MESSAGE FROM WBENC’S CHIEF OF STAFF:
CANDACE WATERMAN REFLECTS ON NATIONAL BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH
## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

This calendar includes events hosted by WBENC’s regional partner organizations and strategic partners. Visit WBENC’s online calendar for more events.

### OCTOBER 2015

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| 15   | AMAC Southeast Regional Forum  
Jackson, Miss.  
Click here for details. |
| 18-21| 2015 NMSDC Conference + Business Opportunity Exchange  
San Diego, Calif.  
Click here for details. |
| 18-21| WPEO-DC: How to Leverage the Supplier Diversity Relationship  
Bethesda, Maryland  
Click here for details. |
| 19   | WBDC-MN and NCMSDC Joint Procurement Meeting Hosted by U.S. Bank  
Minneapolis, Minn.  
Click here for details. |
| 22   | CWE Women Business Leaders Conference  
Framingham, Mass.  
Click here for details. |
| 22   | LATINA Style Business Series - Phoenix  
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| 23   | 39th Annual LBA Sol Business Awards Gala  
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Click here for details. |

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Click here for details. |
| 5    | WPEO DC Annual Breakthrough Breakfast and Procurement Fair  
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| 6    | WBEA Texas Educational Encounter  
Bellaire, Tex.  
Click here for details. |
| 6    | WIPP ChallengeHER DOE  
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Click here for details. |
| 6    | WBSCS 20th Anniversary Celebration  
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| 9    | WPEO-NY Brown Bag Lunch with Johnson & Johnson  
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| 9    | GWBC LACE Awards  
Atlanta, Ga.  
Click here for details. |
| 9    | WEOConnect International in Canada National Conference  
Toronto, Canada  
Click here for details. |
| 18   | WPEO-NY: Prime Supplier/Second Tier Opportunities  
Bridgewater, N.J.  
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| 19-20| 2015 NGLCC National Dinner & Washington Procurement Forum  
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**NEW CORPORATE MEMBERS:**
PSC Industrial Outsourcing, LP, Education Networks of America (ENA)
DEAR FRIENDS,

In this issue of the President’s Report, we reflect on the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and, in a cause close to my heart, investigate how WBES can practice good business management when confronted with medical crisis, including long-term illnesses.

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and according to the American Cancer Society, it is estimated that in 2015:

- More than 40,000 women will die from breast cancer.
- More than 230,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women.

Those sobering statistics aside, more women are surviving this disease than ever before. I know this personally because I am a third-generation breast cancer survivor.

I was 37 years old when I was diagnosed, and it changed my life forever. I was initially stunned by the diagnosis, because at the time, I was working in the medical field, specifically in OB-GYN, and I was accustomed to dealing with illnesses, just not my own.

I remember telling the surgeon that getting cancer was not going to stop me from teeing off at Pinehurst Golf Course, it was not going to stop me from working, nor was it going to stop me from caring for my ailing mother.

As we do in business, my doctor and I developed a strategic plan for treatment, which included surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. Over the next year, I endured more than I thought I could, and learned just how courageous, strong, and focused I could be. I really didn’t have time to focus on my sickness; I had to focus on my recovery.

My support system rallied around me, which allowed me to successfully complete my treatment plan and, unfortunately, say goodbye to my mother at the same time. By being flexible and open to course modification, I was able to sustain and survive a difficult time and come out on the winning side.

Being a breast cancer survivor is an essential part of my identity, and something most people don’t know is that it qualifies as a disability. The theme of this month’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month is “My disability is one part of who I am.” We all know how important it is to accept and elevate all parts of your identity. Think about what it means to tell your story—and how it could affect your employees’ choices to tell their own truth. We are our own best leaders.

Being intentional is something I take seriously. When I was handed my diagnosis, I was intentional about planning for the unplanned. This is an essential step for an entrepreneur or employee. Long-term illness or natural disaster can be costly on a personal and professional level in so many ways.

When life happens to us—and yes, it will happen to you—we have to think ahead:

- What you would want to occur in your business should you be faced with an unplanned circumstance?
- What messaging should go to customers to assure them business is still ongoing?
- Who would handle communication with your customers and staff?

Having contingency arrangements could save the life of your business. In this issue, you’ll read stories of how women had to enact disaster recovery plans—and in some cases, rebuild from scratch. Take this opportunity to review your business’ disaster plan or establish a plan today.

I find that women business owners are a strong group. We know about challenge. We know how to be tough. Above all, when disaster strikes, the WBENC community stands together.

Sincerely,
CANDACE WATERMAN
WBENC CHIEF OF STAFF
WBENC is pleased to announce its annual search for America’s Top Corporations for Women’s Business Enterprises. The list of Top Corporations is designed to recognize organizations who are choosing to integrate policies and programs across the corporation to enable growth and reduce barriers for women-owned businesses; increasing opportunity in new markets – both domestically, and internationally; fueling innovation; and empowering communities through economic growth and job creation.

The 2015 Top Corporation Application gleans additional information where corporations are doing exceptional work in the areas of Business Case, Program Management, Supplier Management, Supplier Development, and Supplier Resources.

TO START THE APPLICATION PROCESS, contact Andrew Gaeckle, Senior Program Manager at 1-202-872-5515 ext. 8888 and send the completed application to topcorporations@wbenc.org by October 16, 2015.

TUCK-WBENC EXECUTIVE PROGRAM

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2015!

The 2015 Tuck-WBENC Executive Program brought to you by IBM, occurred on October 4-9 in Palisades, N.Y. WBENC-Certified women business owners from across the country came together for a week-long executive development program, designed to assist WBEs in evaluating their businesses through financials, market analysis, and leadership. WBENC congratulates these women for their commitment and investment in their businesses and in the 2015 Tuck-WBENC Executive Program.

http://www.wbenc.org/tuck-wbenc-executive-program/
NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH: ERODING STIGMAS AND STEREOTYPES

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the federal National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), celebrated in October each year, and the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. One in five Americans has a disability, which is legally defined as someone who has a recorded physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, according to the 2010 U.S. Census.

“Even though many people experience disability, many negative stereotypes about individuals with disabilities remain,” says Jill Houghton, Executive Director at U.S. Business Leadership Network: Driving Success Through Disability Inclusion (USBLN®). “Stereotypes and biases serve to unfairly and sometimes unintentionally keep qualified, capable people out of jobs. The beauty of business-to-business networks like USBLN and WBENC is that they provide a ‘safe’ place for business owners to share their challenges and effectively learn from each other.”

USBLN held their 18th Annual National Conference and Biz2Biz Expo in Austin, Texas last week, where they also celebrated USBLN’s certified disability-owned businesses, including those businesses owned by service-disabled veterans. The USBLN serves as the collective voice of nearly 50 Business Leadership Network affiliates across the United States, representing over 5,000 businesses. Similar to WBEs, Disability Owned Business Enterprises (DOBEs) have the opportunity to market certification and connect with USBLN member companies.

