

How Barbara Morrison has helped foster small businesses in the Bay Area for over 30 years (Video)

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As the first female broker on the trading desk of a San Francisco boutique lender, Barbara Morrison was hoping for some business cards. But this was 1976. And, she was told, the company didn't issue business cards to “girls.”

Well, that changed. She also managed to get onto their in-house directory. But, alas, only as "B. Morrison." It was, after all, 1976.

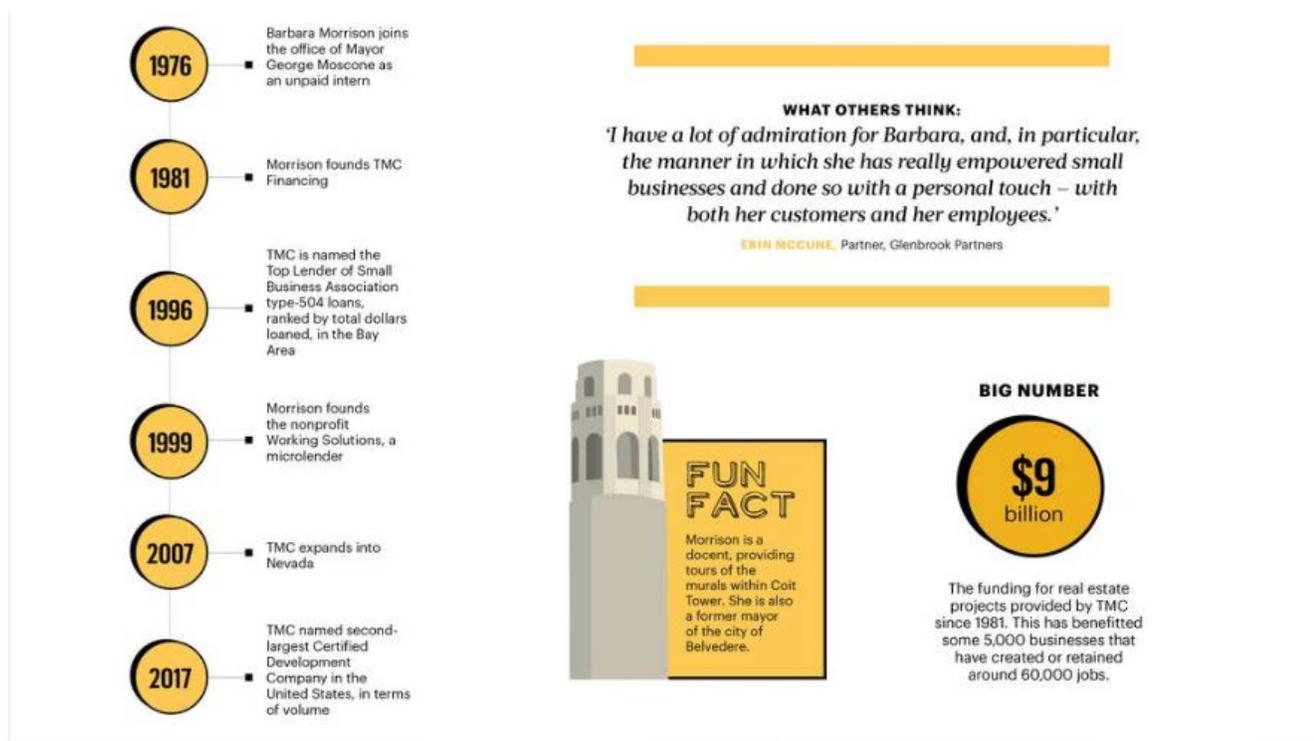
Morrison went on to join the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Economic Development. She smiled when she recalled how her boss had a girlfriend in Southern California — which often meant he couldn't bother to attend Mayor Dianne Feinstein's 8 a.m. meetings with city department heads. At barely 30, Morrison attended in his stead.

In 1982, Morrison left the public sector and hasn't looked back. She founded The Morrison Co. (TMC) Financing in SoMa; it was an all-female outfit and the eventual first male employee was the receptionist. Morrison's mission: Facilitating small business loans to entrepreneurs hoping to buy their places of business.



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Barbara Morrison, founder and president, TMC
Financing

"One of our taglines is: 'Own the business, own the building,'" Morrison said. "If you're at the mercy of a landlord and constantly rising rents, you don't have control over your future. So we always say, if you have to write a rent check to somebody, why not write it to yourself?"



Over the past 35 years, TMC has helped more than 5,000 clients obtain some \$9 billion in loans.

"I've had the privilege of a front-row seat to watch optimistic, passionate entrepreneurs grow their businesses and improve their communities," Morrison said. One of her first clients was a husband-and-wife couple who were refugees from Vietnam. A business that started with two sewing machines in a living room grew to multiple 90,000-square-foot East Bay warehouses. The husband "was so proud to tell me he employed 300 people. And he paid \$1.2 million in corporate income tax that year — he was so proud to tell me this."

Barbara Morrison

Founder and president, TMC Financing

HQ: Oakland

Revenue: Actively managing some \$1.2 billion from 1,200 borrowers

Jobs: Helped with loans that enabled borrowers to create 3,700 San Francisco Bay Area jobs in fiscal 2016.

Philanthropy: Working Solutions, a nonprofit micro lender founded by Morrison in 1999, has disseminated nearly \$12,000,000 so far, largely to low-income, women- and minority-owned businesses.

Management style: Morrison's office noticeably skews toward women in an industry that is still male-dominated. Helping young women succeed — and increasing lending to women- and minority-owned businesses — is a high priority. Morrison likes to provide loans to entrepreneurs who want to own their own real estate. "To understand management here, you have to understand the foundation of it all: I love what I do," she said. "I don't keep that a secret."