



# 'THAT'S GREAT PR'

## Borshoff Named Small Business of the Year

By Matt Ottinger

For anyone in the orbit of the communications and public relations worlds in central Indiana, the Borshoff name is widely recognized. But many may not know the extent of the company's history and impact.

For instance, it was founded in 1984 by Myra Borshoff during a time when only 3.5% of businesses in the U.S. were women owned. A trailblazer for women entrepreneurs in Indiana, she built the firm to be a prominent business and model for other women-owned ventures.

CEO and partner Katherine Coble reflects on how clients and the industry have changed through the years.

"It's been a great evolution in terms of we have terrific clients and have throughout our history, but now it feels like clients and the industry, everybody is far more versed in terms of what public relations, marketing and advertising are – or at least what they think they are – and are seeking very specific kinds of help," she clarifies. "It used to be that people came and kind of generally needed help. And now we are a lot more specialized in terms of the people we hire. We're a lot more specialized in terms of the work that we deliver."

Today, Borshoff is an integrated marketing and communications agency, offering services in advertising, branding, creative, digital, paid media, PR, video production and internet-related work.

The fruits of its efforts have not just been satisfied clients, but a host of awards that include Emmys, advertising and communications awards, prestigious speaking spots, being named as *IBJ* Women of Influence, Best Places

to Work in Indiana accolades and more.

And now it can add another nod as Borshoff was recently recognized by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce as its 2026 TikTok Small Business of the Year.

### Entrepreneurial spirit

Consulting partner Karen Alter is a former Borshoff CEO and has been at the company for nearly 30 years. She intends to retire this



Collaboration is key as Borshoff's "Shoffers" enjoy working with a variety of clients in different industries.

summer and recalls her initial impressions after being encouraged to draft proposals for new ideas and plans shortly after she started.

“It was very much an entrepreneurial spirit,” Alter reflects. “Even if you weren’t yet an owner, and I didn’t really at the time have aspiration to be an owner, I feel like just that energy and that spirit of our predecessors and the culture they built really encouraged us to bring our ideas forth and have a voice.”

She emphasizes that “carrying that torch” has been a focus. Alter also points to fostering representation, which she believes is an important sentiment for a women business enterprise (WBE).

“I think as a WBE, we will have that empathy and that caring atmosphere for our team and our clients and our partners,” Alter praises. “That’s just infused and that’s why I’ve stayed so long and poured my heart and soul into this place.”

Furthermore, to ensure team engagement, Borshoff created a “belonging” committee, comprised of volunteers from each department of the agency who meet monthly and discuss significant cultural happenings inside and outside the agency that could affect employees’ sense of belonging at work.

The participants named the committee the “Shircle” (as in the “Shoff Circle”). The Shircle has helped lead all-staff fireside chats on issues like mental health awareness, past experiences and disability awareness, and has coordinated yoga sessions at lunchtime on its rooftop space.

## External outreach

Borshoff takes pride in being a central Indiana firm. That’s evident in how its staff is encouraged to give back.

For more than 15 years, Borshoff team members have participated in an annual Day of Service and in 2025, helped pack meals for hungry families and Burmese refugees at the Burmese American Community Institute. Furthermore, each year Borshoff supports the United Way of Central Indiana’s annual campaign. In addition, employees serve on boards and as members of many Indiana organizations, including the Indy Arts Council, Indy Chamber, Indiana Chamber of Commerce, Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee, Women’s Fund of Central Indiana, Central Indiana Women’s Business Center, Rotary Club of Indianapolis and TechPoint.

“I remember when I was interviewing, hearing the two ladies talk about how important it was in the firm for us to be doing pro bono work and working with nonprofits and serving on boards and volunteering for things in the community,” Coble recalls, noting she had lived in St. Louis, Missouri, where that sentiment was not so evident. In fact, she points out her employer discouraged community engagement in favor of an intense work and travel schedule.

“I knew where I lived and I knew where the grocery store was, and honestly, that was the extent of my understanding of the community there,” she reflects. “And it just was completely different here.”

## Internal messaging

Borshoff’s employees go by the moniker, “Shoffers.” They enjoy a relaxed, hybrid schedule environment, although there is no lack of activity. Its annual employee retreat is a time of recognition, reflection and advancement as staff comes together to celebrate, plan and learn. Its leadership awards are called “the Shoffies,” spotlighting each employee’s contributions to the agency.

To honor its founding on October 1, each year Borshoff hosts a large “Shofftoberfest” (think Oktoberfest) party on its rooftop for clients and community friends, which features a polka band, German



Borshoff’s ownership team of Karen Alter, Katherine Coble, Justin Wojtowicz and Jennifer Dzwonar make workplace culture a priority for its staff.

beer, pretzels and a stein-holding contest.

“We have former employees that come back to that and still want to hang out with us,” Coble relays. “And we have former employees that have hired us at their places of business, so it’s really kind of a family atmosphere.”

There are also policies that loudly resonate with the team. The firm instituted a Bring Your Baby to Work program, welcoming employees to bring newborns to the office to care for them, in an effort to combat increasing childcare costs.

Partner Jennifer Dzwonar believes the business has generally been “ahead of the curve” when it comes to accommodating staff and building a winning culture through the years.

“We’ve had a lot of flexibility in our work in a way that we know this new generation comes in expecting,” she says.

Perhaps that awareness is how Borshoff reports average tenure of 23 years for partners, a 10-year average for its leadership team and a seven-and-a-half-year average for all other employees – featuring 100% retention in 2025.

## Mixing it up

Borshoff’s client list can read like a “Who’s Who” of Indiana’s top companies in a host of industries. Eli Lilly and Company, AES Indiana, Cummins, the NCAA and Indianapolis Zoo are just a few of its satisfied customers.

“But then we’ve also gotten to do some really cool, fun stuff with some startups and with some other brands that are in other markets. This last year, we got to help launch RetrievalAir, which is an airline specifically dedicated to traveling with your pet,” Coble imparts. “So, it’s super fun, interesting things that have been kind of all over the place in terms of either the kind of work they needed or the variety of what they were offering.”

For Dzwonar, it’s that constant potpourri of enjoyable work that maintains that exciting experience for Shoffers of all job titles.

“It just runs this wide gamut (of clients), and I think that is what keeps people here.”

**RESOURCES:** Karen Alter, Katherine Coble and Jennifer Dzwonar, Borshoff, at [www.borshoff.biz](http://www.borshoff.biz)