Sarah Babineau, Founder and Managing Partner at Compass Metrics, is a dual-certified DOBE and WBE, as well as an outspoken disability awareness advocate. She echoes Houghton’s sentiment that NDEAM is meant to encourage education, innovation, and creativity of people with disabilities.

“People with disabilities are not a monolithic group, even among those who share the same condition,” says Babineau. “For many, ‘disability’ sounds like you’re saying; ‘I’m less than a whole person.’ Even in supplier diversity, disability-owned is not as common as woman-owned. I think this is going to change, but it starts with education.”

“PTSD is a highly misunderstood and highly stigmatized disorder,” says Babineau. “Most people think of soldiers, yet they don’t understand that as a civilian woman—I am the poster child for this condition. The majority of people suffering from PTSD are civilian women. Nobody talks about this, so the myths and stigmas abound. The first step is disclosure.”

When an employee or an entrepreneur chooses to disclose about a disability, it is important to understand the vocabulary. For instance, more than 70 percent of disabilities are a non-apparent disability, which cannot be inferred from a person’s physical presence, rather than an apparent disability, according to the Department of Labor. In addition, disabilities can be labeled as acquired disabilities or disabilities originating since birth.

WBE Joanne Peterson, Founder and CEO of Abator, an IT consulting company, is part of the community with an acquired, apparent disability. Because of a malformed pelvis resulting from a car accident at an early age, Peterson suffers from severe arthritis and other complications. She has had to use crutches and has endured several operations to ensure her mobility.

“I learned about USBLN certification from another WBE, Joyce Bender of Bender Consulting,” says Babineau, whose firm is the only business in the nation to specialize both in diversity and inclusion best practices and federal affirmative action compliance, knows that disclosure can be tough for anyone. She has lived with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for her entire adult career, and she has made the decision to be a visible advocate of the disorder.

Be sure to read more about diversity and disability at the following resources:

- Department of Labor
- Office of Disability Employment Policy
- National Disability Institute

PRESIDENT’S REPORT // FEATURES
Peterson. “Whenever you talk about diversity on any level, you have to include people with disabilities. They will bring unique perspectives to your goods and services that you might not be aware of.”

Despite being WBENC-Certified in 1999, Peterson just recently found out about USBLN certification. She plans to submit her paperwork to get dual-certified by the end of the year. She attended a National Disability Institute event earlier this year, and she was galvanized by the support for entrepreneurs with disabilities.

“I was surprised to find out how many people with disabilities are entrepreneurs—about 15 percent of people with disabilities are entrepreneurs—and the economic impact we have,” says Peterson. “One of the reasons I started my business in 1983 was because it offered the flexibility I needed as a person with a disability.”

Although Babineau’s PTSD is a non-apparent disability, she says the most pressing concern for disability employment awareness is the growing necessity for more visibility in the business community.

“Just as we’ve done for other marginalized communities, we have to encourage the private sector to show disability inclusiveness through visible business symbols,” says Babineau. “When we have leaders who disclose a disability, it’s a draw for other leaders with disabilities to come forward and understand their disability does not limit their career options. And it speaks volumes about the organizational culture. When we show that diversity—including disabilities—in the workforce leads to making money, we’re speaking ‘C-suite’.”

Houghton agrees. “Environments such as USBLN and WBENC allow business owners to overcome attitudinal barriers and drive business success through inclusion,” says Houghton.

GET CERTIFIED THROUGH USBLN

Are you a WBE who may qualify to be dual-certified as a DOBE? The USBLN Disability Supplier Diversity Program® is the nation’s leading third-party certifier of disability-owned business enterprises (DOBE®s), including companies owned by service-disabled veterans.

The DSDP serves in an advocacy and certification role, linking disability-owned businesses to information, resources, and contract opportunities with corporate America, government agencies, and other buying organizations.

There are an estimated 57 million people with disabilities in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Department, approximately 15 percent of persons with disabilities who are working are also self-employed.

Learn more here.
S haw, who started Boo-Shaw Bakery in 2012, suffers from an undiagnosed severe rheumatology disease, osteoporosis, and blood disorders that are slowly claiming her mobility. She suffered a stroke in her 20s and had to endure a radical hysterectomy in her 30s. Yet she hasn’t lost her optimism.

“I’m probably one of the only business owners who can’t eat their product,” says Shaw. “I was always the sick kid. So it has really been my grounding in my faith and my family that helps me get through each and every day.”

When she decided to take the cookie recipe she had “rolling around her kitchen drawer” and scale it into Boo-Shaw Bakery in 2012, she says every step in the process became about cultivating relationships with vendors she could trust.

Her husband acts as her business partner, helping her manufacture Boo-Shaw’s signature cookies in their current shared commercial kitchen space and organizing equipment purchases for the upcoming move to their own commercial space. Shaw also cites her close relationships with her banker, attorney, and vendors as based in integrity and faith—which make it easier to manage hard days with her chronic illness.

“Right now, we’re working on patenting our blending process,” says Shaw. “My attorney knows me—and my illness—and he knows how hard I’ve been working to get here. When you are totally honest and authentic about your identity, it pays you back.”

Shaw has also taken advantage of the WBENC community; she got WBENC-Certified through Women’s Business Enterprise Council South in 2012 immediately after founding her bakery.
and she has had opportunities to broaden her network with fellow WBEs and Corporate Members throughout Florida and the United States. Now she is concentrating on ensuring her business is ready for scale. As an African-American disabled woman, Shaw admits she never thought she would get the chance to pursue this dream.

“When you are totally honest and authentic about your identity, it pays you back.”

Although Shaw has to make the choice to manage her business with a long-term illness, what happens when a woman business owner must confront a traumatic injury?

Three and a half years ago, Kathleen Frantz, founder of Katy’s Goodness, experienced an accidental seven-foot fall when an outdoor railing gave way, sending her crashing upside down onto a brick pathway. Although she miraculously escaped without paralysis, she found herself with severe spinal soft tissue damage, hematoma on the head, broken bones, contusions, and medically required bed rest for six weeks.

Before the accident, Frantz had leveraged her award-winning background as a professional pastry chef to elevate her kitchen creations and bring Katy’s Goodness treats around the world. Her muffins and cookies were sold in Borders bookstores and Barnie’s Tea and Coffee shops; she also partnered with Kenmore/Sears to send 250,000 My OH Mega® cookies to troops overseas.

“I basically went into hibernation mode from April 2012, when I had the fall, to August 2012,” says Frantz. “I shut the business down for that time. It was just too hard as a single mom to try to heal while running a business.”

Although it was more difficult to bring the business back after the hiatus than she expected, Frantz says she was driven by her passion for food and people—especially after the accident.

“I think I learned more in those six weeks and during that time than in many years of business before,” says Frantz. “It was a long recovery, and I’m still dealing with effects of the fall. But it was a humbling experience to realize you’ve built a community ready to be there for you.”

