

# SMALL BUSINESS

## PROFILE:

### QUALITY TECHNICAL SERVICES INC

**President and owner:** Doña Storey  
**Business address:** 4456 Corporation Lane, Suite 210,  
 Virginia Beach, VA 23462  
**Phone:** (757) 490-4710  
**Web site:** www.qts-trng.com  
**Business:** Manages the purchasing and installation of  
 furniture and security systems for government buildings and  
 private companies. Also provides consulting work to small  
 businesses interested in federal contracts. QTS customers  
 include the Internal Revenue Service, the Defense  
 Department, the Department of Justice, Time Inc., J.P.  
 Morgan Chase & Co., and Johnson and Johnson Inc.  
**Employees:** 21  
**When opened:** 1980

Doña Storey is rare among small-business owners in her ability to land federal contracts. The reason she gets them is not merely because she's a minority and a woman and has participated in the U.S. Small Business Administration 8(a) program for disadvantaged businesses. Her nine-year participation in the program expires next year, but Storey is almost completely weaned off of it. She now competes fully on almost all her contracts. And she advises businesses far and wide on how to successfully land government work. Storey was recently selected as the **SBA Minority Business Owner of the Year** for a region that includes Virginia, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, Maryland and Washington, D.C.

#### Q. How did you start your company?

A. Out of school I worked for Revlon and Estée Lauder in the glamour industry. I was a marketing and press liaison and training consultant. But my father was in business, and it was always an assumption growing up that I would have my own business. Since my background was as a consultant, I started my business to help other companies with strategic launches. Let's say a corporation wanted to develop a new product or service to launch into the marketplace. I would sit down with them and talk about how they would go about it.

#### Q. How did you get into federal contracting?

A. A retired Navy captain from a company called Sonalysts, in Groton, Conn., was working on a contract down here, and I met him at a Kiwanis Club meeting in Norfolk. The company does Sonar technology for the Navy, and they had helped with creating authentic sound for the movie "The Hunt for Red October." Their work helped the movie get the Academy Award for sound editing. When Sonalysts got into that, the bug bit them to do more commercialization. So at the Kiwanis Club meeting, the Navy captain said, 'Our firm is just really desperate, and you might be able to help us.' They wanted me to help them take some of their military technology and transfer it into the commercial marketplace. And as I was helping them commercialize, they were helping me to become a federal contractor. They were truly my mentor in doing that. I learned everything I could about accounting services and putting together proposals and the technical writing for proposal development.

#### Q. Did you have any difficulties moving into federal contracting on your own?

A. Getting a bank to step up to the plate to help me finance my company was a huge problem. I wasn't even asking for a loan, but a line of credit to fill the gap between the time in cash-flow time from the time you pay your vendor until you get paid by the government. The banks kept telling me, 'I don't know if you can manage a contract that big. You're too



Doña Storey, president and owner of Quality Technical Services Inc.

big a risk.' I was getting frustrated because I'd hear about these other guys stiffing banks for x amounts of money, and the banks were still throwing money at them. I tried to tell the bankers, 'I pay my bills on time. I'm an honest person.' But I just wasn't getting anywhere.

#### Q. How did you get over that hurdle?

A. Finally I presented that problem to my accountant at Goodman and Co., and they suggested a banker come in to our offices to talk to me and the accountant. So we had that meeting, and the accountant spoke in numbers and things the bankers understood. The accountant said, 'We stand behind how she runs her business, and we're asking you to give her a chance.' That was SunTrust Bank, and they were the first and only bank that gave me a chance. Now, we have open-ended lines of credit with many of our vendors, and people are always asking me if I want to bank with them.

#### Q. What advice would you give for people running their own companies?

A. I'm a very debt-averse person. That's one thing I learned from my dad. It's an old Asian culture thing maybe. Asians don't like debt. They're cash people, into profit and not carrying debt. I don't carry debt in this company and not in my personal life either. I talk about that with my employees too, try to put some of those cash-flow principles in front them.

#### Q. What about for people trying to get federal contracts?

A. First of all, you have to determine whether what you're selling is something the government buys, and quite frankly I have yet to find anything that the government doesn't buy. Then you determine what department in an agency that would buy your goods or services. There's usually a small business advocate in the federal agency. You can say 'I sell pencils and paper clips. Who in your agency buys these things?' Then you could go and market to those people. You should also be familiar with F.A.R., the Federal Acquisitions Regulations. At the very least you have to know how to access that online or get yourself a CD-ROM or hard copy. Once you get some contracts, a good idea is have a past performance matrix that you can give out. You'd list the name, contract number, the point of contact with their telephone number. Staple them with a nice cover on it, and that's a nice start.

Peter Dujardin/Daily Press