


METRO ORLANDO

By Jackie Kelvington

OPENING DOORS FOR
HISPANIC ENTREPRENEURS





»» Across the country and certainly right here in Metro Orlando, not only is the business landscape changing, but so is the language of business.

Smart organizations have already prepared for the cultural, demographic and economic shifts that are taking place by transforming their marketing strategies, integrating bilingual approaches, implementing diversity initiatives and retooling their hiring plans – all with an eye on the growing Hispanic population and workforce.

NUMBERS DON'T LIE

The nation's fast-growing Hispanic population and workforce have other implications, too. Experts predict an ongoing surge in the number of Hispanic business leaders and entrepreneurs. And trends and data show that Orlando will continue to emerge as a hotspot for Hispanic-owned businesses. According to the Census Bureau, the Hispanic population in the United States increased by 58 percent, from 22.4 million in 1990 to 35 million in 2000 (most current data available). Experts predict that by the year 2050 nearly one-quarter of the nation's population will be Hispanic and will continue to live in five primary states – California, Texas, New York, Illinois and Florida. With a current Hispanic population of more than 427,000 (more than 22 percent of our total population), Orlando ranks as the 13th-largest U.S. metro for Hispanics by total percentage of population for metros over one million.

From a business perspective, this story gets even stronger. The U.S. added more than 373,000 Hispanic-owned businesses between 1997 and 2002, representing a 31 percent growth rate. Florida had the third-highest number of these businesses. Orlando has emerged as a top location in two areas: as an attractive place for Hispanic business leaders and entrepreneurs to establish their operations, and as a leading metro in the state for doing business with countries like Mexico, Brazil and Chile.

Consider the first point: Orlando's starting line-up of Hispanic business leaders and entrepreneurs includes the

The Latino population, already the nation's largest minority group, will triple in size and will account for most of the nation's population growth from 2005 through 2050.

Nearly one in five Americans (19%) will be an immigrant in 2050, compared with one in eight (12%) in 2005 — the current number for Orlando is one in six.

Hispanics will make up 29% of the U.S. population in 2050, compared with 14% in 2005.

77% of Orlando's growth is from minority groups.

From 2000 – 2004 the Hispanic population in Central Florida grew nearly twice as fast as in the rest of the state.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center



JIM E. JARDON, II
President & CEO, JHT Incorporated



MERCEDES F. McCALL
Regional Executive, Banco Popular North America



RICARDO AGUILAR
Founder & President, Biotraits

heads of simulation companies, a bank, a custom home builder, a biometrics company and a major network television station.

"One thing that sets this region apart is the proactive role that government and community leaders have taken to welcome and encourage

Hispanics to be part of our ever-expanding business center," says Jim E. Jardon II, president and CEO of JHT Incorporated, a leader in interactive multimedia training systems. "Orange County Mayor Richard Crotty, City of Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, the Metro Orlando EDC, the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Business Initiative Fund — all have promoted and championed the influx of Hispanics to our region with a myriad of business initiatives, programs and assistance."

Ricardo Aguilar, founder and president of biometrics start-up company Biotraits, wholeheartedly agrees. "There are two more unbelievable resources here for start-up companies, and that is the Disney Entrepreneur

ties for trade and investment. The Metro Orlando EDC, in fact, has worked with more than a dozen companies since officials met with them in 2007, hoping to secure their interest in establishing an office or facility here.


"I BELIEVE THAT A COMMUNITY THAT OPENS DOORS TO DIVERSITY AND INNOVATIVE IDEAS WILL EXPERIENCE ENDLESS ECONOMIC GROWTH. ORLANDO IS A PRIME EXAMPLE OF A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY THAT WELCOMES CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ALL, CREATING OPPORTUNITY AND SOLID ECONOMIC GROWTH ..." — MERCEDES F. MCCALL

Center and the University of Central Florida's Technology Incubator, where my company currently resides. They and a host of other community partners helped my dreams come true," Aguilar says. "Believe me, others outside of this region are envious as to how hard Metro Orlando works to help start-ups succeed and thrive."

REACHING BEYOND CENTRAL FLORIDA

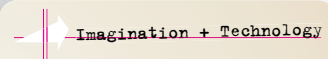
Orlando's Hispanic business connections go beyond the leaders and entrepreneurs who call the region home. In 2007, delegations from Central Florida traveled to Spain, Panama and Brazil to pursue cooperative business opportunities. And business development missions to these countries will again be made in 2008 to continue building on the interest and opportuni-

Whether here locally or in South America or Spain, business leaders and entrepreneurs identify Orlando as a place where dreams come true.

"One thing is for sure — Orlando has become fertile ground for Hispanic businesses to build and grow," said Mercedes F. McCall, Central Florida region executive of Banco Popular North America. "I believe that a community that opens doors to diversity and innovative ideas will experience endless economic growth. Orlando is a prime example of a dynamic community that welcomes contributions from all, creating opportunity and solid economic growth. Orlando is a great location for Hispanics, but it is also a great city for anyone willing to contribute and get involved. The doors of the Orlando of today are always open to new ideas and the dreams of so many." 



WHAT DO YOU SEE?



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