Katy’s Goodness’ mission statement speaks to Frantz’s commitment to people: “Creating foods that are better for you while strengthening communities, one product at a time.”

“When we came back, I knew we had to change the business model to include the retail industry and strengthen our structure so we can continue to impact our community, whether it’s our consumers, our local community, or the veteran programs our product supports. We want to positively support these communities for years to come,” says Frantz.

Recently, Frantz has added another layer to her community focus: women. After getting certified in 2013, Franzt has attended events with her local RPO, Women’s Business Development Center – Chicago (WBDC-Chicago). She also just recently incorporated the Women Owned logo on her packaging and in marketing in August.

“When I’m at events, women come over just because they saw the logo,” says Frantz. “Seeing other women succeed is good.”

“When I’m at events, women come over just because they saw the logo. Seeing other women succeed is good.”

Although Frantz and Shaw both face challenges and opportunities ahead, they both advocate the slow-and-steady approach. Embrace each day, and take one thing at a time. And when in doubt, eat a cookie.

WBE Loni Shaw of Boo-Shaw Bakery at the cnFMSDC trade show at Walt Disney World earlier this year.

WBE Kathleen Frantz (far left) exhibited Katy’s Goodness at the Easter Seals Walk with Me event in Rochester, NY last month.
WBENC INSIGHTS

Access it Today!

WBENC Insights is a password-protected site for WBENC-Certified WBEs, Regional Partner Organizations, and National Corporate and Government Members with information on industry forecasts, procurement trends, government contracting, and skill building.

If you have not yet created an account please check all mail folders for a message from our media partner, MobilePaks, a VIA Company, with instructions on how to login to your account.

Additional information about WBENC Insights can be found under Resources at www.wbenc.org.
THE DECISION TO EVACUATE

For many people, Hurricane Katrina sounded like a myth. When evacuations happen once or twice every season without consequence, the tendency to trust hurricane warnings wanes. Even naval wife and then-WBC Gulf Coast Director of Certification LaKesha White didn’t think, “This could be the big one.”

“I was waiting for my husband to come home after a seven-month deployment,” says White. “We had a plan in place for evacuation, but I was stubborn. I deviated because he was supposed to be home. I thought my son and I could ride this one out. But my family in Texas pleaded with me, so we went. A normal four-hour drive to Beaumont, Texas took 14 hours.”

Although she was already in Birmingham, Alabama on business, Kate Armstrong, the then-Executive Director of WBC Gulf Coast, couldn’t fly or drive home to New Orleans to take any valuables from either her home or the WBC Gulf Coast office, which was located in downtown New Orleans at the time.

“I was lucky that I already was out of the city,” says Armstrong, “WBC Gulf Coast had just worked with a Corporate Member to secure Birmingham office space—a cubicle, really—the month before. It was impeccable timing.”

TEN YEARS LATER: WBENC LOOKS BACK ON HURRICANE KATRINA

Ten years ago, the future of the city of New Orleans looked bleak. Hurricane Katrina, the costliest natural disaster in United States history, made landfall on Monday, August 29, 2005. In the next 48 hours, the levees would fail and the personal and business landscapes for woman-owned businesses in the Big Easy—including certified and future WBES and staff members of WBC Gulf Coast (now WBEC South)—would change forever.
One WBE had a plan for Hurricane Katrina, even if she did not know how much it would take to enact.

“Before Katrina, no one really planned,” says Michele Wink, President of UP Professional Solutions. “Evacuation is a pain in the neck. But after Hurricane Ivan in 2004, I knew we needed some kind of plan. It wasn’t very sophisticated; I basically had a phone tree in a folder and a group that would, post Katrina, be called our ‘business continuity team’ now: our CFO, accounting manager, payroll coordinators, and human resource coordinators all at the ready.”

Wink made the call on Saturday afternoon, arranging for hotel rooms in Houston for her team and setting a meet-up time. She left the city at 2:00 a.m. Sunday, her two sons in tow. She remembers thinking she would be back in time to process payroll on Wednesday.

Sentiment can play a part in the decision to evacuate, and a decade later, WBE Teresa Lawrence, President of Delta Personnel, still gets emotional when she recalls her “typical Cuban American reaction” when she heard about the storm.

“I was like, ‘I’m sure it’s going to blow over!’” says Lawrence. “And my employee looked at me, and she said, ‘Yeah, you are crazy.’ But I still thought it would be like a normal weekend evacuation: Pick up the computers and put them on higher ground. Pack up the kids for three days and go to Jackson, Mississippi.”

“And then, it happened,” says Lawrence.

**WHEN TEMPORARY BECOMES PERMANENT**

“[Clients said] ‘We know you’re affected by the storm, but your competition says they can do it faster.’ We had to prove them wrong.”

Although Hurricane Katrina sideswiped the city, the water rose too far and too fast for the levee system surrounding New Orleans. A tragedy played out on national television as these women started to reorganize their lives and protect their futures.

Wink wasn’t back in New Orleans by Wednesday, but luckily, she had her core team with laptops in Houston, Texas. Due to the outages in the 504 area code, she had to purchase new cell phones for her staff, but Wink says that was a small sacrifice. With 225 employees in 24 states, she had to ensure business resumed as normal.

“We were about one week late processing that first payroll, and there were nervous and worried people,” says Wink. “But time is money. Competitors were champing at the bit. I had clients call me and say ‘We know you’re affected by the storm, but your competition says they can do it faster.’ We had to prove them wrong.”

Busy ensuring employee and client needs were met, Wink says, the company doubled its line of credit. Despite not having a plan for Hurricane
Katrina, her bank worked with her to extend the line of credit and develop options.

Armstrong, who ran the WBC Gulf Coast out of her cubicle in Birmingham during and after the storm, was in communication with her staff and board members when she realized she had to get to the WBC Gulf Coast office in New Orleans to access certification files and other important documents.

“The office was on the 17th floor downtown, and we were told there was unlikely any damage beyond windows being blown out,” says Armstrong. “But the city was under martial law—and there wasn’t any power.”

“IT TOOK DIPLOMACY TO EXPLAIN TO PEOPLE WHO WEREN’T AFFECTED BY THE STORM THAT WE DIDN’T HAVE AN OFFICE. AT THE SAME TIME, WE WERE ALSO DEALING WITH WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS IN THE AREA WHO LOST EVERYTHING.”

The city had only cleared business owners and property owners in seven select zip codes to re-enter the city.

“The troops told us we only had two hours to get in the building to get what we needed,” says Armstrong. “I was worried it might take me an hour to just walk the 17 flights of stairs of the building in the dark with no air conditioning! But thankfully, I had brought one of those large, Euro-trip style backpacks. I fit as many of the time-sensitive certification files as I could, the checkbook, and then lugged the CPU tower in my arms.”

As Armstrong returned to Birmingham and continued to field hundreds of inquiries, White remembers trying to process certification applications and help WBC Gulf Coast businesses when she did not have an office or even a working phone.

