

Best Practices

in Supporting Women's Entrepreneurship

in the United States:

A Compendium
of Public and Private
Sector Organizations
and Initiatives

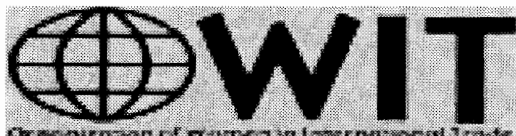


Organization of Women in International Trade

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

Type of Organization: Membership Association

Client Groups Served: Women doing business in international trade.



BASIC DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Description

The Organization of Women in International Trade (OWIT) unites women around the globe to foster free trade and the advancement of women in business. OWIT is a non-profit professional organization designed to promote women doing business in international trade by providing networking and educational opportunities and increased market access. Members include women and men doing business in all facets of international trade including finance, public relations, government, freight forwarding, international law, agriculture, sales and marketing, import/export, logistics, and transportation.

Mission

OWIT is designed to promote women doing business in international trade by providing networking and educational opportunities and access to markets.

History

- 1989 OWIT was founded.

Issues Addressed

- Need for networking among women doing business in international trade
- Need for education and mentoring of these women

ACHIEVEMENTS

Successful Elements

Access to Markets

- OWIT provides increased access to markets through its web site and other means.

Access to Networks/Networking and Access to Education, Mentoring, or Technical Assistance

- OWIT offers extensive networking and educational opportunities to women in international trade.
- It has conferences, a speakers' bureau, educational meetings, a website with news for women in international trade, and other features. It advertises major international conferences by other groups as well.

Access to Honors

- The *OWIT Woman of the Year Award* is given annually to a woman that has furthered international trade through excellence and innovation and who by doing so has enhanced the status of women in international trade and business.

Milestones

- Over 2,000 members worldwide
- Chapters in Australia; Bermuda; Alberta, Canada; Toronto, Canada; Denmark; Dominican Republic; Geneva, Switzerland; Jamaica; Nairobi, Kenya; Peru; Puerto Rico; Sofia, Bulgaria; Vladimir, Russia
- 20 United States chapters

LESSONS LEARNED

- Act like a lady and be part of any team, women or men. Always be polite and positive (well, wherever possible), while making your position clear.

- However, don't be afraid to be "one of the boys" (within limits) or allow them to treat you differently in a business context.
- Being human does not take you away from your position in a controversial situation.
- Use diplomacy in accordance with the situation.
- Help other people. Although you might not receive payment in money, you might be compensated in other ways.
- Never pass up an opportunity to network, even with those who might not appear to be in a relevant business currently. Such networking may pay off down the road.
- Networking works best when it is done on the basis of either a true mutual business interest (immediate) or a real friendship.
- Be as responsive as possible.
- Foster frequent communication, both to help you to best assess your customer's wants/needs and to keep your business on the minds of the people you want to reach.
- Don't undercharge for your goods/services. Test the local market, but don't be afraid to cut an introductory deal.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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