



FOUNDED BY WOMEN: **Inspiration and Advice** **from over** **100 Female Founders**

Learn from successes and failures, told through a series of Q&As with the most ambitious female founders and CEOs.

DATABIRD

SKYSTEM
Crystal Clear Close



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SKYSTEM.COM

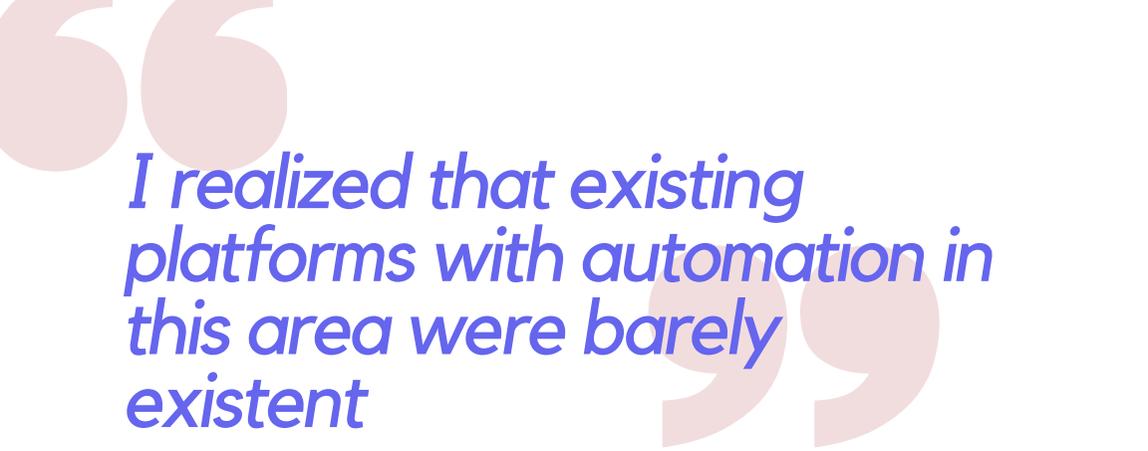
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Q: What's your background, and what are you working on?

I started my career in public accounting and have worked in various Fortune 100 companies, such as Marriott and Freddie Mac. My work focused primarily on internal controls and risk mitigation in both the international and domestic arenas. I continuously saw a variety of issues and inefficiencies in the month-end close process, and I knew I should take the leap and help teams shorten the time spent to close and simplify their reconciliations.

This realization became the spark that compelled me to found SkyStem, a SaaS company that aimed to create an affordably priced solution to help automate month-end close and reconciliations. Building SkyStem was not easy but it's definitely rewarding to see all our growth and accomplishments from the very start. SkyStem has grown into something more than I could have ever imagined. At SkyStem, we are always working on expanding our solution and growing the company. I am blessed to have a dedicated, innovative and creative team who are never satisfied with the status quo.





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Q: What motivated you to get started with SkyStem?

I started my career in the travel and hospitality industry, and through my experience in audit and investigative accounting, I ultimately fell in love with the world of audit, controls, and the accounting process. I was asked by a troubled financial services giant to lead the year-long remediation effort due to a failed regulatory audit.

This happened due to broken internal controls around the month-end process. After a year of arduous work, long hours and teamwork, we were able to deliver a clean audit and retain the banking license. Due to my experience in various projects and being immersed in the accounting world, I knew firsthand the multitude of problems and risks accountants face when employing manual methods to close the books and complete reconciliations.

Whether it's a large corporation or a mid-size company, closing and reconciling is part of the routine function of the accounting department. I also realized that existing platforms with automation in this area were barely existent, priced quite high, and often beyond reach for mid-sized companies. Mid-sized companies are often operationally complex and can benefit from automation during the close. But they lack the excess capacity and resources to make a large investment and undergo a multi-month implementation. This motivated me to found SkyStem, and our flagship solution, ART, was brought to the market shortly after.





