

ABN USA

ASIAN BUSINESS NEWS

Finding success in the *new* ecosystem



*Fast 100
Asian American
Business*

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NETWORK LEADERSHIP

USPAACC focused on preparing minority suppliers for success in new ecosystem

A quick look at some of the leading businesses today, and it's easy to see that the digital transformation has gone well beyond being a trend. Instead, the new digital economy is changing consumer expectations and thus, how businesses operate.

With the Internet of Things serving as this transformation's eventual backbone, the digital economy is all about bringing together various components to work as one seamless unit. This resolution only happens when a solid system is in place to truly leverage the strengths each can provide.

Understandably, this evolution impacts all aspects of business — including supply chain. For many of the players in the supplier diversity space this development means finding new, innovative ways to work as a true network.

Recognizing the need to bring all of the players in the supplier diversity space together, Susan Au Allen, CEO and national president of US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation, started a movement to accomplish this goal in 2015 when USPAACC celebrated its 30th anniversary. She

brought together leadership from the National Minority Supplier Development Council, United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and U.S. Black Chambers Inc.

"It was an unprecedented gathering of the eagles," she said. "These were people with vision, strength and strong wings. This [meeting] was the first time that all of us came together in unity to show our strengths and interests by standing on the same platform and working together to further the notion of equal opportunity through diversity."

The foundation is now there for this network of visionaries to make strides as a single unit, especially as procurement continues to streamline — and self-serve options become the new normal.

"It's important to understand that there is a special marketplace for those who do not belong to the majority group or the mainstream. Of course, success requires a willingness to come together, collaborate and work as a unit capable of drawing from each other's strengths," Allen added. "This marketplace is too big



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for one group to handle. A plethora of opportunities flow through this network, and more Asian-Americans need to join the movement. At USPAACC, we have worked hard to become the platform for Asian-Americans to feel comfortable and confident — a place where they have equal opportunities to be informed, to be nurtured and to thrive.”

Everything moves faster today, with information technology running our lives, she said.

“Diverse entrepreneurs are an interjection of energy into the nation’s economy, capable of playing a significant role in re-engineering America’s competitiveness,” Allen said. “Supplier diversity needs to open up to new ideas and newcomers into the marketplace.”

She said Asian-Americans can play a significant role in supply-chain diversity.

“It’s time for Asian-American entrepreneurs to take credit for their accomplishments, move beyond stereotypes and being quiet bystanders,” Allen said. “We are highly skilled professionals and innovative entrepreneurs with great optimism for the future and the ability to add significantly to this growing economy.”

“Asian-Americans are very much part of the fabric of innovation, meaning our members have the potential to be the industry leaders and visionaries in the new digital economy,” she added. “This is truly an exciting time of new discoveries and growth for our community.”

In the meantime, USPAACC will continue to support the efforts of Asian-Americans. “As we have done in the last 27 years of our 32-year history, USPAACC will continue to tell the Asian-American story and give recognition to their positive contributions to the quality of American life,” Allen said.

ROAD AHEAD

She has confidence in the U.S. economy, its ability to be competitive and to continue growing.



Susan Au Allen

“President Trump has a strong business acumen, and he is surrounded by business people. This administration has plans to bring jobs home, strengthen security and truly have good and smart agreements with other countries,” Allen said. “And, the President is under the microscope of a large population of Americans who need opportunities to work. We are hopeful that the business sector will be strong with capital released and available at good interest rates. The world is changing, and we need to evolve too.”

Bottom line: America is becoming increasingly diverse, she said.

“We are seeing that the world is further flattened by new technology, and the playing field is becoming more leveled. Myriad opportunities are opening wider than ever before to people of color, those with disabilities and those with different ideas,” Allen said. “We welcome this progress, while also embracing the fact that there is still more work to be done.” ■

USPAACC to hold national conference May 31-June 2

The US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation will hold its annual national conference — CelebrAsian Procurement Conference — May 31 to June 2 in San Diego, California. As part of the conference, the group’s chief procurement officer and chief technology officer/chief information officer forums will provide entrepreneurs and business leaders an opportunity to strategically plan with a fresh perspective — and follow the money.

Young industry disruptors will also be presented not only to inform the

wider audience of their successes, but also to inspire.

“We will spotlight new and up-and-coming technologies, as well as real-world and proven strategies to effectively address competition and seize opportunities,” said Susan Au Allen, USPAACC CEO and national president. “When people keep their optimism and leverage determination, they have an amazing ability to accomplish great things. This can-do spirit will be ever present at the conference.”

There will also be a federal government focus, which she sees as a crucial

component, considering the opportunities that will arise with President Trump’s administration’s renewed focus on defense and infrastructure.

