

All Hands On Deck for this Diverse Workforce Training Entrepreneur

By Connie Russell Gorum, CEO C. L. Russell Group, LLC

In the Navy, the command “all hands on deck” is an expression used as a way of getting the attention of all crew members. As a veteran owned business, I apply this same command when strategically developing my business network. Developing a strong network is essential for the growth of businesses, especially small and minority. As a forward-thinking company, executing supplier diversity into my main stream processes is critical for success. Diverse companies typically encounter barriers such as access to capital and networking opportunities. If you want to maximize the best networks for the success of your business, applying the all hands-on deck best practices with supplier diversity programs just might help you achieve those goals. Running your business is necessary for entrepreneurs, however; you still need to create time to connect with other business associates to generate a pipeline of innovation and resources. Supplier Diversity programs can help you build your network.

As the CEO of a diverse workforce training company, providing services to emerging consumer markets and maintaining innovative practices is important. Here are a few supplier diversity strategies that has helped my business maximize the “all hands on deck” best practices:

1 Become certified.
Diversity certification is an important milestone for small

and minority businesses. It confirms the business ownership, and that it's controlled by a diverse group. These entities include the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WEBENC) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vets First Program. Certifying my company as a Veteran Owned Small Business and a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) open the opportunity platform. They also helped bring visibility to my business in markets I wasn't aware of. These certifications are marketing resource tools that pays for itself.

2 Teaming.
Strategic alliances for minority businesses can help increase the scale of the services or products you provide. Collaboration is key to growth and helps businesses enter larger markets and gain competitive edge. Teaming with other diverse businesses has allowed me to increase my network pool greatly. Teaming allows me to pursue larger opportunities I couldn't qualify for if pursuing independently.

3 Have Ridiculous Faith.
Faith is believing in something you can't see. For entrepreneurs, this may be reaching a profit goal or closing a deal. Believing in yourself is half of the battle for entrepreneurs. Surrounding yourself around other successful entrepreneurs helps confirm success is a great possibility for you. Why wouldn't it be? One of the characteristic traits of entrepreneurs is taking risks, and that is believing in



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yourself even when no one else does. There have been several times when I doubted myself when pursuing opportunities. Exercising ridiculous faith allows me to have the mindset of seeing my situation as how it could be - not how it currently is. Demonstrating ridiculous faith can also position you as a leader in your industry.

4 Commitment.
If you want to be a game changer in your industry, you have to be committed. Developing a buddy system will help you achieve each other's goals. Having others hold you accountable for your goals creates synergy and a competitive spirit. A buddy system requires you to be fully committed to helping

the other person(s). If you don't think you will have the time or the dedication to commit, you shouldn't waste the other person's time. Connecting with supplier diversity programs can serve as your buddy system and help you stay focused on your business goals.

For my company to continue to 'design training with your industry in mind' it is essential to stay connected with supplier diversity programs and exercise all the services they offer to stay ahead. Building a business empire requires all hands on deck.

About the Author

Connie Russell Gorum is a veteran and the CEO of C. L. Russell Group, LLC, a workforce training company.