

WEConnect Canada Certifies Women-owned Businesses



WEConnect Canada: A Path to New Business Opportunities

In the 2009 issue of the Business Women in International Trade Newsletter, we showcased the launch of *WEConnect Canada*. This Canadian non-profit organization opens doors to new supply chains through the certification of companies that are at least 51% owned, managed and controlled by women.

WEConnect Canada delivers education, training, coaching, and mentoring programs to help business women acquire the skills necessary to bid successfully on contracts. *WEConnect Canada* actively works with qualified women-owned businesses and puts them in contact with corporations as well as the many *WEConnect* affiliate organizations in the United States, Europe, India, and China.

COULD YOU BENEFIT FROM BEING CERTIFIED?

For women business owners, there are numerous advantages, including:

- Accessing local and global supplier diversity procurement opportunities to accelerate business growth;
- Increasing your business knowledge by interacting with corporate buyers and other women business enterprises;
- Building credibility through certification;
- Tapping into the growing corporate and public sector demand for diversity in supply chains.

Along with these benefits, certification can open many more doors for women-owned businesses!

"We were one of the first companies to become certified because we believe there is tremendous potential, particularly in view of the United States set-aside programs. We plan to treat it like another market; treat it like its own network of contacts."

Michele Bailey, Blazing Design Inc., Oakville, ON

"WEConnect Canada-certified businesses have an open door to a potentially lucrative market."

Laraine Kaminsky, Lead Strategist, *WEConnect Canada*

The Road to Export Success...

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Points to remember for export success:

A key partner: the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service. Trade commissioners have years of experience, know the market, and can bring together partners and networks that will contribute to your success.

Be strategic. Developing networks is a business decision to be treated seriously; however, take care not to drain other business development activities.

Choose carefully. Select the right networks that will lead you to the development of business opportunities.

Raise your profile. Participate actively in trade shows, use the media, join special interest committees, etc. Be systematic in maintaining contact and interest within your network. Key people need to see you in action.

Use the latest technologies. Explore Internet-based tools such as webinars, web-conferencing, Skype, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr and others. It is possible to be at the same table even when people are worlds apart.



Launch of *WEConnect Canada* in Toronto, April 2009.

WEConnect Canada 2009 Highlights

- Exceeded 2009 expectations with close to 50 certified women-owned businesses and 27 corporate members.
- Trade mission to the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) National Conference in San Francisco California in June 2009 – 16 Canadian certified women business owners met with United States Fortune 500 buyers.
- Knowledge Transfer Event, Toronto, October 2009 - women-owned businesses from across Canada met corporations from Canada and the United States, including Accenture, Alcatel-Lucent, Avis Budget Group, BMO Financial Group, Cisco, Dell, Ernst and Young, IBM, KPMG, Manpower, Merck Frosst, Pfizer, Randstad, Royal Bank of Canada, Staples, TD Financial Group and Wal-Mart.
- The first *WEConnect Canada* award went to Marla Kott of Imprint Plus in Vancouver for signing a contract with a major buyer from the United States – a direct result of her certification.

2010 Plans and Coming Events

- Ongoing *WEConnect Canada* events across Canada including training and webinars.
- Trade mission to the Women's Business Enterprise National Council's (WBENC) 11th National Conference and Business Fair, Women in Business 2010: The Opportunity Connection; June 22-24; Baltimore, MD.
- *WEConnect Canada* Knowledge Transfer event – coming in fall 2010, location to be confirmed.

To get certified with *WEConnect Canada*, check out eligibility on the website at www.WEConnectCanada.org or email questions to info@WEConnectCanada.org.