

SENATOR HARKIN GERI JEWELL ASHLEY FIOLEK HUMOR PAUL'S MS RIDE DR. SVENDSEN SPINETO DIABETES VETELLSON CROSSWORD EVENTS/CONFERENCES

ABILITY

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Paper Trail to the Top



Mark Ellson's tagline for his business is "creating a future for disabled veterans." The president of the value-added reseller, JEMNI Inc. helps service disabled veteran-owned business (SDVOB), meet customers' needs throughout the US.

"I have a passion for helping veterans," says Ellson, "and I'm committed to developing and launching a website that allows my fellow veterans to evaluate and comment on any non-profit services they receive."

Following his own military service, Ellson returned to start what has become a three-decade long career of providing products and services to the federal government, as well as Fortune 500 companies. He's dedicated himself to progressive executive leadership, while working with large private manufacturing concerns.

"I have always wanted to be my own boss and control my career," said Ellson. "The opportunity didn't happen as soon as I had hoped, and it wasn't until the company I worked for was sold in 2010 that I committed myself to growing JEMNI full-time."

Today, his company is in a unique partnership with xpedx, a division of International Paper, which has proven of great value to both entities. Xpedx, a premier supplier of paper products, printing, packaging and facility solutions, mentors JEMNI, while the latter offers close-to-the-customer resources and world-class service. It helps customers gain competitive advantage through efficient "green" sourcing. This includes packaging design; printing/fulfillment services; facilities solutions; and kitting/small-assembly services. The company also facilitates third-party logistics, warehousing services, energy-conservation products and supply-chain management.

When the contract with xpedx recently came due for renewal, supplier management buyers from the Boeing company started the negotiation process with xpedx, its incumbent supplier since 1998. That's when Boeing decided that bringing in JEMNI could also help the aircraft company increase its diversity spending goals and long-time investment in veteran-owned businesses. JEMNI now supports front-end business requirements and hires veterans to work in xpedx's Kent, WA, facility.

With varying degrees of success, federal laws have sought over the years to establish goals and requirements that support SDVOBs. More recently, with thousands of vets returning home, it's become increasingly important to accelerate opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship among vets and service-disabled vets.

Ellson believes that it's critical to have a national organization provide one voice that speaks up to create awareness of all the benefits that can be gained from businesses that are certified by the United States Business Leadership Network (USBLN), such as JEMNI, in the marketplace. As a business owned by a vet with a disability, JEMNI is supported in gaining access to commercial contracts through USBLN's Disability Supplier Diversity Program.

"Very few companies nationwide include certified Disability-Owned Business Enterprises in their supplier diversity programs," Ellson noted. "Not because they don't want to, but because they are unaware of this reliable business certification program. I encourage disability and service-disabled veteran entrepreneurs to become certified if they want to grow their companies."

Ellson is certified with the Veterans Administration, and serves as a national board member for the SDVOB network, which advocates for vet entrepreneurs and their affiliates. ■ **ABILITY**

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by Anita Howard
USBLN



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