

Northeast Utilities DSDA Participant Update

May 1, 2013

Legal Services

commVerge Marketing was able to obtain legal services through CULI, who works from UConn Law School, to create a custom marketing services agreement for our customers. It is an agreement that can be used for a variety of customers needed our services and addresses the complex mix of services, software and intellectual property that we develop and deliver.

From experience with other law firms that provide contractual services, we know that we would not have been able to obtain such high-quality, custom services at any price. The relative size and specific research requirements would not have received the attention that the CULI team provided. Also, without the services available through the DSDA, we would not have been able to afford such a custom agreement.

Their services have proved very invaluable and greatly, greatly appreciated by commVerge Marketing. We will engage them for services in the future and are willing to pay a higher rate if required.

Mentor Support

The input and guidance received from commVerge Marketing's mentor has been invaluable. Our mentor has provided us with insight and advice on many fronts. Our particular mentor has many years for corporate executive management experience, so his perspective is from the inside out. He also is very adept at balancing the needs of our growing, dynamic, ever-changing demands and our desire to continue to provide our customer the "hand-holding" experience they have come to enjoy from commVerge Marketing. That service delivery is an important aspect of our service because it sets us apart. His support has included:

- Web site support
- Client project management enhancement
- Compensation matters
- New product planning

Supplier Development Academy Feedback

Environmental Integrity Company, LLC
Jeremy Hollins
Kristina Czepiel Dearborn

In the summer of 2012, my colleague Jeremy and I were invited to attend the Supplier Development Academy put on by Northeast Utilities, SCORE, and the University of Connecticut. Our company, Environmental Integrity is a fairly young company and growing. The Academy was extremely helpful in helping us determine our short term and long term goals as a company. Not only did the program help us determine our goals, it provided us the tools to reach them.

To us, the most valuable part of the workshops was the network of peers and mentors. The networking and exchange of information really opened our eyes to new ideas and approaches when running a business. The experiences and the insight of the other business owners was such a valuable tool. We are still in contact with many of the business owners we became acquainted with through the program. The Academy allowed us to form trusted relationships with our peers that we may not have otherwise had the opportunity.

The workshops presented each week were informative and hands-on. We were able to take away valuable and tangible information we could use going forward. The hands on portion of the workshops provided an opportunity to use the material presented in the workshops as well as the opportunity to interact with other members of the program in a meaningful way.

Prior to the Supplier Academy and working with our Score mentor, EIC had not reviewed or modified our existing Business Plan since it was created. Through working with our mentor we established the goal of revisiting our business plan. Since the Academy, EIC has been able to use the tools we acquired from the program and have updated and revised our existing business plan. An important piece of the business plan was our sales and marketing strategy. As a result of the program and work with our Mentor, EIC is currently embarking on a new marketing strategy and advertising campaign. The Academy was a critical part of us evaluating our business plan, revising the plan, and implementing practical steps to take our business to the next level.

ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY COMPANY LLC

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A Minority-owned Enterprise

3 May 2013

Cheryl Clarke, SBLO & Manager,
Supplier Relations & Supplier Diversity
Northeast Utilities Service Company
107 Selden Street, BMN1, Berlin CT 06037

Re: Diverse Supplier Development Academy Experience

Dear Cheryl;

Noted below is a summary of our DSDA experience and how it has impacted our business:

The NU/UCONN Accelerator program is a phenomenal offering that is unmatched in the Greater New England area. The program demonstrates a sincere desire by Northeast Utilities Service Company to develop minority businesses into thriving enterprises that can serve the needs of the company to an even greater extent than is being currently done by minority suppliers. The educational offerings served as strong reminders of many issues we have experienced in business as well as providing insight into areas important to any business owner.

Aspects we found that have helped the most were the SBA presentation, the Insurance presentation and the Negotiation Skills workshop. The SBA presentation provided keen insights into the inner workings of the SBA and gave a strong overview on how the SBA can truly benefit a small and growing business. The Insurance presentation helped us realize the amount of coverage we need to maintain and also gave us a foundation of new questions to ask our insurance agent and other areas we need to be aware of to make sure we are covered in an emergency. The Negotiation Skills workshop reminded us of the importance of being creative as we seek win-win relationships with our clients. Specific to the Negotiation Skills workshop, we have used the information to help us structure offerings that have led to the submission of winning proposals. Within the past month, we structured an offering to a client that had a number of creative options that allowed the client to meet his budgetary goals while allowing us to meet our pricing target.

