


making
CONNECTIONS
building
BUSINESSES



"We've seen NextGen grow substantially in the marketplace since we started doing business with them. But that growth has never affected the outstanding customer service that Monsanto receives."

**- Deb Lebryk
Director,
External Relations
Monsanto Company**



"The fact that Monsanto and their employees depend on NextGen to help them be successful is an awesome responsibility."

**- Carmen Jacob
President,
NextGen
Information
Services, Inc.**

Becoming a world class supplier is more than just a dream, it's a *process*.

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(SLMBC is committed to promoting partnerships with MBEs among major U.S. corporations through strategic marketing and communications programs that educate majority companies on the benefits of doing business with minority entrepreneurs. As we continue to make these strategic business connections, we will also look for innovative ways to become an even greater asset to our partners.)

Spend a few minutes with Carmen Jacob and Deb Lebryk and it's clear that their business partnership is a special one.

Their story began in 2003 when Monsanto sent out a competitive bid to help fulfill its contract labor needs. NextGen, an information technology and business staffing firm, participated in the RFP process and came away as one of five suppliers selected to staff Monsanto's clerical and scientific functions.

It didn't take long for Carmen and the NextGen staff to prove their worth. They so impressed the Monsanto team that within a year, they had another opportunity, this time to help staff Monsanto's IT function.

"We initially awarded NextGen a contract in our administrative area, a new but growing line of business at NextGen," says Deb. "They submitted an outstanding proposal in response to our RFP and, after winning the business, came through with everything they promised and then some.

"NextGen's participation in the RFP process for administrative services and their success in this area allowed us to consider NextGen's IT services to help meet the business needs of our managers," Deb explains. "NextGen now supports the IT business and has continued to surpass our expectations."

Carmen is appreciative of Deb's high praise. But it comes as no surprise.

"Our job is to be flexible," Carmen explains, "because our clients' needs are always changing. We care about the growth of our customers. So, that means we listen to what they want, act on what they say, and provide proactive ideas to help them extend their businesses. I have wonderful employees who have a lot of experience and knowledge in this industry. They're the ones who make it happen."

Although the NextGen-Monsanto partnership has reaped tremendous benefits for both companies in a relatively short timeframe, Deb and Carmen are quick to acknowledge that "making it happen" isn't accidental. They explain that, like any relationship, their success has been built on some tried and true essentials: open communication, trust, transparency, living up to commitments, and persistence, just to name a few. And they advise MBEs and corporate members to think long-term when considering strategic business partnerships.

"You can't build these kinds of partnerships overnight," says Carmen. "It takes time to develop trust and a true understanding of your client's needs. Both parties have to be patient and have to be willing to stick out the relationship."

"I'm very proud of the fact that two St. Louis-based companies have established such a successful working relationship," Carmen adds. "Monsanto gave NextGen a chance - they believed in us. And for that, I'm grateful."

NextGen



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ST. LOUIS MINORITY BUSINESS COUNCIL

308 North 21st Street • Suite 700 • St. Louis, MO 63103 • Phone: (314) 241-1143 • Fax: (314) 241-1073
Email: info@slmbc.org or visit www.slmbc.org