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Gradillas Court Reporter Chronicles Own 8(a) Success Story

“It’s important work,” said Josephine Gradillas, principal and founder of Gradillas Court Reporters, a licensed California court reporting and litigation support business. “Especially when witnesses are under oath...the transcripts are extremely important and are used to come to legal decisions and conclusions.”

Gradillas Court Reporters was founded in 2001 but more recently in 2010 the growing firm entered into the U.S. Small Business Administration’s 8(a) Business Development Program, which helps socially and economically disadvantaged individuals gain a

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

Although Gradillas was steadily growing and maintained non-governmental work prior to becoming an 8(a) certified company, Gradillas would receive only occasional request from government agencies requiring court reporting assignments. That would all change after she met David Sutton, director of small business utilization for the Department of Justice, at a SBA seminar. Sutton advised that Gradillas should seriously consider becoming a certified 8(a) firm. “Well, I wasted no time and pursued, and received my 8(a) certification,” said Gradillas. “Very shortly after becoming certified...I called the regional director of a large government agency and explained I was a court reporter and a certified 8(a) firm. The response was, ‘You’re a court reporter and you’re an 8(a) – I have been looking for someone like you!’”

That phone call would begin long-lasting relationships with a number of government agencies including the Department of Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, Department of Labor,

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Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Securities and Exchange Commission. Gradillas said, a large part of her work is through the 8(a) Program. “My only regret is that I did not become 8(a) certified sooner,” said Gradillas.

“That phone call resulted in immediate job settings for us...which have been increasing in quantity and quality ever since. This may not happen each and every time but it reflects that with serious research and follow up effort, you may find the right person to talk to that needs your services,” said Gradillas.

Speaking about her growing company and contracted court reporters, Gradillas said, she enjoys working with the U.S. Government and finds it especially rewarding to provide job opportunities for people.

Gradillas' firm has also earned a positive reputation as a, “go-to” firm when agencies need a court reporter the next day due to any number of circumstances. She has gained this ability from 30 years of experience within the legal community and from her relationships with court reporters all over the country.

“I've been a businesswoman for a long time, but I still feel the thrill of grasping new ideas and new tools,” said Gradillas. The leading edge technologies they employ are: real-time transcription that uses software plus the court reporter's electronic dictionary that transforms machine stenotype into plain English so attorneys can have direct access and ask questions; and the real-time transcript synched with the video of the witness to allow instant word searches that display the video linked to any word or phrase. Gradillas mentioned that technology is making court reporters' work more accessible for government agencies and international clients, and also provides opportunities for court reporters who like to do this type of work.

“It's a rewarding experience to help companies like Gradillas take advantage of all the opportunities afforded by the 8(a) Program and strongly encourage other small business owners to contact their local SBA office for more details,” said Sandra Vasquez, business opportunity specialist, and Gradillas liaison within the 8(a) Program in the Los Angeles District Office.

Referring to the 8(a) Program, “It's been a good fit for our business...because there are many government agencies that use court reporting services,” said Gradillas. “I've made it a priority to go after 8(a) opportunities...to those small business owners out there who are good candidates, I would certainly endorse and recommend that they consider the 8(a) Program...it will be a new marketplace for them.”

Gradillas and her court reporting business has also empowered her to give back to the community as well. She was recognized as a “Women in Business Advocate of the Year” by the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce and she also received the “Woodbury University Heritage Award.” We look forward to hearing more about Josephine Gradillas in the years to come.

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