Founders’ Day
Sandra L. Kurtzig
Chairman of the Board, CEO, and President
ASK Computer Systems, Inc.

In 1972, the chief executive of a Silicon Valley start-up firm asked Sandra Kurtzig to write a computer program to track inventory for his manufacturing company. Perceiving this as a golden opportunity, she left her sales job at General Electric to start her own custom-programming business.

To set up an office in the second bedroom of her apartment, Kurtzig used $2,000 in savings to rent a computer time-sharing terminal and buy a desk, chair, and filing cabinet. At the age of 24, Sandra Kurtzig, Silicon Valley's leading female CEO founded ASK Computer Systems, Inc. Today she jokes, “In an area where garage start-ups like Hewlett-Packard and Apple were the norm, I couldn't even afford the garage.”

She decided at an early stage to focus exclusively on manufacturing companies. “From my experience selling computer time-sharing services for G.E., I knew the manufacturing market and understood its potential. I saw a critical lack of software for the manufacturers seeking to computerize their operation and decided to fill that need.”
Paul Fireman
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Reebok International Ltd.

In 1979, Paul Fireman acquired the rights to distribute running shoes in the United States for a small, high-quality manufacturer of custom-made track shoes. Fireman recognized the potential of the century-old J.W. Foster & Sons and decided to take a risk on the Bolton, England company.

Three years later, the running shoes were doing a modest business. Fireman noted an emerging trend on the horizon -- aerobic fitness. He introduced the first aerobic shoe in the United States and quickly followed with a full line of garment leather aerobic shoes in a spectrum of fashion colors.

Fireman considers education to be a vital aspect of the future. "What I hope we can instill is motivation. I believe that the way you're going to inspire people is by getting them to understand that there is opportunity and by providing an atmosphere where achievement is encouraged." By turning his company into the largest and most successful designer, developer, and marketer of high-quality athletic and casual footwear and apparel in the country, Paul Fireman has certainly taken full advantage of the opportunities that have been presented to him.
Spring Weekend