

# Business MATCHMAKING



A Cooperative Agreement between SBA and HP Small Business Foundation

## **Ashlyn Supply Chatsworth, CA**

In March 2002, Carol Moran and Suzanne Roberts decided to pool their experience and knowledge in textile sales to launch their own linens distribution business. They founded Ashlyn Supply as a master distributor of linens to exclusively serve the hospitality, institutional and healthcare industries.

Carol Moran knew from experience that succeeding in their business venture depended on persistence, hard work and luck. More concretely, success meant winning sales. Moran and Roberts brought in an additional part-time salesperson to help fill the sales funnel and began a marketing campaign that included direct mail, faxes and old-fashioned cold calls to prospects. Their most effective sales tool – and the hardest to secure – was face-to-face meetings with potential customers.

Through her local Small Business Administration office, Moran learned about the Western regional Business Matchmaking event taking place in February 2004 in Anaheim, Calif. Business Matchmaking, sponsored by the SBA and HP, brings federal, state and local government agencies and major corporations in every industry together to network, educate and ultimately, contract, with small businesses. Moran recognized the opportunity to get the inside track on potentially large private sector and government contract opportunities.

**For a new company, winning a government contract is one of the most difficult things you will encounter. You are at a disadvantage because you are competing against larger companies with more resources and that know all the “ins and outs” of the procurement process.**

Business Matchmaking is organized so that prior to the event, attendees can logon to the Business Matchmaking portal, identify potential buyers, setup their meetings and manage their schedules for the event. Sellers are matched directly to participating buyers seeking their types of products through their NAIC codes, a standard industry classification system of goods and services. Once onsite at the event, attendees can use the Tech Center provided by HP to get last minute appointments.

Bonne Lenoil, a sales manager, represented Ashlyn Supply at the matchmaking event. She gauged right off the bat that this was more than just the typical “how-to” seminar.

**The event was so well organized. I was able to secure 7 appointments with agencies and companies specifically looking for linens. The buyers were also extremely helpful and referred us to other companies that could use our services even if they couldn't.**

Through the Anaheim event, Lenoil won a contract valued at approximately \$8,000 to provide bedspreads to the Long Beach, Calif. branch of Job Corps, the education and job training program funded by the Department of Labor. Lenoil is excited because this contract only scratches the surface of the opportunity: there are over 100 Job Corps training centers across the U.S. and Ashlyn Supply now has the experience, credibility and contacts to win business at other centers.

Lenoil said the opportunity would not have happened without Business Matchmaking.

**I wasn't even aware that Job Corps offered overnight stays, but I learned that their linen needs are similar to those of a hotel. Business Matchmaking opened up our eyes to places we would never have thought of trying to sell our products to – it was great.**

ICI Enterprises, Inc. operates the Job Corps training center in Long Beach under contract from the Dept. of Labor. Jim Linday, Vice President of ICI, met with Ashlyn Supply and about 30 other small businesses at the event. Despite representing the Job Corps on behalf of the Dept. of Labor, ICI Enterprise is a small business as well. Linday said this makes him well aware of the value they can bring as suppliers to larger government and corporate entities.

**We are always trying to find the best supplier for our government dollars. Many times the small businesses are more eager, provide more service and do it more efficiently than their larger competitors. We feel like we provide a service to the Dept. of Labor that is as good or better than any large company, and so we are always open to give other small businesses the chance to sell to us.**

With the ability to focus more attention on fewer customers, Linday said small businesses can compete by consistently delivering superior customer service. Ashlyn Supply's contract with the Job Corps is just one example of how Business Matchmaking is helping small businesses prove they can deliver on that mantra.

**Note to Media:** Below is contact information to learn more about Ashlyn Supply and ICI Enterprises and their experiences with Business Matchmaking.

## Ashlyn Supply

Carol Moran, President

Ashlyn Supply

12386 Osborne Place

Pacoima, CA 91331

Phone: (800) 458-4596

[ashlynsupply@aol.com](mailto:ashlynsupply@aol.com)

[www.ashlynsupply.com](http://www.ashlynsupply.com)



Jim Linday, Vice President

ICI Enterprises

790 E. Willow St., STE # 150

Long Beach, CA 90806

Phone: (562) 989-7726

[jlinday@letc.com](mailto:jlinday@letc.com)

[www.letc.com](http://www.letc.com)