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Citizenship came before certification for Hannah Kain, founder of WBE Alom.

Overture Premium and Promotions provides web services to CVS Health WBE Overture Premium and Promotions (Vernon Hills, IL) is a product-based marketing firm started by CEO Heather Sanderson in 2001. The company, which grew from three employees to a current workforce of 120, provides web development and other services for large corporations.

"We work with the company's procurement department to find out their needs. From there we develop a website, either housed with their web portal or on an offsite system where we maintain it for them," Sanderson explains.

Her company has supplied promotional products and web design for CVS Health for the past several years. "We originally worked with Caremark, which was bought by CVS. We connected with CVS's supplier diversity team after the merger. Eventually we were invited to bid on a project and we won."

Overture had been in business a few years when one of its clients encouraged Sanderson to seek certification. "It ended up being a really big deal for us," Sanderson says. "We've secured contracts with very large companies through WBENC by attending trade shows and networking. It gets us in front of big companies that we never would have been able to meet on our own."

WBENC gives WBE Alom leverage and more

Hannah Kain was not a U.S. citizen when she began her company Alom (Fremont, CA) in 1997, which provides supply chain management. Her lack of citizenship prevented her from obtaining the one thing she really wanted.

"I wanted to be WBENC-certified

right away," says Kain, who was born in Denmark. "At that time you had to be a resident to get certification." Kain became a citizen in 2001, and submitted her application for WBENC certification immediately.

Kain worked in the supply chain management industry for a number of years before starting Alom. "I set out on my own because I thought there was a better way of doing business," she says.

Alom offers technology-related global supply chain management services, from digital media duplication facilities to configuration management and electronics testing and repair. Services include procurement, assembly and complex fulfillment. "We're strong in the technology industry. We have also been involved in the medical and automotive industries, and we just got involved in telecommunications," Kain says. The company has a separate division for print management.

Kain recognizes that a growing number of large corporations are focusing on supplier diversity, and finds her WBENC certification provides good opportunities to connect and an extra layer of leverage with these businesses. She's found a number of her larger clients through WBENC relationships.

Kain says her certification provides other advantages. "There's a lot of peer-to-peer support and business opportunities. That's not why I signed up in the first place," she says with a smile, "but it has been a nice add-on."

MDavis weathers the economic storm with WBENC support

MDavis (Wilmington, DE) is a fifth-generation industrial construction company that builds, installs and maintains corporate plants and facilities for national and international companies.

"In 2015, we are celebrating 145 years," CEO Peggy Del Fabbro says proudly, adding that the company will reach \$50 million in sales for the first time ever this fiscal year.

Del Fabbro joined the company in 1987 and is one of its three co-owners. Despite its longevity, the company hit rough times during the most recent recession. Del Fabbro says the company's strategy to survive the bad economy was to apply for certification as a WBE.

"We felt certification would give us an edge for obtaining work, and keep our people working until things picked up," she explains. But it turned out to be much more than that. "Getting certified is the best thing I ever did. We already provided outstanding service,

and WBENC certification is icing on the cake for our clients."

MDavis survived the recession well, she reports. "We developed new customers as we pursued a diversified market base through WBENC."

Del Fabbro calls her WBENC certification a differentiator. "It has provided us with unparalleled networking opportunities and education for me. I think I have changed and improved myself professionally over the last five years, mainly due to what I've learned through WBENC."

WBE Matrix Integration fills IT gaps

Brenda Stallings's first job was as a typesetter, which gave her an introduction to how technology changes work. But technology took a back seat for a while as Stallings took over a family-owned music store in 1971.

Eight years later, she started noticing new technical products coming to the market, and she decided to turn her focus in that direction. She became a Radio Shack dealer, selling phones and computers. Eventually, she sold off her phone division to focus on computers. And in 1997, Stallings launched Matrix Integration (Jasper, IN), which helps its client organizations implement IT solutions.

"We learn what our customers need in IT," she says. "For example, we'll learn what kind of infrastructure the client has in their data center, and then we help them understand the best ways to utilize that technology."

The swift pace of technology advances makes it difficult for businesses to keep people trained and up-to-date. Stallings believes her company provides that missing in-house expertise for the organizations she works with.

Stallings grew her company with-

out realizing that diversity was a need for the people who hired her. As she began to attend meetings of industry-related organizations, she was asked if she had considered becoming a certified WBE. She had not, but it piqued her interest.

"I asked my clients if this was a benefit for them, and they said, 'Yes!' I learned companies have trouble finding qualified women-owned businesses in this industry."

She has been WBENC-certified for more than a decade, and recommends that other women business owners have a frank conversation with their clients and ask about the value of certification. "I didn't realize how important diversity was until I heard it from the clients."

Commonwealth Capital Corp CEO gives back through WBENC

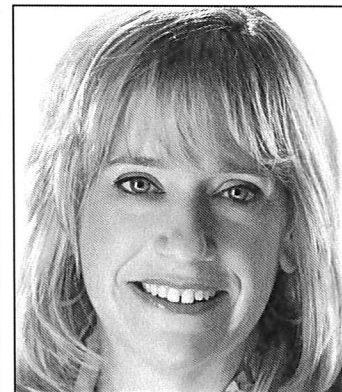
According to Kimberly Springsteen-Abbott, certification is key to doing business with large corporations. "The first question I always get is am I certified," she says.

Springsteen-Abbott's company, Commonwealth Capital Corp (Chadds Ford, PA), is a technology leasing equipment company. The company focuses on equipment for the IT, medical and telecommunications industries.

Commonwealth Capital was founded by Springsteen-Abbott's late husband. As the company began to grow, Springsteen-Abbott took on the role of CEO, and decided to register as a diverse supplier. She does a lot of legwork to find new clients, using the Internet and other networking sources. But she says she is often asked to prove her diverse status. "A lot of places want to speak to me personally to make sure it is a woman running the business," she says. WBE certification can help move that discussion forward.

Commonwealth Capital now has its own supplier diversity liaison. When her company has contracting needs, she can reach out to WBEs and minority-owned businesses.

She also gives back to the organization that helped her business thrive. "WBENC has been a tremendous asset to me. The council does everything possible to help my business grow." *D/C*



MDavis CEO Peggy Del Fabbro considers WBENC certification a differentiator.



Sue Marquette Poremba is an engineering and construction writer in State College, PA.