

Noteworthy Events

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Government Meets Goal Set in 1994 for Women's Business Contracts

By [STACY COWLEY](#)



Rebecca Boenigk, the chief and a founder of Neutral Posture, a furniture manufacturer, brought in \$7 million last year from government contracts and expects that to double or triple this year.
Credit Michael Stravato for The New York Times

After more than 20 years of effort, the federal government has, for the first time, met its goal of awarding 5 percent of the money it spent on contractors to businesses owned by women.

Small companies captured 25.8 percent of the government's contracting dollars last year, representing \$90.7 billion, the Small Business Administration plans to announce on Wednesday. About \$17.8 billion of that total went to businesses owned by women during the fiscal year, which ended in September.

The news comes on the heels of a Commerce Department analysis showing that

businesses owned by women are 21 percent less likely to win government contracts than otherwise similar companies. Companies owned by women tend to be younger and smaller than other businesses, but even accounting for those differences, the disparity remains, the agency found.

The government set its 5 percent target in 1994 for spending on women-owned businesses, which are defined as those that are at least 51 percent controlled by women. It repeatedly fell short.

Five years ago, the government adopted new rules allowing agencies to set aside specific contracts for bidding only by companies owned by women.

“I think we can attribute the government meeting its goal directly to that being put in place,” said Ann Sullivan, the head of government relations for Women Impacting Public Policy, a group that lobbied for the change. “They weren’t going to meet it simply by wishing and hoping; there needed to be a program specifically designating some contracts.”

A more recent change, made late last year, allows procurement officers to go a step further on some small contracts and award them directly to qualified companies, without competitive bidding.

About 36 percent of the businesses in America are owned by women, according to census data. Most have no employees other than the owner, but those with employees have a collective work force of 8.4 million.

Working with industry groups, the S.B.A. increased its outreach efforts in recent years to teach women who are entrepreneurs about federal procurement opportunities and help guide them through the often complex process of preparing bids. Maria Contreras-Sweet, who became the agency’s head two years ago, made meeting the federal contracting goal a priority.

Women in Congress have also pressed for progress in recent years, introducing and passing several pieces of legislation intended to make contracts more obtainable for women who own businesses.

“Five percent is not a big goal, and it seemed like it took forever to meet it,” she said. “I’m hoping that agencies now won’t sit back and go, ‘The women are taken care of, we don’t have to worry about it anymore.’ I hope this will instead show that if the government is determined, they can make it happen.”

5 Things You Can Do to Improve Your Mindset in 20 Minutes



Susan C. Foster

These tried and true tips will help you take on the day with confidence.

Mindset is a set of attitudes, says Carol Dweck, a world-renowned Stanford psychologist, who discovered after years of research that dedication, hard work and resilience are much more important to growth and success than brains or talent. When we change our mindset to one of growth, we change the course of our lives.

We can do these simple steps every day, quickly and easily, to improve our mindset:

1. Just breathe. (5 minutes)

Studies show that just a few minutes a day of quiet can open our brains and make it available for our most innovative ideas. Sit or stand in a quiet spot, feet on the floor, and hands by your side or on your knees. Now just quiet your mind—picture a place that is your idea of peace, such as a beach or a mountain. Just breathe, consciously and deeply from your belly. If your thoughts start to intrude (the project is due today, a late bill, etc.), just notice, then go back to your picture. You don't have to be a meditation expert to do this. Five to 10 minutes of quiet, deep breathing during the day can also help us get back on track when stress levels get high, and clear our minds to come up with a better solution or next step to our challenge.

2. Check your thoughts. (5 minutes)

Have you ever gotten up in the morning when the weather is lousy and said, *This is going to be a bad day?* I have. More times than not, it guaranteed a day that finished the same way. Our thoughts are powerful. They create feelings, which leads to actions and behaviors that determine whether our day goes well. Learning that we can choose our thoughts is one of the most powerful things we can do to take charge

of our lives. Taking five minutes to make sure our thoughts are positive starts the day off with the right mindset.

