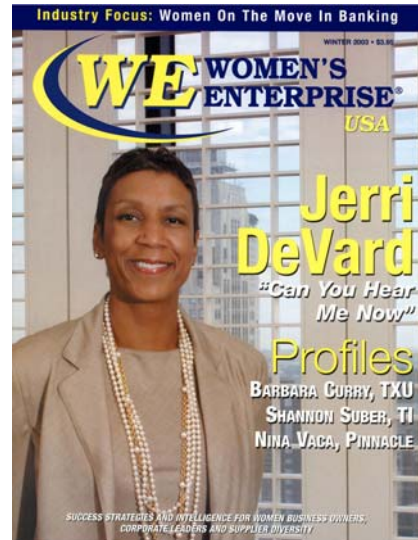


Women's Enterprise USA

Wainstein: Makes Positive Outlook a 'Priority'

By Peter Fretty

Much like individuals, no business is perfect and some undoubtedly face more obstacles than others. However, while each company has its own way of overcoming hurdles and moving forward, whether or not the organization will be successful over the long haul usually depends upon the attitude and the overall prospective of its leader.



Deborah Wainstein, CEO and founder of New York City-based Priority Staffing Solutions, Inc., is a prime example. Wainstein is blessed with a remarkable outlook, especially considering that her business relies heavily on the industry's need for personnel at a time when unemployment numbers are at record highs and the economy is showing very few signs of improvement.

“If you want to continue moving forward, you cannot look at circumstances as challenges. Anything can be a challenge if that is how you view it, but really they are all learning opportunities,” she said. “It all depends upon how you look at the situation. It is not always easy to keep a positive outlook, but it is worth all of the effort you put into it. You need to love what you do in order for the challenges to truly be opportunities.”

Another aspect that has led to success for Priority has been its noticeable focus on diversification. “You have to diversify if you want to succeed regardless of what business you are in,” Wainstein said. “When one aspect of the operation is up the others are down. Obviously we would like all of our markets to be up at the same time, but having the diverse offering allows us to maintain the balance that is crucial to business success. Diversity is the only way to survive in this economy.”

Priority currently has three locations – one in New York City and two in Elkhart, Indiana. The firm's New York headquarters focuses on providing clients with temporary and permanent administrative personnel including clerical worker and processors in addition to court reporters. The firm's Indiana locations also provide permanent and temporary personnel, however in addition to administrative personnel the offices have an additional focus on light industrial work such as fork lift operators and production workers. “We hire, recruit and train employees to solve our client's personnel needs,” she said.

Wainstein entered into the staffing industry after graduating from the Fashion Institute of Technology roughly a decade ago. She initially worked for another staffing firm and decided to start Priority in April 1999. “Those were lean days,” she said. “I literally worked out of a file room with a folding chair and a cardboard box.”

Today, Priority has 18 full-time employees as well as 500 temporary staffers working daily. In coming years, Wainstein plans to continue expanding Priority to include additional strategically located branch offices. “That is our primary goal,” she said. “We will most likely keep the same mix.”

Wainstein told *Women’s Enterprise* that her company’s goal is to serve as employment strategists for the client. “We help our clients employ the right people and figure out how to find, hire and recruit. We serve as an extension of our clients’ organizations. That is how much we work to understand them.”

Priority further sets itself apart through its high level of quality customer service. “We get to know our clients and form a partnership with them. Building that relationship and truly understanding their needs is undoubtedly our biggest asset,” she said. “We know we are doing our job when we have happy clients that continue to come back as their needs change. This is not an easy thing to do in a highly competitive market place.”

Although there is a significant amount of competition in the field of staffing including major players like Manpower and Kelly Services, Priority is a certified minority, woman-owned operation and that designation sets the firm apart from other employment agencies. “We also have a very diverse crew of multilingual individuals, which makes us a little more attractive to clients,” she said.

The best advice Wainstein has ever received is to never run out of money. This is advice that Wainstein took to heart early on and highly recommends that any budding entrepreneur seriously consider. “Even if you do not need a line of credit, it is very difficult to receive money when you really need it. It is crucial that you work to secure a line of credit upfront in order to avoid potential problems that a lack of capital can present,” she said.

Wainstein’s advice to other WBEs is to never give up. “There are days you feel like you cannot get back up. And it is so easy to want to give up, but you need to remember that it is just a feeling and it will pass,” she said.