

Bobbi Coffin, Chief Marketing Officer
Wendy Blosser, Chief Commercial Officer
Robin Harper Cowie, Chief Financial Officer

Diversity Suits the C-Suite

AT BIODESIX, FEMALE EXECUTIVES 'SHAKE THINGS UP' TO DRIVE GROWTH



COMPANY SNAPSHOT

FOUNDED

2005

HEADQUARTERS

BOULDER

COLORADO

EMPLOYEES

119

Anyone who works in bioscience knows there are few women in executive leadership roles. Although women come into the industry at the same rate as men, only one in four moves up to a C-level position and only one in 10 makes it to the board of directors, according to a recent study.

Things are different at Boulder-based Biodesix, which develops blood-based diagnostics to better understand how a patient's lung cancer may be progressing. Following recent promotions, three of the six C-level executives are women, and of the nine executives in total running different units of the company, four are women.

"IN COLORADO, THERE'S AN EMPHASIS ON FRESH IDEAS AND NEW WAYS OF THINKING. IT WAS CLEAR WHEN I INTERVIEWED AT BIODESIX THAT THE TEAM WANTED STRONG, DIVERSE LEADERS WITH DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW," SAID WENDY BLOSSER, CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER, WHO CAME TO BIODESIX IN 2015.

Robin Harper Cowie, the company's Chief Financial Officer and its first female C-level executive, said Biodesix made a concerted effort to hire people with diversity in mind. "It's important for any organization not to hire cookie cutter—the same person, the same thoughts, the same personalities—because things get stale, and you don't solve problems quickly," said Harper Cowie.

She pointed to one particular problem Biodesix faced after launching its first blood test, called VeriStrat, in 2013. Cowie said the Biodesix team was absolutely convinced that the sales and marketing strategy they'd chosen would produce success. But soon they weren't reaching the projected number of physicians and patients.

They decided to shake things up a bit and brought in Blosser, Bobbi Coffin, the Chief Marketing Officer, and Linda Traylor, Vice President of Medical Affairs. The new team went into the field to interview physicians and ask them a host of questions around what they needed most from such a test. Afterward, Blosser and Coffin recommended that Biodesix revamp its sales teams, as well as its messaging and marketing strategy, right down to the packaging and materials.

"It was not easy at first for some members of the company to absorb," said Harper Cowie.

"It takes collaboration and audacity to make major changes," said Coffin. "This group of women has what it takes to make tough decisions."

Coffin moved to Colorado from Pittsburgh in 2015 to work for Biodesix and has not looked back. "It's a great place to be from a career standpoint," she said. The healthcare industry is moving very fast, which creates lots of opportunities, she said, and there's an openness within the bioscience community to provide support to anybody who wants it.

Harper Cowie arrived at Biodesix six years ago from Pittsburgh, drawn not only to Colorado's gorgeous surroundings, but to the state's bioscience sector. "There are a lot of great universities, there's great talent, there's good investment, there's a really active [bioscience] community."

Blosser came in 2015 from Ohio. "I initially investigated this role from the standpoint of who the investors of the organization were. They're very well respected, and they have a long history of success that I wanted to be a part of again."

Today, Biodesix is seeing growth like it never had before, said Harper Cowie, thanks to creativity and diversity in their C-suite.

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