

- *EACH YEAR, the Minority Business and Professional Directory recognizes the accomplishments of those individuals contributing to the development and success of minority business enterprise. The staff of the Minority Business and Professional Directory takes great pride in honoring the year's trendsetters and wishes them continued success.*

■ ***Belinda Guadarrama*** ***GC Micro***



GC Micro, the award-winning computer hardware and software dealer, was started in 1986 by Belinda Guadarrama in a one-room office with two employees. This company will enter the next millennium as one of the largest Hispanic owned firms in the United States, and one of the oldest computer resellers in the nation.

If you ask Ms. Guadarrama for the key

to her achievements, she will tell you her "secret formula for success." "Take all the money you have in the world and add to that whatever you can borrow from friends and family members. Develop a good five-year business plan and stick to it. Invest ten years of 14 to 16 hour days, six to seven days a week, giving your customers the highest levels of service and attention ... treat everyone on your staff like business partners ... and always keep a close eye on your accounts receivable, your accounts payable and your financial statements ..."

GC Micro's founder began with a good formal education, solid management experience, and a determination to invest as much time and energy as it took to accomplish her goals. She credits the company's "business teaming philosophy" for much of its success in working with larger accounts. "We try to evaluate a customer's specific needs, and team with manufacturers or other small businesses to present to our customers solutions they might not have previously considered." Ms. Guadarrama must be on the right track, because GC Micro has enjoyed a level of success few small businesses ever achieve. The company's collection of awards from customers across the country fill the lobby of its headquarters in Novato, California. She is especially proud of the 1997 award from the U.S. Department of Commerce for "Minority Entrepreneur of the Year."

Belinda Guadarrama advises small business owners to take full advantage of all the new technology available. "The Internet, web-based catalogs and online procurement systems are invaluable in helping small firms stay competitive in today's marketplace. We started using the internet at GC Micro as an integral part of our sales and marketing program several years ago. Today we do a significant portion of our business by customizing online procurement systems to meet our individual customer's needs. With our new website, we can help our customers consolidate their purchase orders and improve the over all efficiency of their procurement process. Your customers will always be interested in new processes that save them time and money."

Over the years, Ms. Guadarrama has demonstrated her dedication to helping other small businesses, women-owned firms and minority-owned companies to achieve success. Because of her reputation as an advocate for small business, she was appointed by Senator Barbara Boxer to the White House Conference on Small Business, and has been appointed to the California Partnership on Diversity as well. In 1997 NASA administrator Dan Goldin appointed Belinda Guadarrama chairwoman of the NASA Minority Business Resource Advisory Council. As part of her duties, she travels to various NASA locations around the country and holds public meetings on how NASA can more effectively utilize small businesses.

These days Ms. Guadarrama works on projects for groups which are making a significant reinvestment in the community. "I'm very excited about the Hispanic Education and Media Group, a wonderful organization that has developed a national program to encourage Hispanic high school students to stay in school and complete their education. Hispanics have the highest dropout rate, but I believe this program can make a big difference here in California to encourage our young people to stay in school."

Ms. Guadarrama is also working on a project she hopes will benefit firms throughout California. She is lobbying to encourage the state government to focus more of its contracting opportunities on California-based companies. "I was astonished when I first discovered how much money the State of California spends with firms outside California, for everyday items that can be purchased in any city within the state. We have talked to the governor, the lieutenant governor and several state legislators. So far, everyone agrees that the State of California should try to work more closely with California businesses." She has drafted proposed legislation, which she plans to submit to the legislature during its next session, to expand contracting opportunities for California firms within this state.