

Maryland Small Business Person of the Year 2010

Lily Bengfort, CEO and President
Consulting and Engineering Next Generation Networks (CenGen, Inc.)
9250 Bendix Road, North
Columbia, MD 21045
(410) 715-1300
lbengfort@cengen.com

“Think big, move fast and implement smart!” That’s the mantra by which Lily Bengfort, President of Consulting and Engineering Next Generation Networks (CenGen, Inc.) in Columbia, Md., has achieved entrepreneurial success through a combination of innate business savvy, exceptional leadership and intense determination.

Ms. Bengfort’s business philosophy encapsulates CenGen’s approach to its mission of creating communication network solutions and evaluating emerging technologies. Their mission is to save lives by providing the best communications possible to the men and women serving their country, from First Responders to the First Infantry Division. CenGen is in the business of building bridges: between radios, networks, legacy and leading edge. They are experts at connecting what is and what can be.

Born in Guyana, South America, Ms. Bengfort’s family journeyed to the United States, drawn by the land of opportunity. Here her entrepreneurial spirit flourished; initially purchasing a service business and tripling its revenue. In 2000, Ms. Bengfort created CenGen, now a multi-million dollar company specializing in tactical wireless communications networks for national defense and intelligent transportation systems. The company began as a home-based business with only five employees. They now employ 45 and have offices in Maryland, California and New Jersey. Growth has been steady; with an average sales increase of 14% annually. Clients include the U.S Armed Forces, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the State of Maryland.

Ms. Bengfort has built CenGen’s national reputation for providing decision-makers in government and industry with leading-edge expertise in network planning, design and implementation. CenGen provides custom solutions to advanced communication situations, independent evaluations of technology and end-to-end network testing. This is no small task, as each contract requires a new approach, a different answer. For the first nine years in business, CenGen functioned primarily as a defense contractor, supplying communications solutions to the Department of Defense and the military. Over the past year, CenGen has begun seeking out other clients in need of advanced communications, including the Department of Homeland Security and Border Patrol.

Growth has been steady and carefully planned out; however not without setbacks. Ms. Bengfort spent three years pursuing a major defense contract only for it to ultimately be cancelled. It was a crushing blow. She picked up the pieces, accepted a loss that year and set her sights high for the future. It was a hard lesson learned, but she managed to acquire the necessary financing to retain

all of her employees and reformulate the company's long-term goals. The company is now more financially secure and technologically advanced. They have been called "the best" at Phase I Testing. This praise is both an honor and a charge. While proud of their ability to provide rapid response prototyping and testing, CenGen continually strives to improve the communications situation for our military men and women.

Success is not lost on Ms. Bengfort. She is grateful for the many opportunities presented her and the positive impact that entrepreneurship has had in her life. She is a passionate about women's business ownership and is a frequent speaker encouraging other women to pursue their dreams of self-reliance and independence. CenGen is a huge proponent of local community organizations, contributing to a variety of local and national organizations, including the Girl Scouts of America, Howard Community College and the Northwest Center Foundation.