

# Leaders Innovators

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**LESLIE TOUMA:** Founder and CEO of the Michigan Security Network (MISN) in Royal Oak. Sixteen companies, universities, and opinion leaders in the state joined forces in 2008 to create MISN, a nonprofit organization founded to accelerate the growth of homeland security business, investment, and job creation in Michigan. MISN is engaged with the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security and Defense on a number of initiatives. Under Touma's direction, MISN organized the Northern Border Security Conference in 2010 to bring government, industry, and technology leaders together to share ideas. MISN has received two grants from the New Economy Initiative that support the continued organizational growth and building of the region's business related to homeland security. Prior to founding MISN, Touma provided strategic consulting services to Fortune 500 companies, start-up companies, nonprofit organizations, and Michigan universities. In 2002, Touma founded the Best Friends Co., which designed and marketed automotive aftermarket products. Before that, Touma was vice president of corporate relations for Lear Corp., managing corporate communications, government relations, community relations, philanthropy, and advertising worldwide. In 2000 she became the company's first female officer and vice president and was named one of the "100 Leading Women in the North American Automotive Industry" by *Automotive News*. Prior to Lear, Touma had a lengthy career in government, international trade, and defense. She served as policy advisor to former Gov. John Engler during his first term, establishing programs to enhance export opportunities for Michigan businesses. Earlier, she assisted Robert Teeter, Republican political strategist and pollster, on several U.S. Senate and gubernatorial campaigns. She also served as a policy analyst on strategic nuclear defense issues at the U.S. Department of Defense, was a member of the U.S. Strategic Arms Control Delegation in Geneva, and served at the U.S. Mission to NATO in Brussels. Touma received a bachelor's degree in history and political science from Kalamazoo College and a master's in international relations from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

**WHERE BORN:** "Pleasant Ridge."

**MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSONS:** "My grandparents and parents, in terms of a value system and work ethic."

**LAST BOOK READ:** "*God Is Not One* by Stephen Prothero."

**WORDS THAT DESCRIBE ME:** "Strategic thinker, ability to connect markets."

**WHERE MY FIELD/INDUSTRY IS HEADED:** "It's headed for ongoing tremendous growth. The security sector, by virtue of the world we live in, is one of the fastest growing sectors today."

**FAVORITE TECHNOLOGICAL GADGET:** "As it applies to my business, we look at a lot of dual multi-use technology. The whole area is fascinating."

**FAVORITE PLACE:** "Northern Michigan and Italy."

**FAVORITE HOBBIES:** "Travel."

**FAVORITE FOOD:** "Middle Eastern."

**MY HIDDEN TALENT:** "I'm pretty good at cooking."

**HOW I WANT TO BE REMEMBERED:** "As working on strategic initiatives that keep Americans safer. My earlier career was nuclear arms negotiations between the U.S. and the Soviets, so I'm invested in Homeland Security technology that can assure greater safety for Americans."



At the annual awards reception on Thursday, April 28, 2011, one Leader & Innovator from the previous 12 months will be selected as the Grant Thornton Leader & Innovator of the Year.