The Miami Herald

BALANCING ACT

CARL JUSTE/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**SHE'S BALANCED:** In her role at the helm of Seabourn Cruise Line, Deborah Natansohn says she has learned to delegate and prioritize to manage the company's long-term growth.

# AT THE HELM

**A survey of leaders of Florida's largest women-run businesses shows a majority are satisfied with the amount of time they spend on work and life.**

Deborah Natansohn, president of Seabourn Cruise Line, dismisses any notion that she is a workaholic. Natansohn, 53, broke the glass ceiling in her industry as the first woman to preside over a cruise line in the United States. But as for the "all-consumed-in-her-work" stereotype, she says it doesn't apply.

A new survey of the leaders of Florida's largest women-run businesses released today shows a majority — 51 percent — are satisfied with the amount of time they spend on work and their personal life.

"I think that debunks a lot of myths about women executives," Natansohn says. "These leaders felt they had a lot of balance in their lives."

The survey, the first of its kind in Florida, includes the responses of 161 women who lead Florida companies with revenue of more than $3 million. Florida International University's Center for Leadership and The Commonwealth Institute South Florida compiled and analyzed the responses, which give a glimpse into the career goals, business challenges and personal lives of women entrepreneurs and top executives. These women employ more than 30,000 people, and their companies contribute more than $12 billion to the state economy.

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The survey shows most of these women have not sacrificed family to preside over expanding businesses. Most keep reasonable work schedules, logging an average of nine hours a day at work. And, almost half limit their travel to only a few times a

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## IN CHARGE

According to a survey by FIU and the Commonwealth Institute South Florida, here's how Florida's women executives stand:

**70%** founded the company

**85%** own a controlling interest

**88%** attended college

**20%** hold a master's degree

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# Women execs feeling fulfilled

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year.

One respondent, Victoria Villalba, owner of Victoria & Associates Career Services in Miami, works a five-day week and says balance is something she has improved upon.

"At the beginning, as a new entrepreneur, I didn't have a balance," Villalba says. "I've had some bumps in my personal life, some health scares that have allowed me to reprioritize, and now I work 50 hours a week, but I do have balance."

As Villalba mentors female employees, she encourages them to keep balance in their lives, too.

The survey shows the average age of women leaders in our state is 51, an age Natansohn says factors into the findings.

### BETTER WITH AGE

"As the women got older, they felt they had even more balance," Natansohn says. "I think it proves these women have good leadership qualities."

In her role at the cruise line helm, Natansohn has learned to delegate and prioritize in order to manage long-term growth. "I think that's what separates those that rise to the top," she says.

In another intriguing finding, the survey details the ambitious drive of these women.

Almost 60 percent aspired early on to be CEOs or presidents or to own their own business. And 91 percent expect to increase revenue over the next two years.

What's behind this ambition? Role models, mentors and other women acting as advisors.

Most of these women had mothers who worked for pay outside the home, the survey shows.

### MENTORS CRUCIAL

Almost all found mentors important to their professional development. And, while most of their companies lack corporate boards, those that do stock them with female board members. Respondents that had corporate boards reported that more than 60 percent of board members were female.

"I think women look to each other for opinions," said Gloria Rodriguez, president of Kramer Laboratories in Miami. "They feel comfortable going to other females for advice."

Jodi Cross, director of operations for The Commonwealth Institute South Florida, says this benchmark survey shows Florida has a high percentage of female entrepreneurs in a variety of industries — 70 percent started their businesses.

"I don't know the reasons why so many women want to strike out on their own as entrepreneurs, but there is a lot of that spirit down here," Cross said.

Despite strong performances and optimistic predictions for the future, these women leaders cite common challenges — hiring staff and building a solid management team.

"I think the women in our state have made great strides," said Joyce Elam, executive dean of FIU's College of Business Administration, which helped compile the survey. "And there's still a lot of potential."

SMART BOX

**WOMEN LEADERS SHOW STRONG COMPANY INVOLVEMENT**

- Almost 70 percent of these women started the business themselves.
- All of the women leaders hold the top positions and have at least 85 percent controlling interest stake.
- At firms with corporate boards, more than 60 percent of the board members were female.

**WOMEN LEADERS ARE SELF-MOTIVATED AND WELL EDUCATED**

- Almost 60 percent aspired early on to be CEOs or presidents or to own their own companies.
- About 88 percent attended college and had bachelor's degrees; about 20 percent had master's degrees.

**WOMEN LEADERS BALANCE THEIR CAREERS AND FAMILY LIFE**

- The average age of women leaders surveyed was 51 years old.
- 61 percent are currently married.
- 74 percent work more than 40 hours a week and 10 percent work more than 60.
- Half of the women are satisfied with the amount of time they spend on personal affairs and work.

Source: Florida's Women-Led Businesses, 2006, survey conducted by The Center for Leadership at FIU in partnership with The Commonwealth Institute South Florida.