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Lofty ambitions set woman-owned firms on fast-growth path

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By *Marjorie Censer*
Monday, May 17, 2010

Anjali "Ann" Ramakumaran was perfectly happy as a headhunter at a consulting firm. But she couldn't put out of her mind her plan to eventually open her own business.

So in 2004, Ramakumaran left her job, invested \$10,000 of her own money and opened up her own technology consulting and engineering firm, Ampcus. Working out of her home, she began as a subcontractor to various consulting firms.



Anjali "Ann" Ramakumaran, chief executive of Ampcus in Chantilly, heads one of the fastest-growing woman-led businesses in the nation, according to a list published by the Women Presidents' Organization, a peer advisory organization for women entrepreneurs. (Jeffrey MacMillan - For Washington Post)

Today, she heads one of the fastest-growing woman-led businesses in the nation, according to a list published by the Women Presidents' Organization, a peer advisory organization for women entrepreneurs.

Ampcus posted \$6.6 million in revenue in 2009 and hopes to be in the \$10 million range this year, according to Ramakumaran. It splits its work between commercial clients such as Verizon and Experian and government work for the Environmental Protection Agency, the Agriculture Department and the Defense Department, among other agencies.

The firm strategically looks for opportunities set aside for female- and minority-owned businesses and continues to forecast growth, Ramakumaran said. She'd like the business to post revenue of between \$80 million and \$100 million within four to five years.

Working toward that goal, Ampcus is responding to four to five requests for proposals every week, Ramakumaran said. In February, Ampcus moved to a larger office within its Chantilly building to ensure enough space for its corporate headquarters of just over a dozen employees.

"There's always a feeling that we need to do more," she said.

Ramakumaran started her career as a headhunter in India, focused on helping companies staff new operations in the country. The work didn't just mean finding employees; Ramakumaran assisted the companies with whatever they needed to get started, including information technology requirements.

In 2001, after marrying, she came to the United States and took a similar position at a Northern Virginia firm. But by 2004, Ramakumaran was antsy and eager to start

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