

Meet Jennifer Stevens, founder, Rocca Productions and JHL Co.

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Jennifer Stevens spent much of her early career navigating the ego-driven world of politician campaigns. A protégé of [Karl Rove](#), the former deputy chief of staff for President [George W. Bush](#) and a veteran political operative for the Republican party, Stevens began working campaigns prior to college graduation. She participated in Bush's campaign for Texas governor and was put in charge of Texas Sen. [Troy Fraser](#)'s inaugural campaign for the [Texas House of Representatives](#).

From there she had her pick of assignments, including campaign manager for then-Attorney General [John Cornyn](#)'s bid for the U.S. Senate.



“I never lost a campaign,” Stevens said.

During the Bush presidency, she had plenty of opportunities to move to the nation's capital but had no interest in federal politics.

“It's basically impossible to accomplish anything at the federal level,” Stevens said. “I knew it wasn't for me.”

In 2003 Stevens headed a new office of economic development on behalf of Gov. [Rick Perry](#). One of the highlights of that assignment was overseeing Mexico President [Vicente Fox](#)'s visit to Texas. There were meetings at the Capitol, intimate events at the governor's mansion and a lavish event at the Four Seasons Hotel.

"It was a blast," Stevens said.

In time she started her own consultancy with a laptop on the kitchen counter of her house.

Since 2004, Stevens has handled a variety of assignments, particularly fundraising and special events such as the Mack, Jack & McConaughy annual fundraiser. Most recently she represented the Texas Automobile Dealers Association's in its successful attempt to prevent [Tesla Motors](#) Inc. from selling its electric cars directly to Texas consumers.

"Honestly, in all the work I've done, winning that Tesla one was especially sweet. We were outgunned and outspent, so I was so proud of being involved in that."

Though her public affairs and public relations business keeps Stevens busy, she found time in 2010 to start a promotional products company Rocca.

Her motivation? The lack of quality promotional products for her clients. She began with Texas-based Jon Hart Luggage and now sells a wide variety of items through the Rocca website.

"It's a rocking little business," she said.

What under-the-radar politician do you admire? Is there such a thing? Hmmmm. I would say State Rep. Sarah Davis, R-Houston. She is not necessarily under the radar but she is a fiscal conservative who is not afraid to take a stand. (I love her) willingness to tackle major issues instead of throwing rhetoric into the public just to catch a headline.

Who is a historical person you admire most? Susan B. Anthony. She started the fight for women's rights, including property rights for married women. I also have an abnormal love for Ronald Reagan.

What biography should everyone read? "Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln" by Doris Kearns Goodwin. Lincoln surrounded himself with political rivals so that he would not have a group of "yes men" advising him.

What would you like to say to Elon Musk [of Tesla]? Cool car but no special treatment. Oh, and you shouldn't need my tax dollars to stay solvent.

What's the coolest promotional product you've seen? The Rocca team worked with Lockheed Martin to design a custom set of Legos to launch a new jet they wanted to promote to world leaders.

What's Austin's worst problem? Many in Austin's city leadership and staff have an anti-business attitude that is dangerous. We have to have a welcoming business attitude or we will lose jobs. Austin is quickly becoming completely unaffordable to many small businesses, and when we lose them we will lose the authenticity of what makes Austin so special. We will become another cookie-cutter large city.

What's in your purse that people would laugh about? Flip flops. I don't leave the house without two pair of shoes. You never know when you'll have to walk somewhere or stop for a pedicure.

Your cocktail of choice? Wine or vodka tonic. I am trying to move to soda to save calories, but life is too short not to have a good drink.