“When the government spends, our members have additional avenues to success because the federal government has a strong small business program that includes minority businesses,” Allen said.



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ASIAN-AMERICAN BUSINESS BY THE NUMBERS

As Asian-Americans start businesses, create jobs and pay taxes, their impact and influence on the U.S. economy continues to grow.

\$825 BILLION

Current worth of Asian-American consumer buying power

Source: Nielsen's 2016 Asian-Americans: Culturally Diverse and Expanding Their Footprint report

\$1.1 TRILLION

Estimated worth of Asian-American consumer buying power by 2020

Source: Nielsen's 2016 Asian-Americans: Culturally Diverse and Expanding Their Footprint report

19

Number of startup companies founded by Asian-American immigrants out of 87 U.S. startups valued at over \$1 billion with the potential to become publicly traded on the stock market

Source: Nielsen's 2016 Asian-Americans: Culturally Diverse and Expanding Their Footprint report

1.9 MILLION

Number of Asian American-owned firms in 2012, up from 1.5 million, or 23.8 percent, from 2007

Source: U.S. Census 2016 and U.S. Census 2015 report based on the 2012 Survey of Business Owners - Asian-Owned Firms

\$610 BILLION

Revenue of Asian-American-owned firms in 2012

Source: U.S. Census 2016 and U.S. Census 2015 report based on the 2012 Survey of Business Owners - Asian-Owned Firms

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PROVIDING SOLUTIONS

Shyam Kumar finds success fleeing crowded spaces

BY MAXINE LEVY

A self-described serial entrepreneur, 45-year-old Shyam Kumar acknowledges, “I like to create something and sell it off. For everything, there is a right price.”

These days, he is founder and CEO of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania-based I&I Software Inc. He has founded several other successful minority-owned ventures.

Born in South India, Kumar grew up in Muscat, Oman, and obtained both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in computer science in Chennai, India.

At age 25, EY recruited him to work in its New York City offices as a PeopleSoft software engineer. There, “I got the lay of the land,” he said.

On Jan. 1, 2001, Kumar invested his personal savings to start I&I Software Inc. “01/01/01 — that’s where my journey started off,” he said. “That’s what made me who I am.”

Recognizing that virtually all companies have comparable business problems they cannot solve on their own, he created Solution Accelerators, a cookie-cutter solution to solve recurring business problems faster and better. While working alongside global industry leaders like HP Inc., I&I developed diverse, customer-focused software solutions for HP’s clients.

During the ensuing years, Kumar also founded information technology consultancies Right Click Systems LLC, Effectual Systems Group Inc. and I&I Energy, a company that sold software billing systems to U.S.-based companies in deregulated energy markets. In 2016, Navitas Billing acquired I&I Energy.

BUSINESS AND MINORITY STRATEGY

Trying to be a little ahead of the industry’s times is paramount to being a successful supplier, he advised. But, when that space becomes crowded, he said he heads to the next opportunity.

One example is Kumar’s current collaboration with IBM Corp. and data governance

specialist Collibra Inc. to help Fortune 500 companies and other early adopters resolve the hot, data-governance issue. Then, what he terms the enterprise’s “data citizens” can effectively shop for and efficiently use its vast data repository to improve their decision-making and their bottom lines.

In a sector traditionally dominated by an alphabet soup of household-word-worthy technology titans like IBM, HP, NTT and the Big 5 consulting firms (Accenture, Deloitte Consulting, EY, KPMG Consulting and PricewaterhouseCoopers), he finds the combination of being both a small player and a minority supplier can prove advantageous.

However, Kumar avoids categorizing himself solely as a minority-owned supplier. While some minority-owned businesses may be tempted to rely on that status, he believes there’s a difference between being a minority and relying on it. “For me,” he said, “it’s an add-on. It’s something on the side. When you do that, results come faster.”

Instead of trying to lure big companies and their multimillion-dollar, often long-term and complex contracts, he said “I let the big boys get the job, and I make sure I’m a very good friend of these big boys.” How? By meeting the right people and persistently showcasing his wares at industry trade shows and allied networking opportunities.

Importantly, large enterprises responding to requests for proposals are often required to award some portion of the contract to a minority-owned supplier.

“They know they don’t do what I do,” Kumar said. “The best thing is, they find me as the trusted partner for their businesses.” Once in the door, he said his customer-focused solutions reinforce his value. “My offerings have caught people’s attention,” he said. “By and large, it’s always been what you do and how well you can do it that makes the difference. Companies have to figure out ‘Why you?’”



Shyam
Kumar

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— SHYAM KUMAR

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