



Monday, January 9, 2012

MHT Women to Watch alumnae have lots to toast in 2011

By [Lori Valigra](#)

As Mass High Tech seeks its next group of “Women to Watch” nominees, a look back at the [class of 2011](#) showed those winners bucked the odds in a year otherwise marked by a continued down economy and anemic financing.

Honoree [Laura Fitton](#) is no stranger to pushing through tough times. The founder and CEO of Twitter apps directory and user hub Oneforty Inc. started her company in 2009, as the economy was collapsing. She nonetheless raised more than \$2 million in venture funding.



Jean Hoffman, Putney founder and CEO, 2011 Women to Watch honoree

She now has more than 90,500 Twitter followers (her handle is @Pistachio), and is firmly entrenched as a social media presence. So much so that in August 2011, she [sold her company](#) for undisclosed terms to Cambridge neighbor HubSpot Inc., where she is now an inbound marketing evangelist. Elements of Oneforty’s SocialBase Handbooks small business version of its enterprise-grade SocialBase On Call service for planning and managing social campaigns became part of HubSpot.

Fitton, author of “Twitter for Dummies” and dubbed a “Twitter Queen” by some, founded Oneforty after having relaunched her Pistachio Consulting company to help other corporations such as IBM, Johnson & Johnson and Ford Motor Co. learn how to use social media. Last June, she also won a [leadership award from Women Entrepreneurs in Science & Technology](#).

Likewise, [Jean Hoffman](#), CEO and founder of generic pet drug company Putney Inc. of Portland, ME, defied a generally tight venture capital market and in October pulled in a [\\$21 million Series C round](#) led by both Safeguard

Scientifics Inc. and NewSpring Capital.

She launched the company in 2006, originally marketing human drugs to veterinarians. In 2009, the company introduced its first drug approved for pets, a generic version of caprofen, whose branded version, Rimadyl, is owned by Pfizer Inc.

In another drug company growth spurt, [Katrine Bosley](#), president and CEO of biotech Avila Therapeutics Inc., saw her firm's pipeline advance to the point where in August it moved to a [new facility in Bedford](#) that more than doubled its space, in anticipation of growth.

Last July, the company received its first U.S. patent. And by September, it completed 28 days of dosing of its first patients in a [Phase 1B clinical trial](#) for its AVL-292 cancer treatment, and advanced to the second cohort of patients.

[Bettina Hein](#) founded two companies during economic downturns, SVOX AG, a speech software firm based in Zurich that was formed in 2001, and digital video company Pixability Inc. of Cambridge in 2008. In June, Burlington-based [Nuance Communications Inc. bought SVOX](#) for undisclosed terms. Last February, Pixability [raised just over \\$1 million](#) from nine angel groups in a round led by Launchpad Venture Group.

[Susan MacKay](#), CEO of Cerahelix Inc. of Orono, Maine, in April was a finalist in the 2011 MassChallenge startup competition. Her company is developing [technology for reuse and recycling of water](#) in industrial processes. And in November 2011, Cerahelix also was named a partner in the Obama administration's [i6 Green competition](#).

Even in the nonprofit sector, companies such as Seeding Labs made headway. [Nina Dudnick](#), CEO of the Cambridge recycler of lab equipment, said in June at the BIO convention that Seeding was partnering with Thermo Fisher Scientific to donate the first Thermo Scientific NanoDrop 1000 spectrophotometer to an eligible lab, typically in a developing nation. Also in June, she was honored by ELLE magazine as one of nine women who are educating, rebuilding, doctoring, employing and sustaining the world.

[Nominations for the 2012 Women to Watch](#) awards are due by Friday, Jan. 27. The New England women typically are from fields such as biotech, telecom, software, electronics, sustainable energy, nanotech, medical devices and IT. They will be honored for contributions to their technology sectors and their ongoing role as leaders in their communities. This will be the ninth year of the Women to Watch awards.

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