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Radio's Joseph named industry 'trailblazer'

By Mike Beggs

Mississauga's Ky Joseph was among the artists, and radio types to be honoured at the recent Canadian Music Week, in Toronto.

On March 7, she was presented with the Rosalie Award, which honours trailblazing women in Canadian broadcasting, at the sixth annual Women In Broadcasting Breakfast at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel.



"There's no secret. It's hard work. It's loving what you do."

This marks only the latest feather in the cap for Joseph, who, in just 13 years has gone from unpaid intern to executive vice president of sales, and shareholder with the Toronto-based Evanov Group, one of Canada's leading independent radio broadcasters.

"It was an honour, and I'm so appreciative to be acknowledged with the past winners," she says. "A trailblazer award is amazing. I never thought of myself (as that)."

Liz Janik, co-producer of the Breakfast says, "Joseph is a true inspiration to all women on the business side of broadcasting,"

"She's extremely talented, strategic, and focused."

The Montreal native studied Journalism at Concordia University. She moved to Toronto in the mid-Nineties to write for the TV show "RV Vacations", while remaining a airline flight attendant/director, three days a week. By chance, she bought a house across the road from Evanov Group CEO Bill Evanov, and soon became a junior sales rep with CIDC (Z103), his fledgling entry into Toronto's Contemporary Hits Radio market.

For this high-energy business, she turned out to be a natural.

"I was a coffee fetcher (starting out), but I was very keen to learn," she recalls.

"There's no secret. It's hard work. It's loving what you do."

She became CIDC's top sales producer, setting a precedent by selling more than \$1 million in 1998 -- between Z103, The

Jewel 88.5 (Easy Listening), and CIAO AM 530 (multilingual radio). By 2000, she was general sales manager; and a year later she became one of the youngest female executive vice presidents in Canadian broadcasting history.

Over the past 13 years, she has seen a generation of young listeners grow up with Z103, which has successfully taken on the major players within Toronto's Contemporary Hits Radio market – by, "programming from the street up."

"We're very different from the corporate broadcasters, because we're independently owned. We listen to our audience, as opposed to listening to consultants. And we program to that," she says.

"While the big money is going down the middle after the 25 to 55 demographic, we've been very successful going to the niches – like young people in their early 20's – because you can't be all things to all people."

The Evanov Group now owns six stations. And this year, it's applying for another 11 licenses!

"We're kind of like the little engine that could," she continues. "It's amazing. We're growing in leaps and bounds."

In 2003, Joseph approached Evanov with the idea of including her as a co-applicant in any future radio license applications.

"I said you should put me in as a shareholder, because I'm a woman, and (the CRTC is) always look for diversity," she relates. "We won our first application, and we kept going."

In what is still a "male-dominated industry", she's now a shareholder in CKHZ-FM in Halifax (CHR), CJWL-FM (The Jewel) in Ottawa, and CKHK FM (The Jewel) in Hawkesbury, Ont. (along with fellow female vice president Carmela Laurignano).

"Since I've been a shareholder, I've seen two other female broadcasters included in applications as owners," she enthuses. "I'd venture to say, you will see women applying for licenses in front of the CRTC. And I may be one of them."

Joseph has done this while juggling the care of her three-year-old daughter Reine. As an executive v.p. overseeing 100's of staffers, her job description includes racking up the air miles.

"My daughter was on 27 flights before she was 2. I refused to travel (without her)," she says. "That's the toughest thing about being a woman in business, is being able to balance your family and career."

Joseph is also a member of Canadian Women In Communications, sits as a board member on the Humber College Advisory Council for Media Studies, has been named "Community Liason" for Etobicoke General Hospital's Perinatal Bereavement Program, and is the founder of Everlasting Angels (a not-for-profit group dedicated to creating tools and literature to help women work through the grief of losing a baby).

Since winning the award, she has seen a spike in calls for public speaking. And she's working on her second book – on personal branding in business.

"It's a self-help book to achieve business success," she adds, "because in business, at the end of the day you are the product."

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