

WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESS EXPANDS INTO NEW MARKETS

ABOUT DLS ENGINEERING ASSOCIATES INC. DLS Engineering Associates, Inc. is a small, woman-owned business with a long history of delivering engineering services to the U.S. government. Located in Virginia Beach with around 20 employees, the firm is primarily responsible for the engineering and maintenance of U.S. Coast Guard aircraft.

THE CHALLENGE. DLS has been successful in serving a few dedicated customers in the challenging Department of Defense (DoD) market, but without a plan for future growth. The company turned to GENEDGE, a NIST MEP affiliate, for help in diversifying into markets outside of DoD. Using the CoreValue Assess® software tool, GENEDGE identified several red flags impacting the company, including the limited number of customers, a heavy reliance on the President/CEO, and the absence of a formal strategic plan.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. GENEDGE offered a two-phase service proposal to help DLS diversify into non-DoD markets. Phase one focused on Strategic Planning/Alignment for Growth, Concept Development, and Execution Planning. The DLS team learned how to articulate a clear commercial vision and value proposition based on the company's existing strengths in data analysis, engineering services, and Coast Guard service history. They identified possible commercial growth areas for these competencies, exploring asset data management markets, product life cycle management, enterprise asset management and the "Internet of Things" / "big data."

In phase two, GENEDGE provided assistance in the areas of Concept Validation, Development, and Execution. This included a formal study known as Technology Driven Market Intelligence (TDMI) that explored commercial analogs to the Coast Guard service delivery areas. GENEDGE brought in a third-party brand facilitation expert to transition the firm's perspective of itself from DoD-based entity to a commercially viable player in the data management space, and the company participated in a brand summit. "Although we're a very early stage commercial company, we decided to invest time and money testing our new value propositions and newly minted offerings on potential customers," explained Donna Scassera, DLS President. The company is increasing sales and adding jobs, and "currently there is a search underway to identify a pilot project where we can test our approach and prototype," Scassera said.

"Our business has always focused on government customers—at least until we began working with GENEDGE. We have developed a multiyear strategy using their guidance to create new services and enter commercial markets. GENEDGE has helped guide the development and roll out of our strategy, applying its knowledge and network to our benefit."

-Donna Scassera, President/CEO

RESULTS



Sales estimated at **\$6 million**



Investment estimated at **\$73,000**



Possible addition of **30** new jobs

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