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## SundayBusiness

### THE BOSS

## The Road to the Cure

**A**T 8 o'clock most nights, my four siblings and I would gather around the TV. My dad was director of advertising for CBS in the early 1960s, and it was our family pastime to pick apart the ads on the different channels.

My family lived in Westport, Conn., hometown of Paul Newman. He became my hero, first as an actor and then as a philanthropic innovator with his Newman's Own company. I didn't know I'd grow up to emulate him (well, the philanthropy part, at least, not the part about working with Robert Redford).

I had a keen interest in marketing from those early days watching TV ads, and I studied business and computers in college. After graduating, I worked for a variety of companies focusing on consumer behavior. I analyzed trends shaping phone purchases. I marketed Rice-A-Roni. I landed at Microsoft in 1984 as a product manager, when the company was still small. On Fridays, we had pizza with Bill Gates.

Before working at Microsoft, I created a lot of presentations -- and like everyone else at the time, I hand-cut graphs and glued them onto paper, sent the text to the typing pool and made glass slides to project on the wall. At the same time, I experimented with the latest computer technologies, figuring out how I could use them to analyze and present data.

At Microsoft, I started thinking about the painstaking processes I had used for those presentations. I wrote and presented a proposal to Bill Gates for a new piece of software for the personal computer, specifically to help people create presentations without all the scissors and paper.

That memo is now in the Microsoft archives because it helped lead the way to Microsoft Power Point. So I guess you can either thank me or blame me for that!

While I was enjoying my career, can-

*As told to Julie Weed.*



#### TRISH MAY

*Founder and C.E.O.,  
Athena Partners,  
Seattle*

**AGE**  
56

**HOBBY**  
Running

**FAVORITE VACATION**  
Anywhere near  
water.

cer unfortunately was also a big part of my life. My father died from cancer in 1983, and it took my mom's life in 1993. So when I received a diagnosis of breast cancer at 39, I thought I would die of it as well.

While I was struggling with my illness, I saw an incredible emotional connection among people who wanted to help. Still weak from my final chemotherapy, I entered and struggled to finish a 10k breast-cancer run. I limped along, bald under my bright pink cap. Crowds of strangers along the race route cheered for me, and their energy buoyed me across the finish line.

I was fortunate. My cancer was detected early, and the treatment was a success. I have been cancer-free since.

From that time, I decided to be part of the cure. I turned to the energy of that crowd, the connection of people who wanted to help. I also turned to the philanthropic model of my hero, Paul Newman. I left Microsoft 10 years ago and set out to create a product line that would provide a continuing source of funding and inspiration to others to help find a cure for women's cancers.

My company, Athena Partners, creates products like bottled water and chocolates, and 100 percent of net profits go to cancer research and education. Our corporate symbol, Athena, is the Greek goddess of wisdom and war, and she's a symbol of battling cancer in an intelligent, strategic way.

So now I've merged my two passions -- business and finding a cure. For customers buying Athena products is a way of supporting a cause. Business partners like Sysco, Alaska Airlines and Costco can demonstrate their social responsibility by offering my products.

There's so much to be done to reach my goal of donating \$1 million every year to eradicate cancer. But when things are tough, and in this economic climate they are, I think back to the crowds cheering for the little bald gal in the pink cap, and I keep on going. □