Innovator. Humanitarian. Unlikely Change Agent. Theresa Carrington is changing the world, having discovered the tipping point from poverty to prosperity, one beautiful basket at a time.

What started as one woman’s vision to create a sustainable solution to reduce poverty in developing countries evolved into The Blessing Basket Project®, the first and only nonprofit to win the Olin Cup business competition at Washington University in St. Louis. Over the last decade the organization has been quietly discovering and perfecting unique approaches to sustainable poverty reduction - which they are now ready to share with the world. In the process the organization has helped create sustainable prosperity for more than 10,000 people in the last decade. Theresa Carrington, founder and CEO of the Blessing Basket Project®, recognized that – the key to helping people emerge from impoverished to financially independent is igniting their entrepreneurial spirit by providing them a launching pad. This is when the world changes.

Theresa’s vision launched The Blessing Basket Projects innovative approach and allowed her to actually identify the tipping point from poverty to prosperity. The Project’s patent pending financial model enables Artisans to earn Prosperity Wages®, which are significantly higher than fair trade wages, for their products. In some instances, the wages could differ as dramatically as the U.S. Equivalent of $12 compared to $1 for the same basket. In this model, the Artisans are paid directly, eliminating the middleman, and are required to start businesses funded by earnings from their basket sales — and it is those entrepreneurial ventures that empower the Artisans to lift themselves out of poverty.

To expand the reach of The Blessing Basket Project®, Theresa also launched Seeds of Blessing®, a program that provides the same entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the United States, while simultaneously empowering women in developing countries by selling their unique hand crafted baskets. The efforts of the U.S.-based Seeds of Blessing® Consultants help generate Prosperity Wages® to pay the Artisans in their advancement out of poverty.

Today with a small staff, a strong team of volunteers, and partnerships with companies like Whole Foods Market®, the Project works with almost 3,000 Artisans across seven countries including Ghana, Uganda, Bangladesh, Madagascar, Guinea, Indonesia, and most recently, Kenya. By selling their products to more than 400 retail locations nationwide, The Blessing Basket Project® has already paid the US currency equivalent of more than $2.5 million to the Artisans it serves. Now, a decade later, villages that were destitute are prospering with thriving economies.

The birth of the Blessing Basket Project®
In 2002, when facing opposition in her own personal life, Theresa was inspired by the incredible support provided by her friends and family. They sent her notes, cards, and pictures for encouragement, which she kept in her own Blessing Basket® that she would turn to for daily reinforcement.
To motivate other women, Theresa began speaking at conferences and organizations, using her Blessing Basket® as a prop. Soon after, women started to request their own Blessing Basket®. Enthused by this interest, Theresa sought a way to curate a deeper connection with the maker of the baskets and the recipient, while simultaneously blessing both maker and recipient. Further, she wanted to ensure that the makers of the baskets would be compensated properly, without having to cede the majority of the profits to a middleman.

Finding a direct path to impoverished Artisans around the world took more than a year, but by the summer of 2003, the first major shipment of Blessing Baskets® arrived and the Project was on its way. Theresa continues to pay it forward every day by empowering the women of the Blessing Basket Project® while giving them the opportunity to make a better life for themselves, via the organization’s progressive technology and thought leadership in the space.

The results achieved by The Blessing Basket Project® have been the subject of several studies by some of the nation’s top universities. The organization leads in the use of innovative technologies, including its patent pending Artisan&You® technology.

Theresa has been honored as one a EBW’s 100 most influential leader of 2015 along with Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush, St. Louis’s business Journal 25 Most Influential Women; Humanitarian of the Year by Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville; and YWCA Non Profit Leader for her opinion leading perspective and unique approach to poverty reduction – to name a few.

Prior to founding The Blessing Basket Project®, Theresa was a journalist who achieved numerous honors, including 9 Emmy awards, over the course of her 20+ year career. Theresa now applies her journalism skills in sharing the stories of determination, inspiration and joy of Blessing Basket Project® Artisans from around the world – all while reminding us how one person can truly change the world.