“The cell phones weren’t working, landlines weren’t working, and this was before smartphones,” says White. “Email wasn’t in the palm of your hand. You couldn’t just send a mass text. It took diplomacy to explain to people who weren’t affected by the storm that we didn’t have an office. At the same time, we were also dealing with women business owners in the area who lost everything.”

“I STARTED TO GEAR DOWN, TO FOCUS ON MY KIDS, BUT MY EMPLOYEES WERE ADAMANT: THEY COULDN’T FIX THEIR LIVES, BUT THEY HAD TO DO SOMETHING. WE ALL HAD TO DO SOMETHING—OR WE’D GO CRAZY.”

During this time, Lawrence was moving her family, including her mother and grandmother, three kids, and husband, into a decaying apartment in Baton Rouge. With mattresses on the floor and a cooler for a refrigerator, Lawrence thought about throwing in the towel on her business.

“I think a person either gears up or gears down, but your mind works very differently after a disaster,” says Lawrence. “I started to gear down, to focus on my kids, but my employees were adamant: They couldn’t fix their lives, but they had to do something. We all had to do something—or we’d go crazy.”

FOR CAPTIONS AND THE REST OF THE STORY, CLICK HERE.
FOCUS ON THE FORUM
OPEN THE BOOKS AND BRING IN THE BUSINESS

WHEN LYNN PERENIC ROSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF TAKING OVER A FAILING LABEL-MAKING COMPANY, SHE WAS INITIALLY SHOCKED AT JUST HOW DEEP THE COMPANY’S PROBLEMS WERE. THE YEAR WAS 2010 AND THE COMPANY, ARGENT TAPE & LABEL, HAD $400,000 IN PAYABLES AND $1.8 MILLION IN DEBT. IT HAD BEEN ROCKED BY A PERFECT STORM OF A RECESSIONARY ECONOMY AND THE DEPARTURE OF A MAJOR PHARMACEUTICAL CLIENT.

WITH a stock certificate in hand, one working press, and three employees, Perenic— previously an urban special education teacher who saw possibilities in her students and helped them succeed against the odds—vowed to bring Argent Tape & Label to prosperity.

First on the agenda was to adopt the philosophy of open book management. Opening the books allowed everyone to see their current financial situation and to realize their progress while also engaging them in the company’s success. This style of management continues to be at the core of what drives the Argent Tape & Label engine.

Five years later, the factory is humming with employees and new business, including major auto companies and their Tier I suppliers, such as Johnson Controls. Argent Tape & Label has enjoyed significant growth every year and continues to prosper. As a result, Argent has been recognized with several awards: Michigan’s Top 50 Companies to Watch in 2012, The Great Game of Business All-Star Award in 2014, and the Outstanding Achiever Award from Argent’s Regional Partner Organization.

“We strive for a zero defect rate—parts are adequately protected and [we] have eliminated contamination concerns.”
the Women’s Business Enterprise Council—Great Lakes (WBEC-GL) in 2012.

Argent Tape & Label produces pressure-sensitive labels for the automotive, food and beverage, horticultural, and pharmaceutical industries. The company is also an authorized 3M distributor.

Argent Tape & Label prides itself on personalized service, whether a client is an automotive aftermarket corporation in need of a specific seam sealer, an industrial engineer looking for an adhesive that cures instantly in UV light, a pharmaceutical company in need of specialized labels, or a small business searching for low-volume labels. Argent Tape & Label prides itself on significant savings in costs, lead times, and waste. “We strive for a zero defect rate—parts are adequately protected and [we] have eliminated contamination concerns,” she says.

Clients include General Motors Company, Ford, Chrysler, Toyota, Pfizer, and Johnson Controls, for which Argent creates labels for harness straps and car interiors.

Key to Argent’s growth has been its WBENC Certification, attained in 2011.

A good friend and fellow woman business owner, Linda O’Brien, introduced Perenic to WBEC-GL and the benefits of WBENC Certification. “We took the same classes and attended the WBENC Great Lakes Conference. That’s when I saw that this was a phenomenal organization for women,” Perenic recalls. “The women said, ‘This isn’t a handout—it’s a hand up,’ and that made sense to me.”

A Power Lunch purchased at a WBEC-GL event led to an introduction to Ford, which in turn led to an introduction to Johnson Controls.

“It’s been traditionally a man’s world in the printing business, but with WBENC as my partner, I’ve carved out a successful place as a women’s business enterprise.”

Perenic took the bold step of opening her books for Johnson Controls to review. She welcomed the company to her factory and to one of her weekly employee “huddles.” She even gave one of the head buyers a “homework assignment.” She gave him a copy of the Great Game of Business and let him know he was to read the book before attending a huddle. The tactic paid off and she won the business. “They are all about transparency, and very few people will show their financials.”

“There is no question that WBENC Certification has been a door-opener,” Perenic says, citing the importance of networking and attending the regional events and the National Conference & Business Fairs, which she has attended since 2011. “As a teacher, I love the educational workshops.”

She is a new member of the Forum and part of the marketing team, and she also volunteers with WBEC-GL. Whenever possible, she sources other WBEs, from promotional products to temporary services.

Going forward, Perenic is excited to mine more opportunities at the regional and national levels. She already has WBENC’s 2016 events, including the Summit & Salute and the National Conference & Business Fair, on her calendar.

“It’s been traditionally a man’s world in the printing business, but with WBENC as my partner, I’ve carved out a successful place as a women’s business enterprise,” she says.

www.argent-label.com
#BuyWomenOwned

Proudly supporting those who support Women Owned businesses

Bringing consumer recognition to products supplied by Women Owned companies

Learn more at www.womenownedlogo.com
COMPANY AT-A-GLANCE

Company Name: ELEMENT
Founded: 2013
WBENC-Certified: 2014
Headquartered: New York, NY
Website: www.elementsnacks.com
Social Media: @ELEMENTsnacks
www.facebook.com/elementsnacks
Slogan: Life is too short to snack badly
Retail: Whole Foods, Sprouts, Kings/Balducci, and organic and natural food markets

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Growing up in Europe, founders Nadia and Fred, enjoyed childhoods filled with real foods in cultures that revere high-quality ingredients and respect for farmers. With ELEMENT they want to bring the best of European flavors to a traditional American snack. ELEMENT is simple and tasty; a smart indulgence, because healthy doesn’t mean boring.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTS

With delicious flavors like dark chocolate and strawberry, Element Snack’s rice and corn cakes are all natural, gluten free, non GMO and vegan. At 80 calories, 5 grams of sugar and no cholesterol, their snacks are both satisfying and indulgent. Per weight, ELEMENT has more chocolate than rice or corn, but never so much that it overwhelms.

“Being a woman entrepreneur is no small feat. It requires a specific personality, skill-set, and über-multi-tasking ability. But it also allows us to pursue our dreams in our own terms, to live our lives more authentically, and to set the tone for what we need. Woman Owned businesses create corporate cultures that are different, more flexible, and nimble. Challenges loom in front of us like tall mountains, but we are tough and every morning when I step into the office I feel that there has never been a better time to own a business.”
Arnold was involved in investment banking and technology before she began to investigate starting a popcorn company. Even more challenging, Arnold was caring for her husband, who subsequently passed away from cancer. Arnold knew she had to succeed for her children, and she pressed on despite the uphill battle for startups.

