

# San Francisco Business Times

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## ORGANIZATION

**Name:** Fran Maier

**Title:** Executive director and president.

**Organization:** TRUSTe.

**Mission of organization:** To build trust between individuals and organizations based on respect for personal information in an evolving, networked world. Privacy and trust issues are central to consumers building trust and doing e-commerce.

**Founded:** 1997.

**Milestone:** In 2001, when I joined, TRUSTe was suffering from the dot-com crash, so we really had to do a turnaround. About two years ago, we stopped thinking about fixing things that were broken and looked to the future; we launched an email program and started to think about expanding our mission.

**Annual income:** \$4 million.

**Expense allocation:** 50 percent delivering certification, developing policies and standards, new products; 25 percent attracting new seal holders and marketing; 25 percent general and administration.

**Corporate support:** We don't fundraise; we charge companies for their certification in getting our seal — 90 percent of our total budget comes from licensing revenue. We have a few sponsors, mostly related to new program development.

**Corporate supporters:** AOL, Intuit, CNET, Verizon, Computer Associates, Yahoo, Microsoft.

**Board chair:** Richard Purcell, chief privacy strategist of Microsoft.

**Board members:** 14, including Joseph Alhadeff, Tatiana Platt, David Hoffman.

**Employees:** 29.

**Volunteers:** 0.

**Events:** We have a 10th anniversary event coming up; we want to celebrate companies who have carried the TRUSTe seal for many of those years, that have been committed to privacy that long.

**Telephone:** (415) 520-3400.

**Web site:** www.truste.org

## NonprofitProfile: TRUSTE

### OFFICE ISSUES

**Recent challenge:** Trying to bring some trust to the downloadable process. We really worked hard with companies to try to come up with rules that define safe and good downloads and build a program to certify downloads to those standards. It's taken awhile.

**Measures of success:** When TRUSTe was first founded, privacy policies were not standard. Only recently has the law required privacy policies, so we know TRUSTe has had a big impact — we've promoted privacy even among companies and web sites we don't touch. We enjoy very high budget growth driven by new companies joining the program and staying in the program; last year we grew by almost \$1 million.

**Smartest move:** Moving into the email space.

**Missed opportunity:** A challenge we have ahead of us now is seeing the best way to enter international markets in a meaningful way.

**Misconception:** Some people think our job is to kick out bad companies; we believe the best thing we can do is keep companies in compliance.

### PROFESSIONAL INSIGHTS

**Personal path to nonprofit work:** Prior to coming to TRUSTe, I was doing a bunch of Internet for-profit start-ups. I was a founder of Match.com, which is when I got to know TRUSTe.

**Toughest aspect:** We've grown based on organic growth, and the hardest thing is raising capital. Especially since we're a quasi-technology company, you want to raise the money so you can keep up with technology and hire the talent and get in front of the problems.

**Most surprising aspect:** I've had the chance to interact with legislators at the federal level, and that's been fascinating.



Fran Maier

**Biggest pain:** Frankly, for TRUSTe, the problems have not stopped. Maybe now we have better web privacy, but spammers, phishers, and so on are trying to extract more money in more nefarious ways from more people.

**Greatest pleasure:** Really understanding how we have had a positive impact on developing legislation, the impact we know we make. We know we're an important part of the mix, even when standing with some of the big industry players.

### INTROSPECTIONS

**Best recent moment:** While we try to keep companies in compliance, occasionally there are companies we terminate. Earlier last year, we terminated Gratis. ... Recently they were sued by the attorney general of New York. It was a reminder to our staff that what we do is really important ... and we played a part in uncovering some issues.

**Worst recent moment:** I lost a really good employee.

**Dream for another life:** My off-the-cuff answer is to ski more. Spend more time with my family. From a professional standpoint, to run another company in this space, perhaps in the for-profit sector.

**Greatest inspiration:** It comes back to the kids. The world is changing very quickly. We can be concerned about all kinds of environmental and political issues, but I worry that you cannot raise a kid anonymously anymore ... with the freedom to make choices without those choices being transparent to all.

**Down time:** I have a family. I like to bike, spend time with friends. I try not to monitor my teenager too much.

**Causes:** In 2001, before I started at TRUSTe, I did the AIDS ride from San Francisco to L.A. I raise money for my kids' schools in Alameda, and a lot of involvement in women succeeding in business in various platforms.

**Most like to meet:** I'd like to sit down with someone like Meg Whitman; she's taken Ebay through an incredible growth stage and put a lot of focus on reputation and consumer trust and all those kinds of things I've watched from the time I was running Match.com to now.

— Sarah Duxbury