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Pinnacle Award Finalist Ashley Mehta: 'Nolij Serves Our Country Because a Healthier Nation Means a Stronger Nation'

By Staff Writer – November 18, 2021



Ashley Mehta, Nolij Consulting

The finalists for WashingtonExec's [Pinnacle Awards](#) were announced Oct. 13, and we'll be highlighting some of them until the event takes place virtually Dec. 8.

Next is Artificial Intelligence Industry Executive of the Year (Private Company) finalist Ashley Mehta, who's chair, CEO and president of Nolij Consulting. Here, she talks key achievements, learning from failures, proud career moments and more.

What key achievements did you have in 2020/2021?

Over the past year, I have transformed Nolij's focus and invested in artificial intelligence, machine learning, natural language processing, along with data analytics and the development of proprietary AI tools to help enable our customers to be ready for the future today.

We created new partnerships with next-generation Silicon Valley companies that bring in operational excellence to our customers, major investments in marketing; and winning a number of exciting prime contracts, including our first sole-source contract in AI products for the Department of Health and Human Services, that are key stepping stones to the company's future growth.

Nolij is also in the process of setting up a Center of Excellence for AI tech in health care and has set up a thought leadership team to identify and develop the best-in-breed solutions with the primary focus on improving patient journeys and outcomes.

This team has also developed Silicon Valley connections with key leaders in health care IT and other technologies who are the guiding voice behind Nolij's strategy to be a major player in the AI space.

Additionally, I have led Nolij as it established three new joint ventures, Cyber Nolij, Technogence and NolijTech to win contract vehicles. For example, Nolij was recently awarded an 8A STAR III contract through Cyber Nolij and is submitting for bids to get on NITAAC CIO SP4 for 8A, WOSB, Hubzone and IEE/ISBEE. In the next year, Nolij anticipates having direct contracts on several IDIQs.

What has made you successful in your current role?

I worked for one of the top five large consulting firms and had the opportunity to learn about the field as a whole — from compliance to proposals, business development, technology and everywhere in between. As the industry started shifting from large businesses to smaller ones, I saw an opportunity to start my own firm and make a real difference in the industry, while having the work-life balance I needed to juggle all of my responsibilities.

From there, Nolij was born. Over the past eight years, my expertise and leadership have been responsible for the great strides Nolij has made against considerable odds in establishing itself amid a crowded GovCon marketplace.

What was a turning point or inflection point in your career?

My turning point started with changing the perception of a staff augmentation company supporting large businesses to a company known for its federal health IT and emerging technology capabilities. We've done that by building strong client relationships, delivering excellent services, retaining our top leadership and employees and building robust partner relationships that complement Nolij capabilities.

In the past year, our business partners have realized that Nolij is a game-changer and admire our “Must Win” and “One Team” attitude and culture.

What are you most proud of having been a part of in your current organization?

I am most proud of Nolij being truly a woman-operated and woman-owned business. I lead from the front and am involved in all aspects of my business. I went from being a stay-at-home mother managing two kids solely to learning the ins and outs of government consulting to now running my own business.

Having raised two biracial children, I am open minded, embrace change, appreciate diversity and love working with people, and I bring that mindset to Nolij. Nolij is a high-energy workplace that is full of unique people, ideas and excitement. Nolij is a melting pot of talent and I enjoy and admire all of my employees and the contributions they make to the growth of the company.

I appreciate the comradery among my employees. They are friends both at work and outside of work. Nolij is fortunate to have evolved into a culture of collaboration and professionalism that extends beyond the workplace to friendships.

Also, as a little girl, I’ve always dreamed of having the ability to give back. As a company dedicated to addressing health care issues for the nation’s military and veterans, Nolij is committed to not only providing the best service to our customers but also supporting nonprofit organizations that give back to the cause such as Women Veterans Interactive and Operation Renewed Hope Foundation.

What is your primary focuses going forward, and why are those so important to the future of the nation?

Technology plays a key role in improving health care in the U.S. and around the world. My primary focus is to be in synch with technology prognosticators, while implementing emerging innovations for the benefit of our nation’s military and veterans so that they receive the best health care and services.