“I have a business sense, but I didn’t know anything about food,” says Arnold. “I learned everything about supply chain, sales, and marketing—and that has been instrumental. My biggest challenge from day one was doing it without a business partner and without external funding.”

She often found herself feeling overwhelmed bootstrapping the business with limited resources and trying to grow the revenue beyond $5-$10M before raising outside capital. While gaining traction in the retail channel, she continued to network and recruit for her team, but it wasn’t easy.

“It’s really challenging in the sub-$5 million market to get external funding,” says Arnold. “And even more important was the access to ‘smart capital,’ such as that partner who could help tackle problems. Or getting advice and guidance as a young brand. I really needed that.”

Those challenges are why this widow and mother of two has taken women’s entrepreneurship as a topic close to her heart. She became WBENC-Certified in 2014, and she is currently redesigning her significant marketing pieces to focus on leveraging her WBENC Certification and the Women Owned logo.

“Entrepreneurism gives women access to flexible professional settings, access to wealth, independence, and the opportunity to pursue a cause,” says Arnold. “As a female entrepreneur and a single mother of two young children, achieving life balance has been a big challenge. I
“I would love a more robust program to connect retailers to corporations committed to diversity in the supply chain. Give Women Owned products a chance on your shelf. Let’s own this.”

finally raised outside capital earlier this year and assembled an A Team and I feel like I just got my nose right above the water. Although my time is still limited, I feel that I can finally spare some bandwidth to start thinking about how I can help others, especially female entrepreneurs. I want to share my learning and help become a trailblazer.”

In particular, Arnold wants consumers to consider the benefits of Women Owned and sustainability sourced products like 479° Popcorn. In addition to being low-calorie and gluten-free, Arnold’s popcorn is made with organic, non-GMO, proprietary grown heirloom kernels. She is proud of her company’s “green mission,” which is committed to purchasing local produce, composting where possible, and investing in ethical fair trade.

“Our biggest challenge has been finding organic products that deliver on taste,” says Arnold. “In the snack category, where flavor and taste are paramount, you have to make some tough decisions. And you have to be willing to risk whether consumers even appreciate the challenge.”

Two and a half years ago, 479° flipped business models to move away from niche direct-to-consumer products to scale their gourmet line and leverage the retail channels. Although the switch came with challenges, 479° Popcorn can now be found at Target, Safeway, Sprouts, and Ahold, and it’s gaining traction for more high-end brand outlets as well.

In August, Arnold was one of 30 small business owners selected to attend the first White House Demo Day, focused on inclusive entrepreneurship, where she met President Obama. She’ll be speaking at an upcoming New York San Francisco event for Fast Company, describing her journey and the ever-competitive nature of snack food. She hopes to attend more national WBENC events next year.

“As a business owner, I can lean in on where I spend my money and support suppliers who align with my mission and goals,” says Arnold. “I would love a more robust program to connect retailers to corporations committed to diversity in the supply chain. Give Women Owned products a chance on your shelf. Let’s own this.”

http://www.479degrees.com

Jean Arnold, Founder and CEO

WWW.WBENC.ORG // OCTOBER EDITION 2015
WHAT DOES YOUR COMPANY DO?

Moses: M2 Connections is a broadband provider in East Alabama; we deliver symmetrical broadband services and direct Internet connections via fiber optic facilities, offering our customers 10 Megabit to 10 Gigabit connections. We are also the only dark fiber provider in our service area and we provide full deployment of fiber networks for municipalities, government entities, telecommunications companies, and campuses, as well as businesses.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF OBTAINING A CONTRACT?

Moses: It has been difficult to look at government contracts, which could be the result of not having a mentor to guide us. In the past, we found the bid process requires the company to submit three (3) past performances, which has been a hindrance, because in order to have a past performance you must first be given a chance to demonstrate what your company can do. It is my opinion, a company may have to be a subcontractor in order to gain the experience needed, unless you happen to get blessed with an opportunity like this.

HOW DID YOU BECOME AWARE OF THE CONTRACT?

Moses: It was not a contract at first. We became aware of the need with FEMA through matchmaker events [held by our local Small Business Development Center, SBDC], but after the meetings, it was quite some time before any additional conversations were initiated. However, through this introduction at the Matchmaker, we were allowed to assist in identifying the problem; develop a solution and follow the bid process. FEMA suggested a set aside, which allowed us to announce that we were a WOSB and the project was within the underutilized codes. So we proceeded and other WOSB's expressed interest and participated.

HOW LONG DID THE PROCESS TAKE?

Moses: We began the process in January and received the award in August. Of course when you are in the midst of it, it felt like forever; but, in hindsight, it was done pretty quickly by government standards. Just to pull the bid together, it took about 2-3 weeks. Luckily, everything was done online through www.FBO.gov and no paper copy was required, which was unusual from past years of multiple notebooks of paperwork.

WAS THE PROCESS SIMILAR TO BIDDING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR?

Moses: The process was much different due to the additional federal regulatory requirements and various regulations within the contracting group. It was definitely a learning experience.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

Moses: I would hope for the opportunity to ask more in depth questions about requirements to any specific (FAR) guidelines. Sometimes that information is not available early in the process. It is very clear that regardless of the size or complexity of a project, the administrative requirements are large and this
can be hard on a small business that is not held to such regulations in the private sector.

Going forward, when I attend a matchmaker, I will reference this specific project and will ask direct questions for interest in something along these lines for other organizations. Before, we used to stick with a product set of what we do, but now we have a specific offering to present and build upon. It has been difficult navigating within companies, especially government agencies, to find the right person to market our services.

What advice would you give to other WBES pursuing a government contract?

Moses: Utilize your local SBDC because they have been an asset for us with finding contacts within companies. They organize the matchmaker events we have participated in, which clearly lead to this opportunity. Also, it is very important to build relationships and don’t give up!

When submitting a bid, pay attention to detail and read. I would hate to lose the bid because of something I missed. Even if you have built the relationship with a person you have been working on the bid with, they may not have authority over the final decision. My focus was getting it completed correctly and to not give anyone an excuse to say no!

www.m2connections.com

USHCC Names Argent Associates President and CEO Betty Manetta 2015 Businesswoman of the Year

The United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC) awarded WBE Betty Manetta, President and CEO of Argent Associates, USHCC’s 2015 Businesswoman of the Year award at the organization’s National Convention on September 22 in Houston, Texas.

Each year, the USHCC recognizes a female entrepreneur whose outstanding leadership, pioneering spirit, social and economic contributions exemplify the best of America’s business community.

