



Grace Ueng, 40, gets physical therapy from Blair Tanner in Raleigh in February. Ueng, founder and president of Savvy Marketing, has been able to maintain her success despite nearly breaking her neck bicycling on a California mountain in September.

STAFF PHOTO BY TRAVIS LONG

grace under pressure

When Triangle entrepreneur Grace Ueng was hurt in a cycling accident last year, she learned to slow down. Clients learned they still can't keep up with her.

By VICKI LEE PARKER
STAFF WRITER

The day Grace Ueng turned 40 she was in the intensive care unit at a California hospital without a clue where she was or why she was there. She was wearing a neck brace, and strings of IVs and cords were trailing from her body.

Doctors told her that she had been found by a motorcyclist who had seen her lying on the side of a trail going down Sonoma Mountain and been transported by helicopter and medically evacuated to Santa Rosa.

She had a fractured neck and serious brain and back injuries. No one, least of all Ueng, knew how serious her situation was, the extent of her brain injuries, or whether she'd ever be able to work again.

"It was scary," says Richard Holcomb, a friend and chief executive of Strikelron, a Durham software company. "You can't see brain trauma. So you have questions like, 'Will you remember again? Will there be a loss of mental capacity?' ... You don't realize how fragile the brain is. It's scary when you depend on it."

By the end of the week, Ueng was orchestrating her own crisis control from her hospital bed. Holcomb, who had flown out to California to be with her, had Ueng's Blackberry and was e-mailing her clients and associates, updating them on her progress, reassuring them



Grace Ueng had brain trauma after a bike crash on her 40th birthday.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GRACE UENG

SEE GRACE, PAGE 4E