

We Asked, She Answered: CEO of Nolij Consulting Talks Women in Healthcare IT



Diversity in STEAM Magazine recently spoke with Ashley Mehta, chairwoman, CEO and president of Nolij Consulting, a woman-owned, solutions-focused healthcare IT company that specializes in digital healthcare modernization for the military, public and commercial sectors. Mehta founded the Northern Virginia-based Nolij Consulting in 2013, and since then, has scaled the company to be the leader in healthcare IT. We asked the Ohio native more about Nolij, her challenges as a female business owner and her goals for the future:

Diversity in STEAM Magazine (DISM): Tell us a little bit more about your background. Were you always interested in IT?

Mehta: I am a graduate of the Ohio State University's Max. M. Fisher College of Business. I have two children and am privileged to be in a position where I can create a positive, impactful work environment for my employees while giving back to the community and championing causes that I am passionate about, including veterans' and women's issues. I love working in IT because, whether it's making systems more efficient, reducing client expenditure or producing better outcomes, technology is able to create a significant and real change in organizations and people's lives. Yes, I've always been interested in technology as it increases business efficiencies and brings people together to solve the most pressing business problems.

DISM: What led you to create Nolij Consulting?

Mehta: I was a former stay-at-home mom with two young children who found herself in a position where I needed to go back to work. I joined a large consulting firm and had the opportunity to learn the entire spectrum of the business – from compliance to proposals, business development, technology and everything in between. As the industry started shifting from large business opportunities to more small business opportunities, I recognized my chance to start my own company and make a real difference in the industry while having the work/life balance I wanted so I could juggle all of my responsibilities. From there, Nolij was born. Over the past 9 years, we have made great strides against considerable odds in establishing ourselves amid a crowded GovCon marketplace! Ironically enough, I have trained several previously stay-at-home moms in this business and they now work for Nolij.

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DISM: What challenges, if any, have you experienced as a female founder and CEO in this space?

Mehta: The biggest obstacle I've faced to date is the lack of prime IT opportunities specifically set aside for women-owned businesses. As Nolij has grown its footprint across the GovCon space, and is now expanding into the commercial sector, I've continued to focus on key areas, such as cybersecurity, RPA and AI, where we can expand our partnerships to create new opportunities for women-owned businesses.

DISM: What would you say is your greatest accomplishment to-date?

Mehta: Building a successful, thriving business and creating an outstanding consulting company with a great work environment for my employees while being a great mother is my greatest accomplishment so far. Our employees gave us a 4 on Glassdoor, which is no easy feat to achieve for an organiza-

and invest heavily in training resources and certifications for your organization and your employees. To build a successful team, be sure you are offering the right benefits that will keep employees with you and give them the chance to grow professionally. It's no longer expensive to provide the benefits and resources that larger companies do. It is important to create a strong foundation to make people feel valued and enjoy coming to work each day. And remember, once you have a strong service/product offering, no one will care if you are a man or a woman.

DISM: What are your goals for Nolij Consulting? What do you hope to achieve in the future?

Mehta: We are focused on strategic growth in a number of areas going forward to make the company future-ready. We are also focused on strong partnerships and relationships to further strengthen our capabilities to meet our clients' goals. We've created three new joint ventures (JV) focused on

our employee's wellbeing while providing excellent health IT services to our clients.

DISM: What is something colleagues would be surprised to know/learn about you?

Mehta: I have a twin brother who is also in IT. He is more in the sales and software product side of the business. My son looks quite a bit like him. I also have an older brother who is in healthcare mergers and acquisitions. I grew up with my father owning his own consulting business around continuing education for CPAs. He did not have the luxury of the business conveniences that we have today. Due to the lack of technology, he had to educate CPAs in person, ship heavy training materials for his classes and had to conduct business over a phone hooked up to a wall. Today we can offer e-learning opportunities, send large documents over the internet, use our mobile phones to have Zoom or WebEx meetings with clients across the world. As a business owner and mother, I have a

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tion. Glassdoor is a website where current and former employees anonymously review companies. I am proud of employing leading talent across the industry and having the expertise to serve our clients and add to their success.

Nolij is proud to give back to various charities and support the less fortunate in our community. As a little girl, I always dreamed of having extra money to give to those in need.

I've been able to do this while raising two beautiful children who have worked hard as well and have bright futures ahead of them. These successes inspire me every day to keep moving forward.

DISM: What advice would you give to another female entrepreneur?

Mehta: I would say that leading by example, putting yourself in front of clients and marketing your company on social media is very important. It's also critical to set yourself apart and create a differentiator for your company. Distinguish your company

cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, emerging technologies and health IT services. These joint ventures are a combination of 8A, WOSB, Hubzone, and SDVOSB managed JVs. We also have a mentor protégé JV relationship with a large health IT company where we plan to win opportunities under relevant IT contract vehicles. We are currently working to win several contract vehicles that give us the ability to win task orders under those vehicles. We just recently won GSA 8A STARS III and Navy Seaport NxG. We are also strengthening our AI /ML solutions to establish a strong capability in software testing and Electronic Health Records (EHR). We just won an artificial intelligence sole source opportunity with Health and Human Services (HHS). We've established several emerging, next-generation technology product partnerships and are currently establishing a workforce that is well trained on delivering these products. Our goal is to achieve an even stronger health IT company focused on

tremendous amount of respect for what my dad accomplished while raising kids without the technological advances we have today.

DISM: Anything else you would like to add that we missed?

Mehta: If your company has predominately male leadership, if it's not leaning more towards a healthy even split, then the next generation of women will consider your company yesterday's product. A product not worth their investment and time; a place where innovation and creativity will be stifled by outdated norms.

I want to take a moment to recognize the bright daughters of my outstanding employees and all that they are accomplishing. It's exciting to think about a future where their contributions will not only be recognized but will be sought-after. Ultimately, empowering women in the workplace ensures your company will be ready for whatever challenges lie ahead.