



Success News

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News Release Date: August 29, 2008
News Release Number: 08 - 24

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Challenges, Direct Recruitment of Young Adults, A Referral System and Customer Satisfaction Brought Much Success!

Pyramid Systems, Inc. (PSI), founded by Jeff and Sherry Hwang, is the SBA Washington Metropolitan Area District Office's 2008 8(a) Graduate of the Year. The company delivers services ranging from applications development, COTS integration, project and program management, technical documentation, help desk management and support, extensive training support, system analysis and support, migration of legacy systems to web-based J2EE compliant platforms, to Section 508 compliance support. Striving to be an outstanding corporate citizen by giving back as much as it can to the community, the people, and the environment and providing the best quality service and value to their clients are Pyramid Systems, Inc.'s top priorities.

Pyramid Systems, Inc. possesses significant government contract experience, including work with the Small Business Administration (SBA), U.S. Navy, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Internal Revenue Service, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The firm has many years of experience in implementing and maintaining security practices and policies to ensure government data privacy while controlling different levels of access from authorized personnel.

Jeff and Sherry Hwang founded Pyramid Systems in 1995. It is a minority woman-owned Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) and CMMI Level 2-assessed company headquartered in Fairfax, Virginia. Pyramid Systems, Inc. provides consulting services to a broad range of government clients and has grown from 1 employee to 78 employees. Further, since its inception in 1995 its annual revenues have increased from less than \$100,000 to \$12 million in 2007. The company successfully graduated from the 8(a) program in May 2008 with 60% of its staff comprised of women and 37% minorities.

As successful graduates of the 8(a) Business Development Program, the Hwangs no longer have access to 8(a) set-aside contracts. This has forced them to be more creative in their marketing, business development activities and their messaging to partners, clients, and the market in general. After clearly defining their value proposition and market niches, they are positioned to overcome the challenges associated with transitioning out of the 8(a) Business Development Program.

The 8(a) Business Development Program is an essential instrument for helping socially and economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs gain access to the economic mainstream of American society. SBA has helped thousands of aspiring entrepreneurs over the years to gain a

foothold in government contracting. Participation is divided into two phases over nine years: a four-year developmental stage and a five-year transition stage.

Participants can receive sole-source contracts, up to a ceiling of \$3.5 million for goods and services and \$5 million for manufacturing. While SBA helps 8(a) firms build their competitive and institutional know-how, the agency also encourages them to participate in competitive acquisitions. To qualify for program certification, a small business must be owned and controlled by a socially and economically disadvantaged person. Under the Small Business Act, certain presumed groups include African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Pacific Americans, Native Americans and Subcontinent Asian Americans. New rules make it easier for non-minority firms to participate by proving their social disadvantage.

Pyramid Systems, Inc. received assistance from the Small Business Development Center at Howard University for 8(a) Business Development Program certification and consulted SCORE: Counselors to America's small business for business-related issues. SBA's Small Business Development Centers provide training, counseling, research and other specialized assistance at nearly 1000 locations nationwide. SCORE has more than 12,400 volunteers that provide training and one-on-one counseling at no charge.

The Hwangs were able to identify and overcome three main challenges during their period of rapid growth. They realized that they operated with a very small marketing and business development team, allowing them to directly touch very few agencies. The referral system was able to open doors where they could present their capabilities and credentials. The lesson learned was that a business can be effectively built from scratch based on client referrals and recommendations, which come directly from performing high quality work. Client referrals have been their main source of growth, and these referrals would not have happened without responsive and consistent program performance.

Every small company has a challenge associated with human capital management. As a small startup, the Hwangs were competing for talent with large, established companies. The path to success was found through the direct recruitment of young adults directly out of school, and then exposing them to mentoring, advanced training programs in the work environment, and immediate exposure to projects involving complex and new technologies. Their size required the Hwangs to become very creative with human capital management to build a team of committed professionals. They have a relatively young workforce motivated by the flow of challenging projects into the company. They are highly skilled and very loyal to the company because of the mentoring and training provided.

Pyramid Systems, Inc. has sponsored numerous charitable and educational related events including but not limited to the Red Cross and the Centreville High School Marching Band. The company is one of the fastest growing technology firms in the region, having been selected by Deloitte & Touche's North American Technology Fast 500 and Virginia Technology Fast 50 programs multiple times in the past few years. As Pyramid Systems, Inc. continues to grow, its primary focus remains complete customer satisfaction. According to the customers, who consistently give Pyramid Systems, Inc. exceptional ratings, it is meeting this goal.

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