



Global Supplier Diversity Strategies

◀ **Cisco Systems, Inc.** is a multinational corporation with 63,000 employees and annual revenue of US\$35 billion as of 2007. Headquartered in

San Jose, California, it designs and sells networking and communications technology and services under five brands, namely Cisco, Linksys, WebEx, IronPort and Scientific Atlanta. Cisco firmly believes that an effective supplier diversity programme is central to the way it does business. In fact, Cisco's **vision** is to gain competitive advantage through inclusion of diverse suppliers and its **mission**, to increase customer satisfaction and enhance sourcing through the inclusion and diversification of Cisco's global suppliers. John T. Chambers, Cisco's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, reinforces this commitment by saying "**the Cisco Supplier Diversity Business Development programme is integral to our success. We recognise that supplier diversity not only makes good business sense, but that it is a business imperative in order to maintain our position in the IT industry.**"

With more companies taking their supplier diversity strategies worldwide, Engage was eager to learn of the current challenges.

Denise Coley, is Director of Global Supplier Diversity Business Development at Cisco Systems. In a recent interview with MBE she highlighted some of the challenges corporations face when they expand their supplier diversity efforts globally, i.e.:

- learning the diversity classifications of each country
- understanding each government's requirements
- focussing on customer requirements in each country
- creating and tapping into a global network of suppliers
- identifying organisations and contacts within each country

One of the ways in which Cisco tackles these challenges is to support and work closely alongside business support agencies (e.g. non-governmental organizations) in each country.

These support agencies are instrumental in helping to identify and locate the countries minority-owned enterprises. It has also been vital to understand the traditions and customers of the supplier's home country. Denise said "The inclusion of globally diverse suppliers in the sourcing process will bring economic vitality to local and global communities, corporations and suppliers."



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