

**U.S. Small Business Administration
Interview with Ana Harvey (11-19-09)**

Ron Johnson: Nearly 104 million businesses are majority owned by women and the numbers are growing every day. And these businesses provide more than 12 million jobs and generate more than a trillion dollars in sales. These are significant numbers and significant accomplishments for women. So, you might ask, where does the woman entrepreneur find the tools and resources she needs to start, grow, and succeed in business?

Hello, I'm Ron Johnson with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Your Small Business Resource, and with me today is Ana Harvey. She is Assistant Administrator for Women's Business Ownership. Welcome, Ana.

Ana Harvey: Thank you, Ron. It's a true pleasure being in your program.

Ron Johnson: Now, these are great statistics and quite impressive. So, how does SBA fit into women's small business success?

Ana Harvey: Well, let me begin by saying that the SBA has played a part in the success of women business owners for many years now. We have so many ways to help women start and grow successful businesses. You know, of course, we are widely known for our loan programs like the 7(a), the 504. And now we have the ARC Loans. But it's also the 8(a) program which actually helped me with my business a number of years ago and actually introduced me to the SBA programs and services. But what my office mostly focuses on is training and counseling women; because we want them to start their business the right way, to finance their business the right way, and actually to grow them the right way.

Ron Johnson: Ana, I'm sure our audience has many questions. And I'll start with what steps should a woman first take when starting a business?

Ana Harvey: Well, that's easy. She should do her homework first. That is, she needs to have a road map that would take her where she wants to go. And, of course, I'm talking about the business plan. You know, the process of developing the business plan forces you to think very carefully about your target market and how you're going to reach it. And it forces you to think about your goals and the money you need, where it is going to come from and where it is going to go. When a lender sees that you have really done your homework, you have a plan to start or grow your business, you're far more likely to get that loan, that line of credit that you need. Without a business plan, getting a loan is almost impossible. Without a business plan, growing that business is a lot more difficult.

Ron Johnson: Two-part question, Ana. How does the Federal government define women-owned small business? And is there an advantage to being a woman-owned business when attempting to do business with the Federal government?

Ana Harvey: Yes, Ron. The Federal government defines a woman-owned business as one that is at least 51 percent owned and controlled by one or more women. So it is not just a

name on paper. A woman or women actually have to be running it. Are there advantages? I think there can be, of course. I'm a woman and I was a business owner. If a woman-owned business can show that she is competing in an industry or an area where women are significantly under-represented, it may qualify to participate in an 8(a) Minority Business Development Program. That's what helped me so much with my business some years back.

Also, there are some circumstances under which contracting offices may limit competition for woman-owned businesses. There are goals each Federal agency is supposed to meet. So yes, there could be advantages.

Ron Johnson: Now, I understand that the Federal government has a procurement program for women. Can you tell me what the program is about or what role does SBA play with it?

Ana Harvey: Yes, that's a very hot topic, Ron. Women have been struggling for many years to get even a small percentage of Federal contracts. But we are making progress.

Contracting is actually handled in our Government Contracting office. But there are a number of resources already available to help women break into Federal procurement. In fact, we have a brand new training module. It is called *Winning Federal Contracts: A Guide for Women Entrepreneurs*. You can find it on our Website at www.sba.gov/women. And just a few days after it went online, thousands had already signed up to take it. It is free. It is very comprehensive. And it includes a lot of resources and some of them are specifically for women.

I also want to add that many of our Women's Business Centers provide training in government contracting. So do Small Business Development Centers, and SCORE counselors may also be helpful. The SBA district office can provide assistance too if you need it. Also, woman-owned firms can register on the Central Contractor Registry. The CCR is a primary resource for contractors on a number of agencies. So, we have quite a few resources and more assistance is coming.

Ron Johnson: Many young women may be interested in starting their own small businesses. So, what kinds of resources does SBA offer to support their small business goals?

Ana Harvey: Well, they can start by visiting our Website at the SBA Develop with Junior Achievement. It has a great name and it is easy to remember. It is mindyourownbiz.org. And there are several more youth-oriented Websites at www.sba.gov. You just have to click on Services, then go to Special Audiences, and then Young Entrepreneurs. And also, some of our Women's Business Centers even have training specifically geared to young women. But any center would be more than happy to help them start their first business, because the basics are just the same no matter what your age.

Ron Johnson: Now, financing is always a big concern. What guidance or resources does SBA offer to help women find the capital they need?

Ana Harvey: Well, this may sound obvious, but I will say it again. Do your homework. Take the time to develop a good business plan. And, of course, you don't have to do it alone because we have our centers. We have the district offices. We have these Small Business

Development Centers and the SCORE counselors that can help you with it. There are many lenders that our district offices or resource partners can refer you to. If you need extra help, the SBA has the numerous loan guarantee programs that I mentioned at the beginning of the program. Many Women's Business Centers are part of a larger organization that has their own resources too for financing. So, some of them are lenders or micro-lenders and they are also part of the SBA micro-loan program. But again, you have to finance it the right way. You must plan it the right way.

Ron Johnson: Well, our thanks to Ana Harvey, Assistant Administrator for Women's Business Ownership, for providing insight into how the SBA can help women start, grow, and succeed in business. Now, you can learn more about SBA's Office of Women's Business Ownership and other SBA resources at www.sba.gov and www.sba.gov/women. So, until next time, this is Ron Johnson with the SBA, Your Small Business Resource.

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