“As a dual-certified woman-owned and Hispanic-owned business owner and leader, Betty proves that the intersection of success and community can be an essential part of your business,” says Pamela Prince-Eason, WBENC President and CEO. “She is such an important part of the WBENC community—including her work on our National Conference & Business Fair Host Committee this year—so seeing her receive this accolade is beyond deserving.”

Argent Associates, Inc was founded in 1998 specializing in supply chain logistics and technology solutions. Under Manetta’s leadership, Argent Associates has evolved from a start-up into a multi-business unit company with over $280 million in annual revenues. Argent has offices across the US and customers spanning Fortune 500 companies, government and mid-cap markets.

www.argentassociates.com

Read the Press Release Here.
WBE SUCCESS STORY
EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

In celebrating the 25th year anniversary of Soft Stuff Distributors, the premier specialty food distributor she founded in 1990, President and CEO Lois Gamerman looks back on the company’s growth with humility. “We started in my sun room and within a year we were in our first physical location. Three moves later, we are now in a 33,000-square-foot facility with a 10,000-square-foot freezer, with plans for a larger building in two years.”

On a national level, Gamerman jumped enthusiastically into networking and educational opportunities, attending every National Conference & Business Fair and Summit & Salute since her company became certified.

“WBENC Certification gets you into the party, but you have to work to get yourself a seat at the table,” she observes.

Her track record of success in achieving business is impressive: Soft Stuff Distributors has won Done Deal Awards for 2012 in the WBE to Corporate Sponsor category, and in 2013 in the WBE to WBE category.

“WBEs provide the same best-in-class business execution that the business world expects from its non-diversity suppliers,” says Gamerman. “I remember when my business was very small, and I was trying to figure things out. Other women took the time to show me the way, gave me advice, and spent time mentoring me. I want to do that for other women because it’s the right thing to do.”

In Minneapolis at the June 2013 WBENC National Conference & Business Fair, when Fuller

“WBEs provide the same best-in-class business execution that the business world expects from its non-diverse suppliers. I remember when my business was very small, and I was trying to figure things out. Other women took the time to show me the way, gave me advice, and spent time mentoring me. I want to do that for other women because it’s the right thing to do.”
had to bow out of a planned dinner, the three Sodexo executives that took her place clicked with Gamerman and asked for an office visit immediately following the event. This led to a contract by December of that year.

This year, Sodexo awarded Soft Stuff Distributors two major recognitions: Sodexo’s Partner of the Year, the top honor, and Strategic Diverse Vendor Partner, at Sodexo’s annual Vendor Partner Meeting in June.

Then, in Austin at the 2015 National Conference & Business Fair, Gamerman saw her Sodexo clients talking to Compass/Foodbuy executives during an evening reception coincidentally featuring food carts. Gamerman introduced herself to the Compass/Foodbuy executives, which led to a meeting at their Charlotte, North Carolina corporate office. The meeting was extremely successful. “Even though we were already under contract with Compass/Foodbuy, we did not have the proper contacts to advance our relationship. If we hadn’t gone to Austin, we would never have met them,” she says.

She also partners with other WBES, such as Sweet Street Desserts, Inc.’s Sandy Solomon and Country Fresh Batter, Inc. to source products.

Gamerman also took advantage of the Tuck-WBENC Executive Education program, attending the program on scholarship in 2014. She was so impressed that she and her husband and business partner Bob Gamerman took the Growing Your Minority Business to Scale class at Dartmouth. The two will attend the Digital Excellence Program for Minority Entrepreneurs on marketing and social media at Google’s headquarters in December, with Tuck School of Business Associate Professor Alva H. Taylor.

“Being in a room with smart people—selflessly giving of themselves—is a very dynamic and exciting experience,” she says.

She is also an enthusiastic speaker, having spoken on a panel in Austin and WPEO-DC for Executive Director Sandra Eberhard on topics such as how to guard against internal employee theft. She is very interested in sharing her experiences with other WBES. “I love mentoring and have told WBES that I meet that they can reach out to me at any time.”

www.gosoftstuff.com

INC. MAGAZINE RECOGNIZES WOMEN LED COMPANIES

WBENC CONGRATULATES THE 16 WOMEN WHOSE WBENC-CERTIFIED COMPANIES WERE RANKED BY INC. MAGAZINE AS ONE OF THE 50 FASTEST-GROWING WOMEN-LED COMPANIES IN THE UNITED STATES. THESE AMAZING CEOs ARE INSPIRATIONS TO THE WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESSES EVERYWHERE.

#2 Pinnacle Group – Nina Vaca
#5 TransPerfect – Elizabeth Etling
#7 BrightStar Care – Shelly Sun
#13 WDS – Jennifer Maier
#14 Cenergy International Services – June Ressler
#16 Atrium Staffing – Rebecca Cenni
#18 Saratoga Roofing & Construction – Chris Green
#19 InGenesis – Veronica Edwards
#20 Merrimak Capital Company – Mary Kariotis
#21 Orion Associates – Rebecca Thomley

#22 MegaCorp Logistics – Denise Legg
#27 Universal Asset Management – Keri Wright
#28 Global Facility Management & Construction – Lauryn Blank
#36 KellyMitchell – Cassandra Sanford
#41 E2 Optic – Kristi Alford
#42 KaTom Restaurant Supply – Patricia Bible
#45 Simplicity Consulting – Lisa Hufford

VIEW ENTIRE LIST HERE.
Although ACCENT-DMC has many national customers, it has a soft spot for its home town of New Orleans, where it was founded in 1991. Lyons and her team roll out the red carpet—and many second-line jazz parades through town—to ensure that her customers enjoy an authentic New Orleans experience.

This year, in recognition of its excellence, ACCENT-DMC was nominated for two prestigious International Special Events Society “ISES Esprit Awards.” ACCENT-DMC won the 2015 Best Meeting/Conference Program over $250,000 for a conference. The program featured a lifestyles event within the convention center, with four unique relaxation pavilions spread around the trade show floor.

ACCENT-DMC was also nominated for Best Event for a Non-Profit Organization under $75,000 for “FestiGals Bodacious Bras for a Cause Luncheon & Auction.” This event was a community give-back of FestiGals, a 501(c)(3) annual women’s getaway weekend created by Lyons five years ago. Each summer, women travel across the nation to New Orleans to be inspired and connected through powerful women-centric seminars with uniquely New Orleans events like the Stiletto Stroll.

ACCENT-DMC became WBENC-Certified when
Lyons met the inspirational President of WBEC South, Blanca Robinson, at a WBEC South event in 2006. Immediately, Lyons decided to pursue certification. The powerful programs, as well as networking opportunities, were what motivated her. “I was excited to network with so many successful women at one event…WBEC South was for me,” she says.

Today, she would advise other women-owned businesses to get certified early in their business leadership. “Women need to get WBENC-Certified at the start of their businesses. It’s a tremendous way to jump-start your company by sharing business intelligence and connecting with prospective clients and other WBEs,” explains Lyons. In 2010, ACCENT-DMC was honored to receive the WBE Supplier of the Year award from WBEC South.