Customers have always been the guiding light to how we innovate and what we build

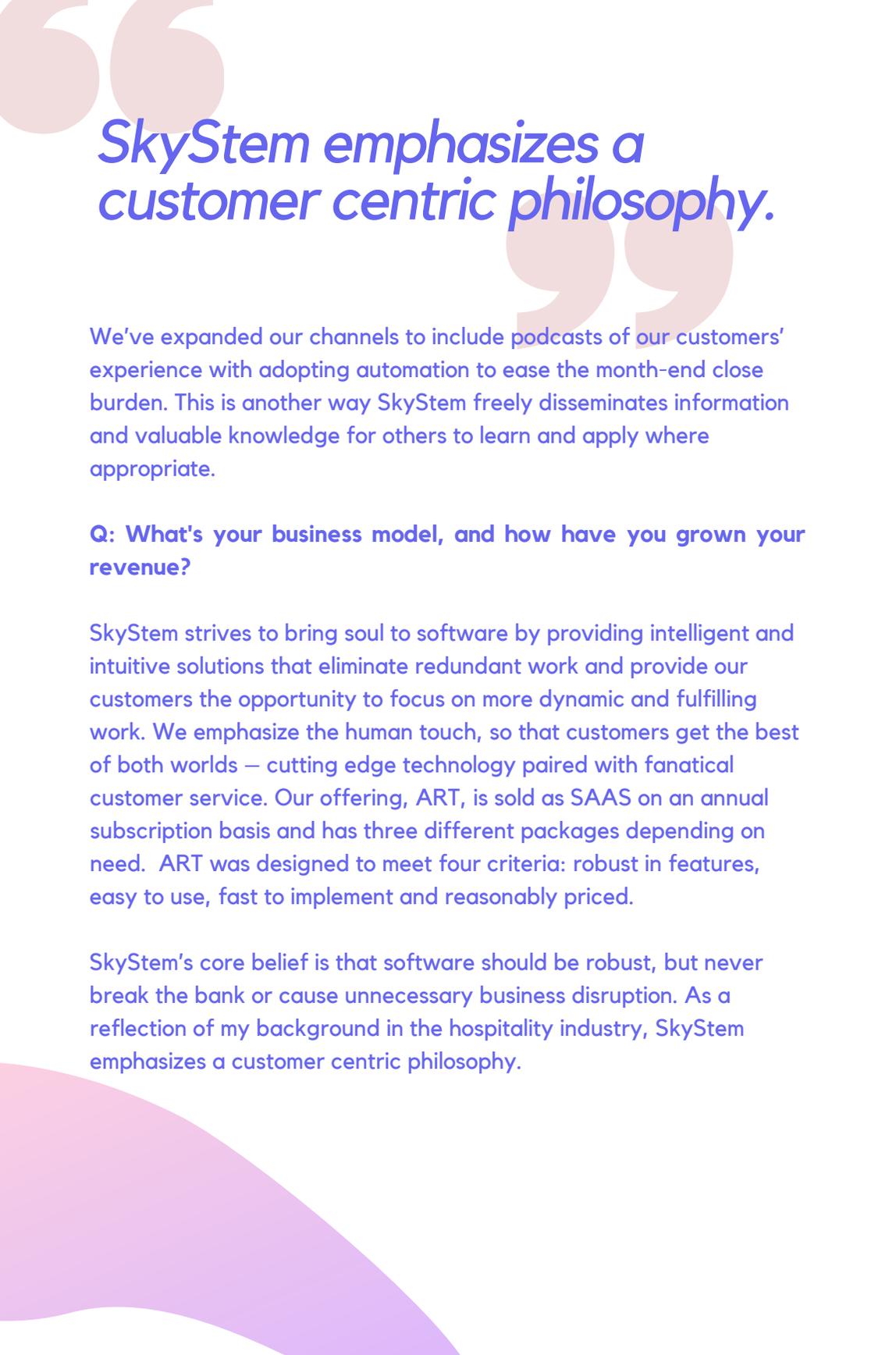
Q: How have you attracted customers and grown SkyStem?

