

The 2011 Great WOMEN of GAMING

Perseverance ♦ Drive ♣ Commitment ♥ Mentorship ♠ Professionalism

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This year, 11 amazing women are honored as CEM's 2011 Great Women of Gaming. Due to a deadlock decision from the judging panel in one category, there were six Proven Leaders and five Rising Stars chosen as this year's award winners.

Now in its seventh year, the awards were broken down into two categories: Proven Leaders and Rising Stars. To qualify as a Proven Leader, candidates must have worked in the gaming industry for a minimum of 10 years and have been in their current position for at least one year. They must also work for a gaming industry company and hold a position of director or higher, having demonstrated exceptional achievement in at least three of the following areas: 1) ability to go above and beyond job responsibilities; 2) commitment to company and co-workers; 3) contributions to the industry as a whole; 4) commitment to mentoring; and 5) strong overall life balance.

To qualify as a Rising Star, candidates must have worked in the gaming industry for a minimum of three years and have been in their current position for at least one year. They must also work for a gaming industry company and hold a position of manager or higher, having demonstrated exceptional achievement in at least three of the following areas: 1) ability to go above and beyond job responsibilities; 2) commitment to company and co-workers; 3)

contributions to the industry as a whole; 4) commitment to mentoring; and 5) strong overall life balance.

The judging committee, made up of former Great Women of Gaming award winners and other industry leaders, had the tough task of evaluating a large pool of extremely talented and accomplished women. They included: Diana Bennett, CEO, Paragon Gaming; Dona Cassese, vice president advertising & communications, Aristocrat Technologies; Christie Eickelman, senior director of worldwide marketing, Gaming Laboratories International; Jan Jones, executive VP government and corporate communications, Caesars Entertainment Corp.; Candace Lucas, former executive director of marketing operations, WMS Gaming; Courtney Muller, senior vice president, Global Gaming Expo, Reed Exhibitions; Debra Nutton, senior vice president of casino operations and marketing, MGM Grand Las Vegas; Valerie Red-Horse, president, Red-Horse Financial Group; Lynn "Nay" Valbuena, former vice chairwoman, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians; and Jean Venneman, vice president of product management, Bally Technologies.

On the following pages, you will see who was selected as winners in each category, including why they were selected and what incredible things they've done for the industry. They are all so inspiring, and we're excited to share their stories with you.

Kimberly Arnold

Chief Operating Officer
The Innovation Group

Kimberly Arnold aims to never burn a bridge. Evidence of her character, the chief operating officer for The Innovation Group says, "You just never know who you'll cross back with in life." And that philosophy has served her well—Arnold has known some of her colleagues since she set foot in the industry 15 years ago. With her positive attitude, graceful approach to business and infectious laugh, it's no wonder she's a Rising Star.

Arnold's career in the gaming industry began by chance. She was brought into the design/build sector of the industry by a recruiter after college. "I'd say the industry found me," she said. Her first position in gaming was with WorthGroup Architects (WorthGroup). Starting as the manager of business development, Arnold honed her skills and moved through the ranks. At the time of her departure 10 years later, she was a vice president, minority owner, partner and member of the firm's board. "I'm proud that I've been able to step up and find success in leadership roles for such technically diverse firms," she said.

Through her work at WorthGroup, Arnold met Steve Rittvo, principal and founder of The Innovation Group. "He was one of my first contacts in the industry," she explained. Keeping in touch throughout the years, Rittvo told Arnold to let him know when she was ready for a change. "And, here I am, at The Innovation Group," she said.

Her first position at The Innovation Group was VP of operations, and now, four years later, she is a partner and the chief operating officer. "The first thing that drew me to The Innovation Group was the partners, and the second was the firm's ability to recognize opportunities and grow vertically to serve those needs and our client base," Arnold explained. Starting as an engineering and urban planning firm in New Orleans, The Innovation Group evolved to provide financial, management, investment banking, development, marketing and diversification advisory services worldwide. "When you have that type of culture and growth, it inherently presents opportunities for the firm and employees. That inspires and motivates me," Arnold said. In her role as COO, her task is to support that diversity and growth internally and externally. "It forces you to constantly be rethinking how to address all those aspects. For me, that's a rewarding experience."

Michael Soll, who nominated Arnold, says she fits well in her role as COO. "She is always thinking ahead, strategically, about our organizational and quality control needs," he said. "She has had a significant impact on our recovering business position coming out of the last few difficult years for the industry."

Also a single mother of fraternal twin toddlers, one boy and one girl, balancing life and career is challenging and rewarding for Arnold. With one special needs child—her daughter has Down

syndrome—and one typical 4-year-old, Arnold is constantly juggling work with the demands of maximizing opportunities and potential for both of her kids, including therapy and medical appointments for her daughter. Relying on her family and workplace, she says she feels lucky to have a huge support network. "I couldn't do what I do without their help," Arnold said. "I have a high-pressure job, but when it comes down to prioritizing, if something happens in my family, they [The Innovation Group partners] kick me out the door and tell me to focus on my family.

That's an enviable culture, and it says a lot about who I work with."

And, those she works with have a lot to say about her. Rittvo, who also nominated Arnold, calls her a "force" that is shaping the industry. Noting her role in The Innovation Group's efforts to move its brick-and-mortar industry into the online sector, he says she is actively involved in working directly with more than eight Native American tribes to develop i-gaming strategies and implementation plans. "She's increasingly looked to by tribes as a source of clear and valued information as they consider this option," he explained.

Soll notes her positive attitude under pressure from her all-male partners. "She delivers for our company without letting the nuances of those pressures stand in her way," he said.

Arnold learned important leadership traits from who she calls "remarkable

men." Along with acknowledging her father and current partners, she was also quick to reference her former boss and partner at WorthGroup, Doug Worth, as one of those professional mentors. She says he has an amazing business savvy and made a point to know every aspect of his business and every department head he hired. "He was constantly pushing us, as emerging leaders, to elevate it to the next level," she explained. Worth was supportive of her transition to The Innovation Group, and Arnold still looks to him for advice.

People like Worth are why, according to Arnold, she has stayed in the industry. "I've had the opportunity to work with some brilliant and creative people," she said. Beyond the magnificent minds of the industry, Arnold revels in the diversity of products, the entertainment draw, the growth and constant evolution.

And, people like Arnold are why CEM puts on this award series every year. "Kim represents a Great Woman in Gaming because of the way she represents the industry, represents herself, and celebrates, unabashedly, her womanhood," Soll commented.

"Kim Arnold has been a behind-the-scenes star in the gaming industry. She is now fully upfront and is a leader who deserves recognition," Rittvo added. We have no doubt that she'll continue to shine for years to come. AL

