

Connie Wimer - CRMA Lifetime Achievement Award

“If you’re not a little bit afraid, you’re probably not trying hard enough.”
– Connie Wimer

Judging by her record of success, and the calm and poise with which she leads her business, it is hard to imagine Connie Wimer has ever been afraid. But she is quite open with the team at Business Publications Corporation (BPC), the publishing company she launched nearly 40 years ago, that she has been terrified through many points of her career. Fear is healthy, says Connie, as long as you use it to move forward.

Connie Wimer is the founder and chairman of BPC, an Iowa-based media company that serves the local business, cultural and philanthropic communities. Since its inception, BPC has expanded into a respected family of publications and events including *dsm* and *ia* magazines, a business journal and a custom publishing division.

Connie did not become an entrepreneur until midlife. Born in a small town in northwest Iowa, she attended Morningside College before moving to Des Moines to be a secretary. She married, raised a family, and was a volunteer leader until adversity in her personal life propelled her into business. In 1976 she bought a title company. As one of few women entrepreneurs at the time, she faced many obstacles, but soon made it a success.

To enhance the business, she purchased a small legal paper. Shortly after, a judicial decision rendered the legal content unnecessary, wiping out her revenue and leaving her with a loan to repay. These were among her darkest days. But necessity breeds innovation, and Connie transformed the paper into the Business Record, a weekly business journal that now boasts over 20,000 readers weekly.

Connie has always been proud of the city she lives in. While vacationing in Sarasota, Florida, she saw a city magazine in her hotel room and thought, “We should have something like this in Des Moines” and set out to make it happen. Her goal was to create a magazine that would reflect the best of our city’s arts and culture; she decided to call it *dsm*, inspired by the airport code for Des Moines.

To create buzz around the launch of *dsm*, Connie sent a tuxedoed gentleman to key businesses with an invitation to a launch party – with no explanation. The combination of stunning design and quality editorial content made the publication a success. Over the past 18 years, *dsm* magazine has expanded from four to six issues annually and

has added digital newsletters and multiple events. Unveiling parties, held each issue, continue to attract community leaders – even without a mystery man in a tuxedo handing out invitations.

But Connie was just getting started. A lifelong Iowan, she had a vision of how to help the state with a publication that could be used to support tourism, talent recruitment and retention. *ia* was launched in 2012 and now serves a statewide audience.

Connie has continued to expand these brands each year. Not only have *dsm* and *ia* presented the best of Des Moines and Iowa, these products have also worked to raise awareness and inspire action around social issues such as diversity, equity and inclusion, mental health, and hunger.

But those accomplishments were just Connie's day job. A civic leader and a pioneer for women, Connie has worked tirelessly to advance the community she lives in. She has served on multiple business and charitable and university boards. She has started or chaired countless organizations, was the first woman to chair the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce and the first woman elected to the Greater Des Moines Committee's Business Hall of Fame. Not only was she the first woman chair of the Alliance of Area Business Publishers (AABP), she was the first woman to receive that organization's Lewis Conn, Lifetime Achievement Award. She was named Master Editor/Publisher by the Iowa Newspaper Association, and was chosen for the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame. Most recently, under Connie's leadership BPC had the honor of being recognized by Editor and Publisher Magazine in its list of "Top 10 News Publishers Doing it Right 2021."

While continuing as chairman of BPC, Connie has also served as a mentor to countless students and professionals. Her reputation as a kind, genuine and caring leader is second only to her reputation for her elegant style, love of scotch and appreciation of a racy joke.

Some would think at 88 years old it would be time to retire. Or not. Connie has said, "Everyone I know gets boring when they retire." But being boring is something Connie, our fearless publishing industry leader and dear friend, need not ever be afraid of.