

Manpower: Facilitating collaboration.

By Emily Richwine

Manpower has long known the value of supplier diversity. As a world leader in the employment services industry, the corporation considers it an essential business strategy. Minority- and woman-owned business partners not only bring in a wider pool of diverse employees, which then translates to stronger diverse communities that are able to spend more with Manpower's customers, they bring knowledge, innovation, and value that make Manpower more competitive. It is with that idea in mind that Manpower recently facilitated its own Supplier Diversity Advisory Board.

The board, made up of representatives from 12 of Manpower's premier diverse suppliers, will advise

Manpower, and each other, by sharing knowledge and collaborating on solutions that meet market needs.

"The advisory board was a vision that I believed would be a powerful way to drive innovation and best practices, as well as meet the needs of our ever-changing world of work," explains **Kathy Greco**, Manpower's director of supplier diversity and program services.

Officially launched in December of last year, the board is split into three committees—knowledge, innovation, and value.

"The committees meet monthly via conference calls to discuss items relating to each of them, such as solutions, research and development,

competitive advantages, training, gaps, and business strategies," Greco explains.

The work has already begun.

"I represent the value, or the competitive advantage, committee," explains **Kekin Shah**, senior director at **Collabera Inc.**, a New Jersey-based, \$320 million minority-owned IT services and solutions company that has more than 4,000 IT professionals globally. Collabera has been working with Manpower for nearly a decade now, collaborating with them to provide successful IT services and solutions to various clients.

"The main focus of the committee is to create more value for the clients in terms of cost, quality, and



Kathy Greco



Kekin Shah



Olsa Martini



Gwendolyn Jenkins

exceptional 'customer-centric' service," Shah continues. "The global economic condition calls for effective partnerships so we can help corporate clients achieve a niche in the market, even in turbulent times, by harnessing the factors that contribute to their respective competitive advantage. At the moment, the committee is focused on creating an informational document on the companies of the respective board members, which will help them share their business plans and strategies."

Gwendolyn Jenkins, president of **Broadview Staffing Services, Inc.**, whose 8-year-old Philadelphia-based traditional staffing company has been doing business with Manpower since her company's founding, is looking forward to what the board will be able to accomplish as a group.

"We knew that in order to be successful in staffing, we had to learn and partner with the leaders in the industry, and certainly, Manpower is a leader," she says. "We went from being a subcontractor to being a major partner on multiple accounts. I am a good example of [the success of] their supplier diversity program."

Jenkins, also a member of the value committee, says being part of this

advisory board will help Broadview grow and, in the end, serve Manpower better.

"It has already helped me," Jenkins says, "because with the information we put together about each of our companies, I can look at the list and say, this is a company I can partner with, and together we can be a successful bidder. I can also seek advice, and I do this all the time. I call other suppliers who are larger and who have been in business longer."

Olsa Martini, president and founder of **Olsa Resources, Inc.**, is excited about the potential as well. Her Oregon-based national talent service provider, which specializes in IT and engineering, has been doing business with Manpower since 2002. Today, her work with Manpower accounts for almost 35 percent of her business.

"Our relationship with them has grown since day one," Martini says. "They take the time to listen to some of the important issues I face as a diverse business."

Martini says the advisory board will give her a new place to discuss those issues.

"It's a wonderful idea to bring all these diverse suppliers together

to share our experiences and ideas with one another," she says. "I am on the knowledge committee. We have already completed some market analysis, which includes market trends, opportunities, and strategies."

One of the opportunities Martini's committee has discussed is already opening doors.

"With the current and new government [stimulus] spending packages, we're looking at which state received what, and it was very helpful to know where the money is going, in which fields and in which areas. That will give us [the information we need] to go after some bids that we wouldn't have known about otherwise."

Greco says the advisory board will also be instrumental in the refinement and continuous improvement of Manpower's supplier diversity efforts, which last year directed more than 30 percent of its subcontracted business to diverse partners.

"The advisory board will be important as we continue to enhance, grow, and refine our program, striving for the best in class," Greco says. "The influence these board members have on the development and refinement of our program is profound." ♦

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