

“Annette Johnson: A True Path to Success”

by Angelique Westerfield



Annette Johnson, *CEO, CMT Services*

There is no grand formula for operating a successful business. Success is achieved by following simple steps that include effective leadership. Annette Johnson - Founder, President and CEO of CMT Services – fully understands this concept. That is why her company has grown into an industry leader in the area of consulting and technology. While many acquire steps for success later in life, Annette Johnson learned at a very young age that true success is achieved when one learns how to manage and overcome adversity.

As an adolescent, Annette Johnson lost one of the greatest loves of her life... her father. Police officers delivered the tragic news to her mother at the family's home in Washington D.C. Annette recalls standing at the top of the stairway as her mother took in the news at the front door. Her father, aunt, uncle, older brother, and sister had been in a terrible crash driving to attend another family member's funeral in Detroit. All adults perished in the horrific accident, with the exception of Annette's brother and sister who were placed under critical condition. Annette watched as her mother courageously consumed the news. Forced to develop an insurmountable amount of focus, courage, and strength in a short period of time, Annette's mother was challenged as she navigated through her loss. She made funeral arrangements for her husband, made regular visits to the intensive care unit for two of her children, and continued with the incredible responsibility of rearing her fatherless children! Her mother's strength was a real life inspiration and ultimately one example of the driving forces that has propelled Ms. Johnson to become successful in both her personal and professional career.

As a young adult, Annette developed a professional interest in cost proposal development. For seventeen years, she worked at OAO Corporation [later acquired by Lockheed Martin]. The company provided services in custom computer programming, network and communications solutions, and information technology consulting. Annette began as a Junior Pricing Analyst. Throughout her seventeen-year tenure with OAO Corp, she became an expert in the field and was eventually promoted to Director of Pricing. Ms. Johnson has a Masters certificate in Government Contracting from George Washington University

and earned her B.S. degree in Business Management from Columbia Union College. With nearly two decades of expertise, Annette Johnson switched focus from advancing her career to becoming an entrepreneur.

Annette not only credits her mother for igniting her entrepreneurial spirit, but also Mr. [Cecil] Barker (President of OAO Corporation) and Armond Farrar of Farrar & Associates. She states that Mr. Barker was a positive influence during her tenure at OAO Corp. His effective leadership was something to be admired, as well as Mr. Farrar. "One day [Mr. Farrar] asked me if I had a name for my business. At the time, I didn't. He then asked what services I was providing. Mr. Farrar wrote my core services down on a piece of paper - 'consulting, management, and technology'. He then circled the first letters of each word. That's how the name CMT was created."

CMT Services opened its doors in 2002, specializing in cost and business proposal development related to government and commercial services. Core tasks include establishing corporate estimating and pricing policies, setting pricing strategies, establishing price-to-win objectives, negotiating subcontractor pricing, and cost proposal development from inception to contract management. CMT Services also focuses on outsourcing services that include financial management services, human capital and staff augmentation, training, and information technology solutions for both government and commercial customers. CMT provides consultation for start-up companies and networks with local workforce exchange programs, direct referrals, and social media.

Cost proposal development is a very specialized field that requires one to be highly skilled and efficient in strategic planning, revenue projections, price-to-win, labor analysis, and competitive assessments [just to name a few]. Annette adds that it's imperative to have a keen understanding of the competitive landscape; "knowing the relative strengths and weaknesses of industry players enables CMT to leverage its key points of difference;"this is critical when operating a business in a highly competitive environment. CMT Services is a difference maker for its clients: consequently (75%) of its new customers are acquired through professional referrals. Annette asserts that CMT has

sustained an upward business growth trend because the company's delivery of personalized and attentive service.

As a business leader, Annette has built a business model focused on professional development and giving back to the community through contract opportunities. Annette states that providing people with opportunities to work is her greatest motivation. Recently, several new hires were trained to support a special project. Out of the ten staffed, three people came from the same household. A by-product of the economic downturn across the region, these individuals experienced a series of layoffs and/or could not find employment over a period of several years. Annette recalls receiving a thank-you note from one of the family member's expressing gratitude:

Let me tell you. I drove up this morning to drop off one family member at the job site. And I was so proud to see my brothers off and ready to go to work. I dropped a few tears because it makes me smile to see men working.... I hope and I pray that they stick it out because it's hard work. But a little hard work doesn't hurt anyone. There's such a sense pride when men can work. One member was so excited to get his first start. He posted a picture on Instagram a picture of him preparing his lunch to go to work. Another member [mid 40s] ended his seven year job drought, and the last member had not worked since graduating from high school four years ago. He has had small part time jobs and worked with his Mom, but not a real full-time job. Thank you for being a blessing. I hope we can duplicate our efforts, and put more folks to work. We are in the business of blessings. Love you much...

A two-week contract turned into a one-year assignment due to their attention and commitment to themselves and CMT Services. Annette adds, "This is why we are in business to make a difference in their lives, in their family lives and in the community.

Annette Johnson has certainly built a life and business to be admired and celebrated. She remains humble and feels that success is overcoming the challenges in life. Annette states, "[My mother] always said that I can do anything if I put my mind to it and always know that my strength comes from God." ■

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