Our award-winning platform has enabled many companies to save time and gain efficiencies. Customers have always been the guiding light to how we innovate and what we build. SkyStem is proud to be one of the few companies that develop modules, features and interface design based on customer feedback. Additionally, SkyStem's product team places heavy focus on ease of use and customer service, by making everything as user friendly as possible.

Furthermore, SkyStem believes in making continuous learning available in the FinTech community. SkyStem hosts its own award-winning webinar series every month to help accountants and finance professionals stay abreast of current developments and share that information with prospects and customers alike for free CPE credits. Our webinar series has covered a variety of topics such as benchmarking the accounting function, fraud, how to streamline month-end close, and topics around organizational risk.

The SkyStem team also makes sure to maintain a global presence at FinTech conferences and tradeshows to continue learning and serving this world.





SkyStem emphasizes a customer centric philosophy.

We've expanded our channels to include podcasts of our customers' experience with adopting automation to ease the month-end close burden. This is another way SkyStem freely disseminates information and valuable knowledge for others to learn and apply where appropriate.

Q: What's your business model, and how have you grown your revenue?

SkyStem strives to bring soul to software by providing intelligent and intuitive solutions that eliminate redundant work and provide our customers the opportunity to focus on more dynamic and fulfilling work. We emphasize the human touch, so that customers get the best of both worlds – cutting edge technology paired with fanatical customer service. Our offering, ART, is sold as SAAS on an annual subscription basis and has three different packages depending on need. ART was designed to meet four criteria: robust in features, easy to use, fast to implement and reasonably priced.

SkyStem's core belief is that software should be robust, but never break the bank or cause unnecessary business disruption. As a reflection of my background in the hospitality industry, SkyStem emphasizes a customer centric philosophy.

Being a female pursuing a start up in a male dominated industry has been a tough journey

Q: What are your goals for the future?

Accounting is filled with so many micro processes and tasks and there has always been limited focus on the small things that make the accounting world tick. I would like to continue to build and refine our current product to mirror what our customers need. As we continue to acquire customers, I am always amazed at, and grateful for, how many great ideas are delivered to us by them. Continuing to inject intelligence into our offering will enable our customers to do more with less and we want that vision to be a constant focal point.

Q: What are the biggest challenges you've faced and obstacles you've overcome?

Being a female pursuing a start up in a male dominated industry has been a tough journey. The imbalance is very evident, but I feel lucky to have stayed our course even with these challenges. This has led me to become a different type of entrepreneur. SkyStem consists of a majority of diverse women in all departments. With this diversity, SkyStem has created several powerful and vibrant marketing campaigns to reflect the female mind. I make a conscious effort to continually include outstanding women on my team and have always encouraged women to take on growth-oriented roles regardless of the industry. I aim to put a dent in the gender imbalance in the finance and tech industry and have also been an advocate for minority women in the workplace. As a minority woman myself, I personally understand this issue by seeing it through my own experiences.

Focus on your strengths and hire qualified people to do the rest

Q: Have you found anything particularly helpful or advantageous?

Strategic vision, commitment to innovation, and a progressive leadership approach has been essential to the success of SkyStem. My personal involvement in many aspects of entrepreneurship, such as being a member of a Department of State panel for women entrepreneurship and being a judge for the New York City Business Plan competition, has made me a known leader in the community. Through these programs I meet and mentor women entrepreneurs to motivate them to strive for their dreams. By maintaining a progressive leadership philosophy and involvement in every department, women at SkyStem have excelled in their roles and have learned firsthand what it takes to run a company. I have also encouraged my employees to take classes that will enable their career success and to strive for their passion.

Q: What's your advice for female founders who are just starting out?

You can't do it all. Focus on your strengths and hire qualified people to do the rest. You can accomplish more sometimes with a passionate, smaller team than you can with a huge squad of people. I would advise new founders to be conservative with their hiring.

