

ALUMNI IN ACTION

Powering the Future of Batteries

By Kenneth Mashinchi



San José State alumna Annette Finsterbusch is leading the way in developing next-generation batteries that will energize our future.

Annette Finsterbusch

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It is easy to see why Annette Finsterbusch, '01 MBA, was destined to lead a cutting-edge technology business. Growing up in Houston, her dad spared no expense in bringing home the latest technology, continuously exposing her to novel ideas and innovations.

With more than 25 years of corporate business experience, and having served as CEO of three different technology ventures, Finsterbusch is undoubtedly an innovation trendsetter.



Currently the president and CEO of EnPower Inc., a lithium-ion battery manufacturer based in Indianapolis, Indiana, Finsterbusch has grown the small start-up into a company well equipped to fast-charge batteries for things that “roll, float and fly.” Initially, EnPower focused solely on batteries for electric vehicles (EVs), but when the competition became laser focused on the automotive industry in late 2020, Finsterbusch saw an opening — and zagged away from the herd.

“We saw a change in the trajectory of the battery demand curve driven by EV adoption, so we made an about-face to service the underserved markets,” says Finsterbusch. “Applications, including power tools, construction equipment, military, aviation, commercial vehicles — these are big industrial applications, many of which are manufactured right here in the Midwest.”

The COVID-19 pandemic didn't slow down Finsterbusch and her team. While the team safely continued operations, Finsterbusch took their 4 to 6 Ampere-hour (Ah) batteries — the amount of energy charge in a battery — to global competitions and showcases, all thanks to the power of videoconferencing.

“I would go to bed in a suit with my makeup on, sleeping face up, get up at 12:45 a.m., do the pitch at 1 a.m. and go back to bed by 2 a.m.,” she laughs. “We literally could canvas the planet to get the word out. Many of the competitions we actually won, and we got the word out to the investors that are looking at our company now.”

EnPower is currently working to build out its battery line in the Indianapolis facility it moved into in 2022. Production of the 40 Ah prismatic battery cells — cells that are enclosed in a rigid casing — will begin later this year.

As battery demands go up, Finsterbusch believes EnPower is well positioned to rise to the occasion and meet the demand.

“Normally I'm the early-stage person who finds the idea, evaluates the technology, figures out how to get it out to the market, and then I hand it off and move on to the next super-cool idea,” says Finsterbusch. “But this is an amazing opportunity because we have the right technology for the right markets at the right time. Who wouldn't want to see that through?”

Finsterbusch attributes part of her success as a CEO to SJSU, where she completed her MBA in 2001. In 2004, she received the Graduate of the Last Decade (GOLD) Award from the university's business faculty.

“Receiving that GOLD award after my MBA had a lot to do with a great deal of confidence and was certainly a great vote of confidence from the staff and faculty,” she says. “I can't ever say thank you enough for that.”