In 2014, ACCENT-DMC was honored to partner with WBENC to produce the 2014 WBENC Summit & Salute in New Orleans and create a memorable event for attendees “that could only happen in New Orleans.” At the same time, Lyons kept a close eye on details and business flow for sponsors, presenters, and attendees.

To complement the local team, ACCENT-DMC partnered with local WBENC-Certified WBEs such as Deborah Farge, President of Convention Plant Designs, Inc. for the centerpieces, and Kathy Anderson of Kathy Anderson Photography. The event started with a simple evening replicating the streets of New Orleans and ended with the final night’s Mardi Gras Gala incorporating beads, jazz parade, and Grammy Award-winning entertainment. Lyons is a new member of the Forum and serves on the marketing team. As a “marketing guru,” she is honored to serve with so many talented women to make a difference. She also enjoys being a resource on Marketing and Special Event committees for WBEC South.

ACCENT-DMC averages 100 events a year. With 25 years in the business, its seasoned professional team is a go-to DMC resource of choice for meetings and events both in New Orleans and with repeat clients across the country. In 2014, Lyons served on local committees for the Women Presidents Organization (WPO) and worked with Dr. Marsha Firestone, WPO President—who is also President and Founder of the Women Presidents’ Educational Organization (WPEO) and a graduate of Newcomb College in New Orleans—on a parade for business owners through the streets of New Orleans.

“ACCENT-DMC provides outstanding and efficient service in a most professional manner. Our delivery of service throughout events we produce contributes greatly to the success of our customers’ meetings,” says Lyons.
ESSENTIALS - WBENC COLLECTION
Make a statement with the premier line of WBENC signature products. Engage our community and share the WBENC brand when you travel. See the WBENC Collection during the National Conference & Business Fair to select items that fit your personal style. You can also view and purchase additional products today online at shopwbenc.com.

- Pebble Grain Zippered Portfolio W/ Calculator
- Executive Rhinestone Pens
- Sling Backpacks
- 16 Oz Tervis Tumbler
- Tervis Water Bottle
- Alexis Nylon Purse Style Wine Tote Bag
- Bling Mugs

shopwbenc.com
WBEC PA-DE-SNJ ANNUAL AWARDS

WBES CONTRIBUTE +7 BILLION TO LOCAL ECONOMY

At its Annual Awards Luncheon held Friday, September 18, the Women’s Business Enterprise Council (WBEC) of PA-DE-sNJ honored those corporations, government agencies, and WBEs that have made a difference by opening the doors of opportunity to women business owners throughout the year.

WBEC PA-DE-sNJ has certified nearly 1,038 WBEs that generate $7 billion in revenue and employ almost 28,000 in the region. It also counts 53 corporations and government agencies as members, ranking it third among councils across the country.

WBEC’s annual awards give recognition to corporations and WBEs for their joint success in advancing opportunities for Women Business Enterprises. The companies receiving recognition include:

**NARCISO “PAT” PATTERSON, VERIZON COMMUNICATIONS** – ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

**COMCAST NBCUNIVERSAL** – NATIONAL CORPORATION DONE DEALS AWARD

**AHOLDUSA** – REGIONAL CORPORATION DONE DEALS AWARD

**FIRSTENERGY CORPORATION** – REGIONAL CORPORATION DONE DEALS AWARD

**LISA CASIELLO, CD & ASSOCIATES, INC.** – WOMEN BUSINESS ENTERPRISE DONE DEALS AWARD

**CHARLOTTE B. COOPER, STANDARD OFFSET PRINTING CO.; PEGGY DEL FABBRO, M. DAVIS & SONS, INC.; MICHELLE MORIN, STATE OF DELAWARE** – SHINING STAR AWARD

(Counter-clockwise from front row): Valerie M. Shearer, FirstEnergy (Regional Done Deals); Peggy Del Fabbro, M. Davis & Sons, Inc. (Shining Star); Amy Holland, Day & Zimmermann, Chair, WBEC PA-DE-sNJ Awards Committee; Lisa Casiello, CD & Associates (WBE Done Deals); Geri Swift, President, WBEC PA-DE-sNJ; Cheryl Smith, AholdUSA (Regional Done Deals); Michelle Morin, State of Delaware (Shining Star); Cecilia Isaacs-Blundin, Comcast NBCUniversal (National Done Deals); Narciso “Pat” Patterson, Verizon (Advocate of the Year); Mary Fox Donnelly, Encompass Elements (WBE Leadership Award); Tabitha Stanislaw, FirstEnergy, Chair, WBEC PA-DE-sNJ; and Linda Gloss, Chair, WBDC
2016 SUMMIT & SALUTE

PHOENIX, ARIZONA MARCH 22 - 24, 2016

2016 NATIONAL CONFERENCE & BUSINESS FAIR

ORLANDO, FLORIDA JUNE 21 - 23, 2016

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Join Forces. Succeed Together.
SAVE THE DATES
In Saujani’s remarks, she told the audience of nearly 2,000: “There’s no question that technology spurs innovation and has the ability to transform our workforce,” she said. “To leave women out of this growth is really shameful.”

Designed to accelerate the growth of women-owned businesses, the conference offered attendees a business trade fair featuring an opportunity for women business owners to make connections with supplier diversity leaders and decision-makers.

At an opening night reception, the WBDC presented awards to honor successful women entrepreneurs and advocates who have demonstrated a commitment to strengthening women’s business ownership. The honorees included:

- **MAYRA KHAN**, Managing Director of Nova Driving School
- **ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR AWARD**
- **TRACI O’BRYAN**, CEO of Arcturis
- **WOMAN BUSINESS ENTERPRISE OF THE YEAR**
- **ANDREA BROWN**, Midas Auto Service Experts President and CEO – WOMAN VETERAN ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR
- **ANDREA SRESHTA AND ANNA STORK**, Co-Founders of LuminAID
- **INNOVATION AWARD**
- **CDW**
  - **CORPORATE CHAMPION AWARD**
- **SHIRLEY MARX**, Board Chairman of New World Van Lines and LORETTA ROSENMAYER, Founder and CEO of INTREN were named the first winners of the HEDY M. RATNER AND S. CAROL DOUGAL LEGACY AWARD.
Q: How do you build a plan for expansion?

Answer:

First, you have to be confident that the time is right. Are your people informed, involved, and understand the expansion? Is your technology prepared? Are the processes in place to handle additional growth? Do you have capital available to fund the growth? Do you have a contingency plan? Do you believe in your plan?

Jennifer Maier
CEO, WDS, Inc.
www.womends.com

I was disappointed recently when I missed out on an acquisition opportunity. One of my advisors gave me great advice. He challenged me by asking if I had told my network I wanted to acquire other companies. I had to admit “no.” Since then, I let everyone know what my acquisition targets are. Success! In July, we completed our first acquisition.

