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# BUSINESS connect

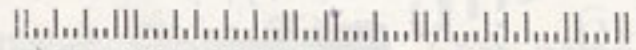
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point of view

# MARGO PROVOST



**By Kathryn Peterson**



## Chairman, Log Haven Restaurant Group

Margo Provost is a true entrepreneur. She gave up a successful career as a health care and technology executive to renovate a Utah landmark. The owner and operator of Log Haven shares her passion, her grueling journey into the restaurant business and her advice to women entrepreneurs.



**Business Connect:** Why is Log Haven considered a Utah landmark?

**Margo Provost:** It's more than just a 220-seat restaurant or banquet location. L.F. Rains, a member of the Metropolitan Opera, originally built it as an anniversary present in 1920. In 1958, it was converted into a restaurant and became locally famous for weddings and its Sunday Hunt Brunch. But then, bankrupt and slated for demolition due to neglect and disrepair, Log Haven closed its doors in 1993 for what many thought would be the final time. In April 1994, I purchased the property and, against the advice of successful local restaurateurs, I chose to restore, renovate and reopen Log Haven. I found myself acting as financier, project manager and general manager simultaneously.

**BC:** What were you doing before you purchased Log Haven?

**MP:** I spent my entire professional life in health care, information technology and strategic planning. I served as an administrator for Ohio State University Medical Center, then moved on to Control Data Corporation where I helped open the California market for their health care division and served as a sales and marketing rep for the western 26 states. I later became chief information officer and vice president of corporate operations at FHP International, a California based HMO. In 1991, I retired from corporate life and moved back to consulting. I moved to Utah and wanted to work locally. Unfortunately, I was unable to find employment in my field of expertise and was dismayed at the lack of high-profile jobs for women. After consulting for some time throughout the United States, my husband and I tired of our time apart and began to look for options that would allow us to be together. Hence, I purchased Log Haven.

**BC:** How was the transition from the health care to the hospitality industry?

**MP:** The skills I honed in the corporate world are also integral to running a successful restaurant. Strategic planning, financial and cash flow management, the ability to hire and fire knowledgeably, as well as to reward and motivate employees have all enabled me to run a successful enterprise. I admit, though, to a tendency to be very cautious and conservative in my approach to finances after learning hard lessons from the health care industry. My approach to the business is proactive, running daily numbers for all management personnel so that adjustments can be made right away, rather than two months down the road. I do not like to play catch-up.

**BC:** What obstacles did you face as you sought to reclaim Log Haven?

**MP:** The first two years of life at Log Haven Restaurant was, at best, a roller coaster ride. But once committed to this endeavor, I felt I had no choice but to make it work — no matter what it took. And then if I failed, so be it. In 1994, I liquidated my assets and dissolved my significant retirement fund to cover the bills while I awaited my financing. Well, I persevered. I recruited a superstar chef, refinanced Log Haven's property and successfully paid off all loans and, yes, survived a two-year IRS audit. These obstacles felt daunting, but obstacles are encountered every day when one runs a business. I try to face the big and the small, one at a time.

**BC:** What's motivated you most to make this project work?

**MP:** I was diagnosed with cancer several years ago and underwent major surgery. A life-threatening illness forces us to look at how we are spending our time. I was determined to spend what could have been the last months of my life making Log Haven a success and training new women entrepreneurs. I love business and I love working with other women who want to achieve their own success through the business world.

**BC:** What advice would you give to women entrepreneurs?

**MP:** So many women don't believe they can do it on their own. They rely on others to carry them through life and take care of them. I want everyone to know that relying on someone else is an even scarier place to be than accepting the responsibility and challenge to take care of yourself!

**BC:** What do you love to do when you aren't at work?

**MP:** I love jazz music. I love wining and dining with witty, intelligent friends and colleagues. I love traveling the world and seeing everyday life through other perspectives. I love reading and needlework and my animals. I love the open road in my RV where there are no schedules or destinations — every moment is a surprise. ●