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## Trade mission to Europe includes businesswoman from Missouri City

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**Ten women, including one from Missouri City, were recently chosen by the United States Department of Commerce to go to Europe on an all-woman trade mission.**

The National Association of Women Business Owners partnered with the United States Commercial Service, a sector of the Department of Commerce, to choose 10 businesswomen for the trade mission. The USCS manages the workings of the International Trade Administration, which assists small and medium sized companies in exporting to other countries. Close to 90 percent of businesses that export are small or mid-sized.

The group traveled to Belgium and the Netherlands, presenting European business officials with their products. They also participated in business seminars and visited the port of Rotterdam, which is the largest logistic and industrial hub in Europe.

The purpose of the trip was to find more places to market American products while educating businesses and increasing the number of women-owned businesses involved in export practices.

"We want to increase the number of women-owned businesses exporting to other countries," Nya Igambi, an official for the United States Commercial Service, said. "Women businesses are successful and fast growing. They have the potential to do business internationally."

Missouri City resident Pamela Kahn, CEO of Genoa International, took part in the mission.

Genoa International manufactures specialty and industrial chemicals used in the oil and gas industry. Other specialty chemical fluids Genoa produces include heat transfer fluid and water coolant.

Some of the products have been purchased by the Department of Defense.

Igambi said the USCS chose Europe because it is easier for American companies to export there. She added that traveling is not difficult when going to Europe and there is no language barrier.

"Europe is open to trade," Igambi said. "The European business industry is transparent because it is easy to follow and identify. They are legitimate business partners and it is easier to conduct business there."

Exporting goods and services to Europe has economic and political advantages as well. When companies export, they have a higher return on investments and they increase jobs domestically. Igambi said that by increasing the number of exporters, there are more jobs on both ends, the jobs are higher paying and the trade deficit is positively affected.

Kahn added that by doing business with Europe, the United States can open the door to a better economy for everyone. Business can make the relationship between America and Europe stronger.

"The Euro is very strong," Kahn said. "It enables companies like Genoa International to do export in the European market. This mission trip was especially important because it strengthened the business relationship between America and Europe. It took us to a different level altogether."

Although the mission only took 10 businesswomen, there were over 90 businesses from the European side that were willing to conduct business with American companies. The missioners were also able to network and make contacts with European business organizations for women.

Three press articles were generated for companies that were unable to participate in the mission activities, giving the American missioners exposure to Europe. Some partnerships were built during the mission trip by both parties signing business contracts to begin exporting.

Leslie Friedrich, president of Friedrich Software Resources, also attended the mission trip. Friedrich added that women get more experience running their own small businesses rather than going into corporate America.

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She said that the mission trip was a success because it created a chance for women to prove themselves in a male-dominated industry.

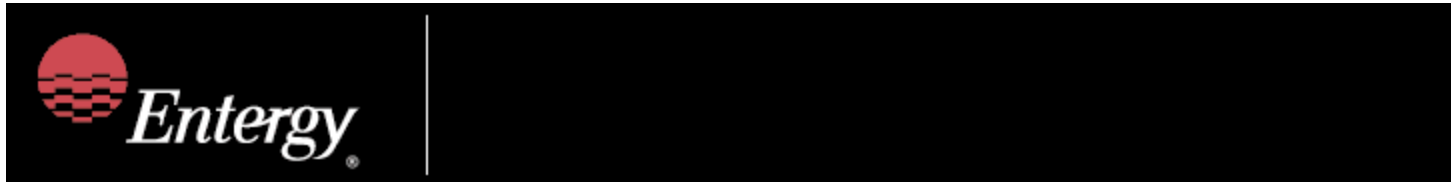
"Unfortunately, there is still a glass ceiling," Friedrich said. "It is true that there are more women executives in today's business world, but due to other responsibilities like children many women can not get to where they want to be in corporate America. The mission assisted us in moving ahead."

NAWBO and the Department of Commerce are assisting new individuals in business that want to export to other nations.

Friedrich is a member of the Houston District Export Council, which gives advice and tips to businesses looking to export internationally.

Professionals in accounting, finance, law and academia assist individuals looking to expand their businesses to other countries.

NAWBO and the United States Commercial Service hope to send more businesses on export missions around the world. They plan to make trips to India and China soon because both are major players in international business.



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