

Meet Terri L. Sjodin: Recipient of the Outstanding Alumna Award for the School of Communication

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Courtesy of Terri L. Sjodin

Terri L. Sjodin, a nationally recognized, award-winning speaker and author, has been named 2023-24 Outstanding Alumna of the Year by the San Diego State University School of Communication.

The award is voted on every year by School of Communication faculty, who nominate candidates they believe have left strong impacts on their field.

“It is somewhat of a ‘life achievement’ award for our alumni, so one criteria is the demonstrated and sustained impact they have made on their community, industry, or the discipline,” said Heather Canary, Director of the School of Communication, who worked with Sjodin during her research at SDSU. “With a successful communication consulting and training company for over 30 years, Terri very clearly met that criteria.”

Sjodin grew up in Fountain Valley, California, and graduated from SDSU with a Bachelor of Arts in speech communication.

After three years of working in the industry, she founded **Sjodin Communications**, a public speaking, sales training, and consulting firm in Newport Beach, California.

“I thought it would be interesting to apply my speech and debate background to what business professionals have to do when they’re delivering a presentation,” Sjodin said. “And I designed my company to meet that specific need across multiple industries.”

Being an entrepreneur hasn’t always been easy, but she has found both personal and professional fulfillment in helping people craft effective messages.

Sjodin has been inducted into the National Speakers Association Hall of Fame, received the Certified Speaking Professional designation, and was named one of the top five women in business by the Orange County Business Journal.

Additionally, her book “Small Message, Big Impact” made it onto the New York Times, USA Today, and Wall Street Journal bestseller lists, and she has appeared on numerous television talk shows and podcasts in the industry.

“(Terri) epitomizes what alumni of the School of Communication can do with their communication degrees to produce successful professional careers that have positive impacts in others' lives,” Canary said.

Even as an alumna far into her professional career, Sjodin has remained involved in the SDSU community.

Sjodin partnered with SDSU for her “**State of Sales Presentations Research Study**,” working with several students and staff members including Canary, and Rachael Record, another professor in the School of Communication. The study consists of three phases that were published in 2020, 2022, and 2023.

At the end of the study, she wrote “Presentation Ready,” published by McGraw Hill and used around the country and in classrooms at SDSU.

“It was such a joy to partner with the students and faculty,” Sjodin said.

“The years we spent collaborating with Terri on sales presentation research can be summed up as a journey of discovery,” Canary said, adding that the research took multiple phases and spanned across a few years, eventually leading to an “empirically-supported, engaging, and powerful book for sales professionals.”

“The multi-year experience has been a win-win-win experience for the School of Communication, Terri, and her clients,” she continued.

As a member of the SDSU Forensics Advisory Board, Sjodin was thrilled to return to campus and work on building up the program's "very important and very powerful" mission.

Sjodin said she loves what she does and cherishes how intellectually stimulating her job is.

"Every day is different and it's exciting and it never gets boring," Sjodin said. "It just doesn't."

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