that there were some people who did stop and look at my art, and some who purchased a piece here or there for \$0.10 a pop!

*Would you count that as your first official paycheck?*

I had so, so many jobs when I was young that I actually have a hard time remembering which was my first official "paycheck" ... but I believe it was for working as a farm hand, taking care of a neighbor's horses in central Virginia when I was a teenager.

*Horses?*

I grew up on a farm, grew up riding horses, so my first choice in work was to learn more about the horse business and learn more about horse care. I was paid minimum wage, and saved all my money in the bank, as I knew that the advanced education I planned for myself would be expensive.

*Sounds like you had big plans!*

I am one of those people who planned my educational future and career from a young age (remember, I had my parents as my inspiration). I wanted to start my own business and go into the world of communications. I also decided when I was young that I would get an MBA. I first thought it would be from U-Virginia's Darden School, as I grew up in Charlottesville, Virginia. But instead, I went up north to Philadelphia's Wharton School.

*If you now were going to be a mentor, who would it be—and what would your message be?*

I believe in making sure women know it is important to have balance in their life, and this is a message I'd like to pass on. It's difficult to "have it all" — meaning a career,

children, a family life, plus the pursuit of other personal interests — but despite the cliché, you can “have it all” with planning, prioritization, supportive friends and family, and a simple yet heartfelt love of life. I’ve found that enjoying everything I do each day gives me the energy, drive and determination to reach for the stars. I hope that other women who have multi-faceted lives can do the same.

*So what has been your highest star?*

Moving to Madison, where I had no roots or ties, and successfully launching a business that is thriving 4-plus years after I founded it is truly a career highlight. I had an idea for a business. I met people after moving to Madison, and gained opportunities to prove myself. I established a good reputation and met more people and came up with more ideas for my business...and here I am today, continuing and growing the cycle.

*What brought you to Madison?*

My husband and I were most recently—five years ago—raising children and holding demanding jobs in the Washington, D.C. area. My husband had an opportunity to leave his job as a professor at Georgetown University and start a new career in investment management; this was the catalyst for me to leave corporate America and start up my own business.

*Quite a change in venue?*

We were thrilled to leave the hustle and bustle of a major metropolitan area and come to a wonderful family town. We didn’t know many people when we arrived; we are happy to say we’ve met some amazing people here and have wonderful friends in Madison. We love it here. Raising three young children in Madison is fabulous.

*What do you do for fun?*

I greatly enjoy all athletic endeavors, and enjoy going to the gym, hiking, skiing and biking outdoors. But my true passion—back to my early days again—is riding horses. I had to take a long hiatus from the sport for a variety of reasons, but have recently found a way to incorporate it back in my life. The discipline I participate in is show jumping—

one of the only Olympic sports where men and women go head-to-head competing against each other! I have always thought this was especially cool about equestrian sports.

*Enjoy travel? Have a favorite place to go?*

I find traveling to any new part of the U.S. or the world incredibly exciting. I love learning about different cultures and different ways of living—you can certainly even see that by traveling across the state of Wisconsin! But a favorite place is Italy, where my family and my husband’s family has roots—yes, my last name gives this away! We really look forward to someday soon taking our children to Italy; they have learned so much about their heritage and would like to see the actual place “where it all began” for them.

*Find time for reading? Can you share a recent title?*

I recently read *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier which is a mystery, and thriller, a romance...and a beautifully written classic that stands the test of time. It also was made into a Hitchcock movie, an absolutely brilliant one. As a Hitchcock fan, that makes this book even more special.

*Is there another character—television, politics, movies, sports, etc.—who also stands out for you?*

I have incredible respect for Dana Torres. As someone who remains active in sports and loves the thrill of competition, I greatly admire Dana for remaining at the elite level of her sport at an age when many, many people said she couldn’t do it. Of course, I am operating under the assumption Dana has played by the rules. There is no reason for me to think she hasn’t.

*Laurel, now that we’ve gotten to know you better personally, let’s go back to business for just a moment. What is a long-range goal that you’d like to achieve before leaving your company or industry?*

There are so many non-profit organizations which have extremely limited budgets for professional communications support (which they truly need!). I’d very much like to find ways to incorporate more pro-bono work into my business, as there are some causes I feel strongly in that I’d like to help.

*Let’s say you’re given a chance to mentor someone in your field about how to be successful. What do you read to help keep you current in your field, and what other hints would you suggest?*

With today’s technology, I can learn so much right at my desk. I subscribe to myriad marketing publications and resources, and view several webinars a week on emerging marketing trends, which, come to think of it, is the entire field of marketing—it is evolving non-stop!. I also get out to seminars in Madison put on by various organizations. These serve a dual purpose—I have a chance to meet new people during networking time and learn from talking with them, plus I learn from the topic discussed during the seminar. Finally, I meet and talk to as many people as I can in my field. I learn something new every time I strike up a conversation.

*Great! And now that we’ve come to the end of our conversation with you, here’s our final question. Can you list three words that you think best describe you?*

Persistent, resourceful, and honest. ■

*Thanks to Laurel Cavalluzzo for her great answers! If you were answering our questions in your mind as you read her responses, write them down and send them to us! You never know when we’ll ask you to be featured in an Professional of the Week profile! But to be asked, you first need to be registered in our Professional Directory — do it today at [IBMadison.com/pd](http://IBMadison.com/pd)!*