

Global Connections

According to **Mary Anne Bueschkens**, general counsel of the ABC Group and special advisor to the company's president and CEO, the company tries to mirror its supply base to the diversity found within its operations. "This diversity has been



Bueschkens

a strength of ABC Group in the past and will continue to be in the future," she says. "We all come together as one team to meet the needs of our customers and return a value to our shareholders. Each company we deal with has to compete, add value, and fulfill a need in order for ABC Group to continue to be successful."

Gerrie Electric fulfills a need within ABC Group's operations, which is the first priority for all of its suppliers, Bueschkens explains. "We have dealt with them for more than 15 years and it is an added bonus that they are a certified WBE, too. Their ongoing cooperation with ABC Group will be based on their continuing ability to meet our needs.

"All suppliers for ABC Group operations have to strive to meet our objectives of cost, quality, technology, and service," she adds. "This is imperative if we are to meet the continuing demands of our customers not only in North America, but globally. We find that certified WBE or minority business enterprises meet these needs on a day-to-day basis."

Marty Britton, president of Toronto-based **Britton Management Profiles, Inc.**, specializes in providing background checks and pre-employment screening, and **Susan Power**, owner of **Higher Talent** in St. John's, Newfoundland, also forged a mutually beneficial relationship after meeting in an elevator at a WEConnect Canada conference in 2012. Power gave an elevator pitch about her HR consul-



Britton

tancy; Britton needed Power's exit interview expertise. Thus began a business relationship that blossomed into a friendship. "It was a big win for me to get Marty's business, since I was just starting out," recalls Power, who has gone on to do business with more women she met at that conference. "I've learned a lot from Marty, and it's been a great connection."

"Meeting Susan was serendipity," Britton says. "I keep a really lean company—outsourcing whenever possible—and I look to other WBEs first for suppliers who can help grow my business. There is a level of trust and connection right off the bat."

Britton also sells to other WBEs she has met at the conference. "I've learned that it's much faster to do business with WBEs than with the big guns," she says. "Another benefit of forming relationships with the women you meet at such events is that they become advocates for your business and often refer you. I make a point of referring other WBEs, too."

Across the country, there are more and more examples of the domino effect at play. On the East Coast, **Andrea Sharpe** of **Karlande Designs** used the services of fellow WBE **Alison Stoodley** of **Alison Stoodley Enterprises**, to set up her social media strategy. The two met at a diversity event organized by the **Newfoundland & Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs** (NLOWE), a regional partner of WCC.

And on the West Coast, **Jaeny Baik**, owner of **Jaeny Baik Media**, was not only successful in working with other WBEs, but landed contracts with NLOWE and the Halifax-based **Centre for Women in Business** to do workshops for WBEs. Baik gained visibility and credibility when she won the Best Pitch contest at the WEConnect Canada conference in 2012.

Beyond networks like WBE Canada, **WEConnect International**, and the **Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council**, it can be a challenge for women to find other diverse businesses with which to partner. "We are open to doing business with diverse suppliers," says Gerrie, noting that it is not easy to gather information on companies that are women- or minority-owned in Canada. Her company has even reached out to its supply base to collect more information that will make finding diverse suppliers easier.

Some good news for businesswomen like Gerrie is the development of a new database by the Canadian government that promises to help women do business domestically and internationally, and connect with and buy from each other.



Power

Why Partner?

Wood provides these insights on why Canadian WBEs should partner or do business together:

- To grow their capabilities by expanding their reach through a joint offering.
- To leverage strengths and shore up weaknesses by offering complementary products and services.
- To bid on large corporate contracts together if they don't have the capacity to fill the needs of large corporations on their own.
- To support each other and contribute to the growth of Canadian women's businesses.
- To support WBE Canada and supplier diversity in Canada in order to create more opportunities for all.



Mousseau