

Karen England
Co-owner
Gould Intelligent LLC, Phoenix

Karen England thought she'd end up more of a crime fighter than a computer whiz. But as one of the owners of Phoenix-based information technology staffing company Gould Intelligent LLC, the law enforcement field is far behind her.

England graduated from Arizona State University in 1984 with a degree in criminal justice and was accepted into the Phoenix Police Academy.

But as the academy took time to collect its pool of candidates, the new graduate and wife needed a job right away. So she went to work at IBM, where her father was employed and where she had worked during summers in high school, correcting accounts receivable.

England's job at IBM became a permanent one, though being taken seriously in a male-dominated industry proved difficult, she said.

"It was hard to get men in IT who had been doing it 25 years to take a 20-something female seriously" she said. "It took me a long time to gain credibility with a client, where now I have 20, 25 years experience of behind me."

After working at IBM, England moved to a small woman-owned software company, then to a large national IT company. In 2004, she was offered an ownership stake in partner Rick Gould's IT company.

As she was making these career changes, the demographics of the IT industry changed.

"It's not as male-dominated as it was in the '80s. Once we hit Y2K, it started leveling out," England said. "I'm encouraged to see a lot more women in the leadership roles."

Before joining Gould, England was able to fulfill her hankering for crime fighting.

"I think I satisfied that back at IBM, when I helped the state put in their automatic fingerprint system," England said. "We worked in the court systems and police department."

Does she think she'll ever try again to join the boys in blue? "I'm too old now to go out and tote a gun and chase people, thank you very much," she said.

