



Tony Rinaldo

**Susan Loconto Penta '86** has been an entrepreneur nearly all her life. "From an early age, I understood that if I wanted something, I had better earn the money to buy it," she says. As a high school student, Penta babysat for neighbors and tutored children in math. And while studying engineering at WPI, she cobbled together a 40-hour work week typing students' papers, waiting tables at local restaurants, and helping out in the university's athletic office. Over the summers, she worked two jobs to make ends meet.

"My parents taught me to be independent, to chart my own course," says Penta, a founding partner with the successful Cambridge-based MIDIOR Consulting. "I like to be in control of my own destiny."

As cartographer of her own life, Penta enjoys working for herself. In her first job out of London's CASS Business School, she worked for product developer IDEA Associates, where she says, "I was allowed to be the CEO of a product. This was a big deal for me."

At IDEA, Penta also met Michael Goldberger, who became her business partner when the two started MODA

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Systems in 1991. The wireless communication software company did well at first. "But we were too early to market," she says. In 1995, they sold the source code licenses to customers and closed up shop.

A year later, following the birth of her second child, Penta knew she needed to get back to work. When a colleague asked if she would consult on a project, she called on Goldberger for help. Before she knew it, she was back in business for herself. "Once an entrepreneur, always an entrepreneur," she says with a laugh. "It's in your blood, it's how you operate."

Through MIDIOR, Penta helps others operate like entrepreneurs, even in large corporations. "Our approach is grounded in the entrepreneurial perspective," she says of the business and technology consulting firm. "We use that perspective, combined with our engineering training, to unlock the power that products can have in the marketplace."

MIDIOR's long client list includes Gerber Scientific, Intel Corporation, and State Street Corporation. "We help these big companies find their entrepreneurs, and put them in the right roles," says Penta, who was named one of *Boston Business Journal's* "40 Under 40" in 2002.

Penta also assists nonprofit organizations as they refine their missions and goals. She serves as chair of Schools for Children, an East Coast nonprofit that owns three schools and one educational program. She is treasurer of the Center for Women and Enterprise and treasurer of the Belmont Day School. "I try to cultivate clarity of vision for the boards I work with," Penta says. "It's important to tie the vision to practical objectives. So I help them create plans and measure themselves against those plans."

At WPI, Penta was instrumental in forming the Collaborative for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and now serves on its advisory board. "I believe in WPI, and understand how valuable this cross-disciplinary program is for both the students and the school," she says.

As an alumna with strong ties to WPI and as an executive who spends much of her time guiding organizations through competitive markets, Penta feels strongly that the university should continue to differentiate itself. "WPI's egalitarian culture is excellent," she says. "We should brag about it."