

# Knock grows with a customer base as diverse as its workforce

Aug 2, 2016, 1:32pm CDT

INDUSTRIES & TAGS [Media & Marketing](#), [Bizwomen](#)

Knock Inc. CEO [Lili Hall](#) drives success by fostering diversity – in her staff, certainly but even more so in the firm’s clients.

Knock, which offers branding and design services, has seen a steady revenue growth since its founding in 2001. Ranked on the *Business Journal*’s Fast 50, its revenue has jumped in the past four years from about \$20 million to \$35 million.



Lili Hall is CEO and founder of Knock, an ad agency that works with entrepreneurs as well... [more](#)

NANCY KUEHN | MSPBJ

But for Hall, the growth is an organic result of her motivated employees and picking up a wide range of clients. Sticking to her entrepreneurial roots, Hall has built a reputation for adding startups to a client list that includes big-name companies like Target Corp. and Caribou Coffee Co.

“It’s in my DNA,” Hall said about taking risks with new businesses. “We have to be really passionate about what they’re doing. When you feel that [the project is the entrepreneurs’] baby, you know it’s a big deal.”

Hall also strives to maintain diversity in Knock’s workplace – where at least 20 percent of employees are of minority backgrounds – and in the clients she chooses to work with, occasionally doing pro bono work with emerging and minority-owned businesses.

So how does Hall and her crew pull it off?

“We have to,” Hall said with a laugh. “Once we start talking with somebody, we make sure we have a great understanding of their industry. And even if we don’t, we bring in experts. And [we are] good listeners, really making sure that they’re getting what they’re asking for.”

She added that when starting Knock, she focused on cultivating collaboration, communication and creativity.

“Culture is everything for a company,” she said.

After hearing about this culture, Handsome Cycles co-founder [Ben Morrison](#) said he asked Knock to take an equity stake in his company.

“It’s one thing when you find someone with money to invest in you, and it’s another thing to find someone who adds value to you,” he said.

Knock helped design Handsome Cycles’ bike shop in Minneapolis, using modularity as a key design feature. The shop’s layout, as well as the move to put all furniture on wheels, let Handsome Cycles do retail by day and host bar events by night. The shop was recognized as “best of show” for design at the 2014 Advertising Federation of Minnesota’s annual Show awards ceremony.

And about 18 months later, Knock helped advise Handsome Cycles through the process of closing the shop and turning its business model around to focus on online sales. Knock helped build a new website, design a logo and transform how customers interact with Handsome Cycles brand.

Morrison, who was hired by Knock in January to help scope out new startup clients (while still involved in Handsome Cycles), said the entire process excelled in its collaborative nature.

“What’s pretty remarkable working with the Knock team is that we’re all on the same page and we’re all striving for the exact same thing,” he said. “You lose track in meetings of who works for who.”

**Knock Inc.**

- CEO: [Lili Hall](#)
- Business: Brand strategy, advertising and design
- Founded: 2001
- Headquarters: Minneapolis
- Employees: About 70
- 2015 revenue: \$35 million
- Web: [knockinc.com](http://knockinc.com)

*Jackie Renzetti writes the Business Journal's Strategies and Cool Offices features.*