

SBA names Minnesota Minority Small Business champion

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Edgardo Rodriguez, Business Consultant at the Metropolitan Economic Development Association (MEDA), has been named the Minnesota Minority Small Business Champion of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The Minority Small Business Champion award is presented annually in each state to individuals who assist small businesses through outstanding advocacy efforts on behalf of minority-owned small businesses. Yvonne Cheung Ho, President and CEO of MEDA, nominated Rodriguez for this award.

After decades of working in the corporate sector in senior positions, Rodriguez joined MEDA in 2002 as a consultant and has utilized his wealth of knowledge and resources to benefit the small business community. His specialties include coaching, analyzing complex and challenging business opportunities for growth, mergers and acquisitions, negotiations, document review, certifications and day-to-day business management issues.

George Jacobson, director of MEDA's Business Consulting Services and Loan Program, said, "Edgardo possesses the talent and capability to connect to clients in a way that is very rare. He intuitively knows what to do and how to approach even the most daunting business problems. He is a true advocate for small and minority business – anyone who knows him will tell you that."

Through Rodriguez's personal efforts, over 150 small business owners were served, many of whom were connected to opportunities that resulted in job creation. Over the past year, he has coordinated MEDA's premier consulting effort, the Pacesetter program, to help accelerate the growth and build capacity of a select group of high potential clients. He has also been instrumental in developing and implementing the MEDA Leadership Program for advanced business owners with the intent of fostering business and civic leaders of color.

Bilingual in English and Spanish, Rodriguez is involved in the community through participation on the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Advisory Board and a Council member and treasurer of the Chicano Latino Affairs Council, where he was just reappointed to his second four-year term. He trains and coaches Latinos aspiring to become entrepreneurs on preparing a Business Plan and opening a Small Business in cooperation with the Latino Economic Development Center. He is also a 2007 Fellow with the Saint Mary's University of Minnesota's Hendrickson Institute for Ethical Leadership as well as a professor in international economics at the same university. He is a valued advisor, trainer and educator to government, government agencies, neighborhood development associations and the community-at-large.