

This NoVa founder is bringing job training into the metaverse

Woman-owned health IT firm Nolij works in the federal contracting space and is in the midst of building a virtual reality lab for onboarding and training.

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When **Ashley Mehta** set out to create her own company in the early 2010s, she followed the method of many successful founders: She wanted something, so she built it.

"I just really felt a need for more women-owned small businesses and decided that I think a lot of women would like to work for women," Mehta told Technically.ly. "So I wanted to really create a women-owned company in federal health IT supporting women veterans, supporting our community, and just do an excellent job in health IT services."

Accordingly, after a career working in the consulting game, Mehta founded her Vienna, Virginia-based company Nolij (pronounced like knowledge) in 2012. The 150-person company delivers testing, enterprise architecture, electronic record modernization, data analytics and agile transformation, primarily to federal agencies like the US Departments of Defense, Health and Human Services (HHS) and Homeland Security. The company was also recently named on the 2021 Inc Best in Business awards, honoring positive impact companies, for its outreach work supporting women veterans and healthcare workers.

In 2022, Mehta said, Nolij is looking to push into new technologies. For one, it's working on an artificial intelligence project with HHS for procurement.

One of its most noteworthy projects for 2022, though, is the virtual reality lab Nolij is in the midst of creating and building products for. The lab is equipped with multiple headsets, workstations and software platforms, and the idea is for companies to use VR to help with onboarding and training. It's a VR use that Mehta said is growing in demand with companies looking to attract young talent.



Ashley Mehta, CEO of Nolij.

"It's just a fun product or technology to use that gets people into a different mindset," Mehta said. "You feel like you're actually there versus just taking a training online or an onboarding through like a web conference tool. This is more fun and more interactive and a lot more hands on, too."

In the new year, Mehta said she hopes to continue expanding in the emerging technology space, be it in the metaverse or attracting new talent (and retaining current staff). She also hopes the federal government can make more room in IT contracting specifically for women-owned small businesses.

"As an owner, you wake up every day and you think, what can you do more for your employees, what can you do more for your clients?" Mehta said. "So, as we kind of progress into 2022, we might create more benefits for employees, think of new ways to service our clients, like the metaverse and virtual reality products, and just continue providing excellent services on our projects."

In other words: She wants something, so she's building it.