To this end, we have created a Center of Excellence, where a team continuously evaluates current and future transformative technologies, identifies the best and customizes them so that they can be implemented optimally and cost-effectively.

We have also been incorporating AI, ML, NLM, RPA and other leading-edge technologies to design solutions that provide superior results for our customers such as departments of Defense and Health and Human Services.

An efficient and advanced health care system leads to healthier people who have a better quality of life because health challenges are proactively predicted, diagnosed and treated. By contributing to improving the standard of health care in the U.S., Nolij serves our country because a healthier nation means a stronger nation.

How do you help shape the next generation of government leaders/industry leaders?

Key to Nolij's continued success under my leadership is the heavy investment the company makes in training its resources. Nolij expects to spend about \$75,000 in training and certifications this year, because we are vested in continuously enhancing our teams' skills and provide opportunities for advancement and growth that benefit the company and the clients we serve.

I'm also proud of the robust benefits we offer to attract and retain the industry's top talent, which includes Nolij paying 100% of employees' health insurance costs, as well as short- and long-term disability coverage.

This past year, despite the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nolij paid all employees a holiday bonus, as we believe deeply in demonstrating our appreciation to our hardworking employees. We work hard to make our employees feel valued, secure and satisfied with their work while promoting a healthy work-life balance.

Additionally, we are focused on ensuring that Nolij employees remain at the heart of the company. Nolij reinforced a sense of community by having virtual team happy hours, online Zoom yoga classes, virtual coffee chats, a virtual holiday party. Nolij cares deeply about its employees and there are regular check-ins, deliveries of care packages with masks and sanitizer, and this year, we introduced Lunch on Us.

Lunch on Us is designed to help employees stay connected with their team members during the pandemic by virtually sharing lunch once a month, compliments of Nolij. Nolij has worked hard to ensure job security during challenging circumstances and avoid mass layoffs. Our work has continued seamlessly while we adopted to a virtual environment.

Going forward, Nolij plans to start its annual picnic back up, resume outdoor happy hour events and plans for a new collaborative workspace designed for the employee of the future.

What's one key thing you learned from a failure you had?

Failure is key to improving and growing as a company so we encourage experimenting at Nolij without fear. When we fail, it's important to invest the time and effort to understand and analyze what went wrong and what we could have done better.

Failure and success go hand in hand — it's impossible to have one without the other. That's why Nolij works closely with our clients and partners and strategizes constantly to increase our chances of making the best decisions that lead to success.

Which rules do you think you should break more as a government/industry leader?

As a government/industry leader, it is important not to get overwhelmed by the restrictions but to think out of the box or even out of the universe! As Steve Jobs used to advocate, "Think

different,” because it is the best way to create/add value for customers and ensure not only great quality of work, but to get the end users excited about using the products and solutions we create.

What’s the biggest professional risk you’ve ever taken?

Starting a government consulting company was both the biggest professional and personal risk. When you start a business, there is a lot of personal time that goes into growing it. Even though I had a lot of business experience in consulting, there are aspects of the business that you need to rely on others to fulfill.

I started Nolij at the right time when I had the energy to stay up late and burn the midnight oil. Today, I have excellent leadership and trusted employees who take excellent care of the company and our clients.

Looking back at your career, what are you most proud of?

I am proud of Nolij’s excellent Glassdoor reviews. We provide top-notch benefits to our employees. We have a high retention rate. We receive outstanding customer ratings.

Nolij has three joint ventures and we are adding more contract vehicles under Nolij. We are focused on emerging technologies and have added 10 new product partners to the mix.

What was your biggest career struggle and how did you overcome it?

Creating a company where people want to grow their careers, are proud to call their employer and not use as a stepping stone.

What’s your best career advice for those who want to follow in your footsteps?

I would advise others who want to follow in my footsteps to do their homework, learn about the government contracting acquisition process and be ready to work hard. Like everything else in life, starting a government contracting business is a learning process, but it is a very fulfilling one.

https://washingtonexec.com/2021/11/pinnacle-award-finalist-ashley-mehta-nolij-serves-our-country-because-a-healthier-nation-means-a-stronger-nation/?mc_cid=b3ae120172&mc_eid=b7d0a421b9