As a result of our involvement in the DSDA, we have become engaged with SCORE and have been impressed with our interactions. Approximately three weeks ago we conducted a video conference with three key SCORE mentors who assisted us with the development of a pricing model for a new offering we will launch into the market within the current month.



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April 30th, 2013

RE: Supplier Development Academy at Northeast Utilities

To Whom This May Concern:

I am a solo practitioner of a law firm and am still a viable business because of the support and the vision of the Supplier Development Academy in which I participated during the summer of 2012.

More specifically, I am a former Assistant Attorney General who opened a solo practice approximately fourteen (14) years ago. Over the years, I realized that my legal skills were inadequate to grow my business and my business stagnated. In order for my firm to remain viable, I needed a mentor, I needed ongoing support, I needed someone or some entity to guide me on how to redirect my firm to create sustainable income and I needed practical training opportunities. Because these needs were fatally critical to the life of my firm and were not addressed, my firm's income stagnated and I contemplated exploring other areas of income producing potential.

Fortunately, I was selected to be a participant of the 2012 Supplier Development Academy. At the direction of Cheryl Clarke at Northeast Utilities, I was assigned a Score mentor, a UCONN graduate student and I was garnered invaluable information from the weekly training sessions which helped to transform my thinking, my skills set, allowed me to evaluate and identify critical needs and resources for my firm to thrive and allowed me to think outside of the box.

The Supplier Development Academy team was passionate about their desire to assist my business to grow in a sustainable manner and provided me with the tools which I needed to take my business to another level of growth. My business remains open today because of the investment made by the Supplier Diversity Academy team and I shall forever be grateful for their injection of oxygen.

I am available to discuss more specifics should the need arise.

Sincerely,

Loida John-Nicholson
Principal



April 28, 2013

Cheryl,

Thank you, thank you, and thank you for inviting my firm to participate in the Diversity Supplier Development Academy (DSDAS) last year. I've been in business for almost 8 years but the first 7 were almost like operating on a "hit or miss" reactionary basis. What I learned most from the DSDA is the plan forward rather than waiting for "stuff" to happen. In fact, the Academy lit a fire up under me and has boosted my motivation to succeed ten times over. Since completing the program and as a direct result of having gone through the program, I implemented the following:

1. With the help of UConn grad/law student **Matthew Farley**, I now have a modeling tool to estimate my costs of doing business which helps me determine if my pricing is adequate. Until this point, I was simply pricing based on an hourly fee I just about pulled out of thin air after chatting with colleagues on their pricing. What I learned is that I am underpriced based on the amount of time, effort, and expense I incur just to get to a signed contract.
2. Matt also introduced me to an online tool, eBillity, which tracks the amount of time I spend working on/with any given client account.
3. I now initiate all invoices via QuickBooks online, which helps me to track outstanding invoices, and syncs with the monthly bookkeeping that I am paying my accountant to do for us.
4. As a one employee company, this experience highlighted how critical it is that I continuously receive external feedback and input/direction if I truly want to grow my business to the next level. To this end I approached six seasoned business contacts to make-up our very first Advisory Board. We meet every quarter on a Saturday for 3 hours. We began in September 2012 and will have our third meeting in June. I cannot tell you how valuable their insights and direction has been in helping me to focus on where and what I spend my time on.

5. With regards to my earlier point about waiting for something to happen, I formalized and/or renewed strategic alliances with firms that offer services similar to but not identical to what we offer and met with each of them to strategize and identify clients we could call on together in 2013. This move has allowed me to expand our capabilities and respond to even more opportunities.
6. In addition to my accountant, I have hired a very part-time administrative person to help me keep my files purges and in logical order; as well, she is doing market research on the companies I plan to approach next month. Although very part time, this is money well-spent because it takes the burden off of me and yet delivers what I need while I work on more pressing things. If all goes as planned financially, I'm hoping to add a part-time person who can do some of the operational work I currently do by end of year/beginning of next year.
7. After Lori Johnson's impassioned presentation on the need to have an online marketing presence, I engaged her firm to deliver my firm's social media presence.
8. I acted on something that will further grow my business: WSP is now a WBENC-certified (Women's Business Enterprise National Council) company. This is really a big deal and something I have wanted to do for several years. Done!
9. I am more aggressive about closing the deal rather than taking silence for an answer, I am tenacious about staying in touch with a client until they make a decision.
10. My Advisory Board has recommended that I implement a sales/revenue tracking program so that I can really understand the impact of closing deals. This is an investment I plan to make by June.

Well, as you can see, the Academy had a real impact. Thank you to Northeast/NStar. Thank you to UConn. Thank you to SCORE!

Best,
Diane

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