

Lisa Warner PICKRUM

Executive Vice President • RLJ-McLarty-Landers Automotive • Age 40

Why did you want to work in the auto industry? I run a holding company, and the chairman of our company wanted to go into business with Mack McLarty, who ran McLarty-Landers. So we actually bought the majority ownership of their operations in 2007. So I landed in the automotive industry.

First automotive job: In 2007. It's what I do now. I'm on the acquisition-business development side, so I represent RLJ in buying dealerships. The reason we went into partnership with McLarty was to grow their business. They had nine or 10 dealerships, and now we have 24, including a Harley-Davidson dealership. It was a tough time in automotive, but it also made for lots of good deals.

Proudest professional achievement: Within the auto industry, I would have to say the last three years of acquisitions — making ones that have become profitable quickly. We took quite a few chances in this market, and — knock on wood — we have not had any that just haven't worked yet.

Current challenge at work: RLJ is a minority organization, an African-American company. One of my goals and challenges has been to increase diversity in general within our dealership body, our general managers and other persons in management. For me, that also means women. My greatest challenge now is finding a female general manager. We do not currently have one. Part of the challenge, let's be fair, is the general manager slot is one that takes a lot of time sacrifice, particularly at times when people like us need to be at soccer or doing things with the family. That doesn't mean it can't be done.

Why does the auto industry seem like a difficult environment for female executives? Historically, women broke into management later than in some other industries, so I think that has something to do with it. Two, in order for women to succeed, they've got to have mentors, and we need to do a better job as women in the industry in getting mentors.

On driving: I am teased in our organization as being maybe the best executive and the worst driver. When we went to buy the Harley dealership, the officers and directors had to get a motorcycle license. We have a training school that was part of this Harley dealership that we bought. I actually wrecked a bike in a parking lot, but I did finish my test and get certified with a dislocated shoulder. At least I am persistent. I'm fine, but I don't think I'll be buying a bike anytime soon.

What you do to relax: Hang out with my kids, two boys, who are soccer and basketball maniacs. When I'm not doing that, I run marathons. This year, I'm running three, which is the most I've run in one year.



— Amy Wilson
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