3. Write your grateful list. (3 minutes)

Set the timer and write down five things you are grateful for every day.³ According to research by UC Davis psychologist Robert Emmons, keeping a gratitude journal contributes to a positive life attitude, and makes us feel better, sleep better and even have stronger immune systems. Try for a different list each day, and at the end of the week you will be surprised how this helps your mindset.

4. Set your intention for the day. (5 minutes)

Before you leave in the morning, set an intention of how you want the day to end. How do you want the actions you accomplish today to make you feel at the end of the day? How do you want to feel about your relationships, and what can you do today to move that forward? It doesn't have to be major. What is one thing you can do that will make you feel better at the end of the day?

5. Turn off the noise. (2 minutes)

Just for today, find something else to listen to when you begin your day. Do your morning commute without listening to the news (it's never positive), talking on the phone or checking social media. Listen to your favorite music, a lecture you've recorded and have been wanting to get time for, or just observe what's happening around you. There will be plenty of time to find out what's happening in the world when you get to your destination. Do this for a week and you will find yourself arriving at work in a calmer, more positive and relaxed mindset. Best of all, you will discover you haven't missed a thing.

That's it—just 20 minutes and you are well on your way to a more positive mindset. Practice this for just two weeks. You will see a tremendous difference in your productivity and your attitude.

'Female-friendly' auto shop plans expansion in north Fulton cities

Becca J. G. Godwin / The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



Honest-1 Auto Care (Photo courtesy of No Limit Agency)

For many people, taking their car to the shop isn't exactly a pleasant experience.

They typically don't expect the chairs to be leather, or the beverages to be complimentary, or to be given a full explanation of all charges by a friendly and courteous technician.

It's that sentiment that **Honest-1 Auto Care** — which has 60 locations across the nation and 40 in development — hopes to change.

The honest-policy business model seems to be working for Dennis Eidson, the company's Atlanta regional developer and almost six-year owner of a location in Roswell. A second Georgia location — owned by Butch Carter, the only other franchisee in the state — opened November 2013, in Marietta.

"We pride ourselves on being family-friendly and female-friendly and honest in every way we can be," Eidson said. "So no high-pressure sales, no making stuff up."

Eidson plans to grow the brand in 2017 by overseeing the opening of four locations, in Johns Creek, Alpharetta, East Roswell and Canton or Woodstock.

Negotiations are underway on an existing repair shop in Johns Creek, which will likely be owned by Carter. Eidson plans to own a second location, and the others are planned as new Georgia franchises.

"We want stores in relatively higher-income areas ... in 'growth' parts of town," he said. "That's really where we're focusing our efforts and looking at right now."

Before he became a repair shop owner, Eidson spent 25 years in corporate America. Carter was a sales executive in the pharmaceutical industry.

That kind of career path is typical for most Honest-1 franchisees, including an IBM employee interested in buying a store, Eidson said.

"It's folks that are business savvy and customer-focused that are the most successful auto repair shop owners," he said. "They don't need to be mechanics."

Holiday Appetizer

HGTV - <http://www.hgtv.com/design/make-and-celebrate/entertaining/smoked-gouda-and-herb-puffs>



Smoked Gouda and Herb Puffs

Ingredients:

- 1 C Water
- 2 ½ Tbls unsalted butter
- 1 Tsp salt
- 1 C all-purpose flour, sifted
- 3 large eggs
- 4 ounces smoked Gouda, diced
- 2 Tbls chives, thinly sliced
- 1 Tbls thyme, minced
- 1 Tbls cracked black pepper

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F
2. Place water, butter and salt in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil
3. Once the mixture has come to a boil, add flour and quickly stir with a wooden spoon until a ball of dough forms, 3-5 minutes.
4. Transfer dough into a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment and mix over medium speed, allowing steam to escape.
5. Once steam disappears, 2-4 minutes, begin adding eggs one by one, scraping down sides of bowl for even mixing.
6. Remove mixture from the stand mixer and gently fold in remaining ingredients.
7. Scoop heaping tablespoons of mixture onto a parchment-lined baking sheet, 1 inch apart, and bake for about 25 minutes, or until golden brown.

Serve warm

