

DFMi bids fond farewell to VP Jody Jones

[DFMi](#) has amassed significant success since its humble beginnings in 1987 as D&F Marketing, Inc. Celebrating its 35th anniversary this year, the company is also bidding a fond farewell to one of its colleagues that has played an integral role in its growth and success.

Jody Jones, Vice President, Operations & Business Development, at DFMi, has been with the company for 32 years. Jones joined the company as Administrative Assistant and through her hard work and reputation, soared through the ranks to her role as VP. After a long and admirable career, Jones is moving on to an exciting chapter with her husband of 54 years, two adult children and five grandchildren: Retirement.

As the company prepares for her departure, *PAX International* sat down for a Q&A with Graham Felton, CEO and Owner of DFMi. He shares some of his fondest memories since hiring Jones in 1991, along with her greatest accomplishments at DFMi.



Jody Jones (left) and Graham Felton

***PAX International:* Jody started as an Administrative Assistant in 1991 and worked her way to VP. What does this say both about Jody's work ethic and about DFMi?**

Felton: At the time, it was the two of us in Atlanta with our headquarters in New Jersey. I looked after the airlines and Jody handled all our communications and interactions with the suppliers and distributors. Jody was very good with details and keeping everyone focused [on] our tasks. She quickly became the point person that everyone went to for information and answers.

It wasn't long before Jody's reliability and dedication to the company saw her moving up the ranks and taking on additional responsibilities.

In July 1998 we moved the headquarters and all operations and finance to Atlanta and Jody oversaw the transition. She then took on the additional responsibility of Operations Manager of five people.

On September 13, 2001, Jody was promoted to VP of Operations and Business Development where she was responsible for all US operations and supplier business development with seven people now reporting to her.

As of July 1, 2010, Jody took over global operations and business development with nine people on her team. Today we have 15 people who look to Jody for guidance and answers.

The best business decision in my 52 years of business was hiring Jody and growing together and working as a team in the building of DFMi.

***PAX International:* Thirty-two years is a significant amount of time—what will be missed most about Jody's presence?**

Felton: Just that—her presence. Jody has been the “go to” person in our company since the day she started.

She took charge [of finding] us an office as I was working out of my basement. I left for a Chicago trip and when I came home she and my wife had found us an office. That was the beginning of a wonderful relationship. Jody brings the steady and calm to our team when we are faced with complex issues or circumstances.

***PAX International:* What is your favourite thing about Jody, both personally and professionally?**

Felton: Professionally, Jody always has the passion and ownership to make each day the best it can be. She wants everyone to be successful within DFMi, a true professional [who] cares.

Personally, Jody always looked out for my best interest and together we became like family. Her compassion and caring for all of us kept us together during very difficult times in our industry.

***PAX International:* What are your fondest memories working with Jody?**

Felton: We had some crazy trips together to the West Coast and Europe; visiting suppliers and always [making] those trips adventurous, some by accident when we would get lost at night. We have traveled over a million miles together and worked with many wonderful people, always with Jody leading the way.

Pivotal moments and accomplishments

Felton tells *PAX* that Jones' career has too many achievements to share them all. When pressed, these are the highlights that came to mind:

- **July 1998:** Transitioning the headquarters from New Jersey to Atlanta. A “Major logistical

endeavor” with “flawless execution on Jody’s part,” says Felton

- **September 2001:** “In the depths of 9/11, Jody took control of operations to keep us all focused on the moment,” Felton says
- **June 2010:** Jones develops a successful business strategy to take DFMi global
- **March 2020:** Jones designs plan to succeed through COVID-19 and executes it over the next 18 months

“It has been an amazing 32 years together and Jody is irreplaceable,” Felton tells *PAX International*. “Many life experiences and lessons we have shared and it has been my joy and privilege to have her at my side.”

Q&A: Jones in her own words

DFMi shared the *PAX International*’s below questions with Jones to surprise her with this article. She did not know about the article until it was published. Here’s Jones, in her own words:

***PAX International:* What will you miss most about the team at DFMi?**

Jones: We have had a lot of very talented team players throughout the years. We have the best team ever at DFMi and I will very much miss the people and all that they bring to our success.

We share the ups and downs of our business daily and the teamwork and support is very real when it comes to finding solutions. Those resolutions give everyone the feeling of “winning” the day and accomplishing what we all want for DFMi and our customers. I will miss that feeling of another successful “win,” but 100 percent it is the team members I will miss most. That’s why I plan to drop by for lunch with the Tucker team whenever I can!

***PAX International:* A lot of people dream of staying in a position for 32 years. What is your advice to people seeking out jobs where there is room for growth and long-term employment?**

Jones: Love what you do! I had the opportunity to learn all facets of our business all those years ago and literally fell in love with it all. Every day brought opportunities to learn, grow and build a successful team for the overall success of our company. But it is more than that; it is also caring about the people you work with, being respectful and kind toward each one, and recognizing the value they bring to the company. I know it is unusual to have such a long-term career, but when you truly enjoy your work and the environment you work in, you stay committed and loyal throughout the good and bad times. I have been blessed to have such a rewarding and exciting career—it has been the best of journeys!

***PAX International:* What will you do in retirement? What are you looking forward to?**

Jones: Travel! I know that is ironic in that I have worked in the travel industry all these years and had lots of trips, but now it will be for leisure with friends and family, exploring countries and cultures, as well as lazy island and beach days in our two favourite “get-away” to relax locations. One is in Kona Coast Resort on the big island of Hawaii, [which] we have been visiting since 1996, and the other is in Sea Grove Beach, Florida. My husband and I also enjoy cooking gourmet meals and sharing these with friends and our “Fine Wine Group” that we have traveled with a lot. We also have five grandchildren and look forward to having more flexible days to spend with them.

If I get bored, I can always do some consulting on the side. I think I will be able to keep myself very busy and plan to enjoy life to the fullest for as long as I can. I am very blessed professionally and personally—I cherish all the memories from the past, and I am excited about the ones I will make in this new stage of life.