Pamela Kan
President, Bishop-Wisecarver Group
www.bwc.com
Global Capital, Ltd. opened an office in the UK on July 17. This wholly owned sub will operate under the name of Agile Leasing UK! We used the British Consulate in Chicago to advise us on names of lawyers and accountants in the UK. Sue Lawton of WEConnect was also extremely helpful and supportive. With these contacts, we were able to learn about all the current tax incentives for companies looking to expand. This advice was free!

We are excited about this expansion and feel that the timing is perfect, albeit contrary to the large U.S. institutional investors pulling out.

Terri E. McNally  
President, Global Capital, Ltd.  
www.globalcapitallltd.com

A business expansion plan should consider the current strength of the business, what demands are creating the need to expand, where demand for expansion exists, what aspects of business must grow to meet higher demand, and how the business will secure funds to accomplish growth. Additionally, an integrated marketing strategy and building an effective team to support expansion are critical.

Maureen A. O’Connor  
CEO, LEM Products Inc  
www.lemproductsinc.com

Our greatest challenge to growth expansion is sales. “Slow to Hire; Fast to Fire” has become our standard practice. There is nothing worse than spending precious capital and energy on non-producers. Watch out for “resume gap hires,” “insurance sponges,” the “nay-sayers,” and the “Rolodex” types who know everyone but no one seems to know them! A good hire is ethical and fits into your company culture.

Susie Galyardt  
CEO, Xioss  
www.xioss.com

Business growth can happen organically, but long-term strategic growth requires planning, dedication, and investment. The key is developing a “growth culture” with processes and infrastructure that are “growth-driven.” We always hire the best staff and do contingency planning to take advantage of opportunities. We invest in scalable, over-dimensionalized systems such that we are ready to take on more challenges.

Hannah Kain  
President & CEO, ALOM  
www.alom.com

Progressive Promotions recently expanded globally, and although there was much to consider, what helped us build our plan was to address the following three main tasks: 1) identify exactly what needs to be expanded, 2) determine the effect of expansion on personnel, and 3) determine new routes and plans for logistics. This helped tremendously in identifying core needs and direction.

Julie Levi  
President, Progressive Promotions  
www.progressivepromotions.com

Upcoming Question:

“As we look ahead to the new year, how do you work with your team to review goals?”

Send your answer to wbenc-news@wbenc.org. Your response could appear on these pages. Please limit your answer to 60 words.
WOMEN ON WELLNESS
BUILDING A HEALTHY CULTURE

IT’S SO EASY TO GET CAUGHT UP IN THE DAY-TO-DAY GRIND OF WORK AND FORGET ABOUT AN ESSENTIAL PRIORITY IN THE WORKPLACE: CREATING A HEALTHY COMPANY CULTURE. NEGLECTING TO DEFINE COMPANY CULTURE CAN IMPACT THE LONG-TERM GROWTH AND SUCCESS OF A BUSINESS. CULTURE MAY NOT BE QUITE AS TANGIBLE AS PROFIT, BUT IT IS ULTIMATELY THE GLUE THAT HOLDS YOUR COMPANY TOGETHER AND IS LIKELY ONE OF YOUR MOST IMPORTANT ASSETS.

WHAT MAKES UP A CULTURE?

A great culture begins with a clear vision, and that vision is ingrained in the employees. The employees know it and work by it every day. Regular communication of the company’s vision assists employees in aligning their work goals to match the vision in pursuit of the company’s mission. A company’s values are equally important, as they define the behaviors and mindsets needed to achieve the company’s goals.

VISION STATEMENT
The vision statement is a formal statement that expresses the aspirations and goals of a company. It can also be defined as the long-term road map toward the future.

Example of a Company Vision:
Create experiences that combine the magic of software with the power of Internet services across a world of devices. —Microsoft

MISSION STATEMENT
The mission statement is the written declaration of an organization’s core purpose and focus that normally remains unchanged over time.

Example of a Company Mission:
Empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. —Microsoft

VALUES
Define the behaviors and mindsets needed to achieve company goals.

Example of Values:
- Integrity & Honesty
- Openness & Respect
- Passion
- Accountability
- Healthy Self-Criticism
- Ability to Meet Big Challenges

—Microsoft

“BEST PLACES TO WORK”

The number one quality that the companies ranked as the “best places to work” share is that they all have a strong, positive culture. In addition to a healthy company culture, the best employers invest in their employees, the company’s strongest asset.
People value the opportunity to grow professionally, and employers can easily invest in their employees by increasing on-the-job training and development opportunities. These opportunities include webinars and professional development events, mentorship programs, and the opportunity to grow within the company. Employers that offer team-building activities also help to build trust, increasing collaboration and decreasing conflicts.

The best employers also invest in the well-being of their employees. By offering the convenience of on-site fitness centers and wellness programs for employees and their families, on-site day care, healthy food services, and flexible schedules, companies create a competitive advantage in retaining and attracting top talent.

Finally, the best employers value performance reviews. Performance reviews give employees the opportunity to look back at past performance and focus on improving performance in the future. There are certain aspects of the performance review that should be ongoing, such as feedback, recognition, and goal achievement. If an employee reaches a hard-earned goal six months into the year, don’t wait another six months to recognize the achievement. Instant recognition can go a long way toward motivating an employee. Offering appreciation keeps employees engaged and boosts morale.

Building and maintaining a strong, healthy culture will lead you to the first step in running a successful, prosperous business. If culture is something that has yet to be defined in your organization or needs to be redefined, recruit your employees to assist in the process. Their buy-in will be impactful in creating the culture and ensuring employees value the culture that’s been created.

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TIPS FOR CREATING A HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE CULTURE

Create a Disciplined Hiring Process
When business grows at a rapid pace, it can become easy to hire candidates with impressive resumes without considering cultural fit, or sometimes even ignoring signs that a candidate may not be the right fit for the organization. The onboarding process should involve interview questions that help determine if the candidate will embrace and enhance the company culture. Hiring managers should be trained on the importance of ensuring cultural fit as well when seeking new employees.

Create a Team of Diversity
In order to build a successful team, it must be made up of employees with complementary skills and differing personalities and styles. If everyone on your team has the same strengths and areas of focus, there may be some large holes in your business plan. The same thought goes for hiring someone with the same professional areas for improvement. If you know you are not a techie at heart, you should focus on finding someone on your team who knows the ins and outs of technology and embrace their strengths. Think about the big picture when developing your team in order for your company to flourish.

Communicate
Employees value honest and constructive feedback, as well as clear expectations. It is important that employees feel that they can approach their supervisor and co-workers to discuss work-related issues, projects, performance goals, etc.

Listen to Your Employees
Take the time to really listen to your employees. Make sure to involve them in decisions that affect them. If your employees feel like they have a say in their work environment, they will likely be happier and more productive and enthusiastic about their job, which in turn will lead to a thriving company.

Recognize Those Who Live Your Culture
Once a culture is defined, make sure not to forget about it. Recognize the employees or teams who embody the culture of the organization. This will offer positive reinforcement and keep the culture in the forefront of employees’ minds.
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