

Connecting Outstanding Women and Minority Businesses to  
Corporate America and the Government Through Supplier Diversity

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## ↳ **Minority Business Spotlight**

Instant Data Technologies Finds Great Opportunities in Fixed Asset Management  
Company Proves that no Challenge is too Big

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Though it's just seven years old, Instant Data Technologies boasts an impressive list of customers. The company helps NASA feed its astronauts and obtains various materials for Boeing Air Space's aircrafts. It advises both big and small companies throughout the United States, China and Europe — and it does so with a full-time staff of just 15 people.

While most of Indatatech's competitors specialize in one aspect of managing fixed assets, the San Antonio-based company offers full-service life-cycle management. It procures, manages, tracks and disposes of fixed assets — a combination the company's founder, Bede Ramcharan, says he's seen only one other company offer.

He says Indatatech further outshines its competitors by utilizing the latest technology. "People look at our name and mistake us for an IT company," he explains. "We're not, [but] we leverage technology very, very heavily in our processes and our approach." Indatatech employs sophisticated technology — including its own asset-tracking software — to ensure accuracy and efficiency in its services. "And of course to our customer, there's an economical benefit," he adds.

Ramcharan founded Indatatech in 2000, and serves as its president, CEO and —

as he puts it — “sometimes janitor, sometimes coffee-maker, sometimes last one out [of the building].” The former soldier, who came to America at age 5, joined the military after college. He served for 21 years before retiring to found Indatatech — a company that has since left a stream of satisfied customers in its wake. “Indatatech is one of our best suppliers,” says Cheryl Linville, small business liaison officer at United Space Alliance. “They do an excellent job and are very reliable. Whenever we call upon them to work on a new project they perform at the highest levels.”

That type of praise helped Indatatech become one of the fastest-growing local companies in 2005, according to the San Antonio Business Journal. Ramcharan also attributes his company’s success to a model he says many small businesses employ: “We are flexible, we’re nimble, we’re easy to deal with — there aren’t a lot of layers of bureaucracy.”

Above all, Ramcharan says he and his staff pay close attention to their clients’ needs. When working to develop a set of solutions, Ramcharan first asks high-level executives what issues “keep them up at night.” Most often, he says business leaders are concerned with knowing the true value of their fixed assets and determining which staffers are using those assets. “Once we sit down and talk to the client and determine their requirements then we can very easily craft a set of solutions,” he adds. “Within that set of solutions, they will usually find one that works best for them.”

Indatatech is often able to save companies between 15 and 20 percent in procuring and inventorying fixed assets based on several techniques. Ramcharan and his team track and archive a company’s past fixed asset use and use those numbers to project future inventory needs — something he says many companies don’t do on their own. “In a lot of cases, companies overbuy the product or [are plagued by] redundant purchasing,” he explains. “We reduce their cost of products on the shelf and help them establish a ‘just-in-time’ process rather than ‘just-in-case.’” In addition to helping lower supply-chain costs, Indatatech also helps companies increase the return on their investments 2:1 or 3:1 through better management techniques.

With that approach, Indatatech has been able to handle both small and large contract, ranging from fewer than 1,000 assets to nearly 20,000. “We’re still a small company, but we’re growing,” Ramcharan says. “We really don’t think there’s a customer out there that’s too large for us to handle with some prior planning.”

Despite its success, Indatatech faces a number of challenges as a small, minority-

owned business. In fact, when asked to name a few, Ramcharan replies, "I could write a book on this." While contracts bring in money, he says it's often difficult to obtain sufficient funds to pursue contracts in the first place. For financing trips to see clients, attending trade shows and conferences and paying sales staff, he says it's important to develop a relationship with a bank that wants to help your company grow.

Ramcharan has also found himself up against clients' preconceived notions or racial biases. He says some potential clients "aren't going to do business with me because I look a certain way," while others may hesitate because of a bad experience with a different minority business in the past. Because of these obstacles, "minority businesses not only have to [form] alliances and partnerships with larger companies, but also have to do some partnering and some alliances between ourselves," he says. Ramcharan recently partnered with another minority business to respond to a governmental RFP—an approach he says has helped Indatatech in the past.

But Ramcharan is quick to caution women and minority businesses against using minority status as a crutch. "Don't depend upon the word minority to sell your company," he says. "Sell your service and sell your capabilities. Make sure you understand what your capabilities really are and how they are perceived by your clients."

In the next few years, Ramcharan hopes Indatatech will become a leading expert in the fixed asset arena, and that companies across America will "feel comfortable looking to us for solutions, opinions, advice and services because our name has begun to stand for quality, customer service and proven results."

But in order for that vision to materialize, some companies will have to rely on a relative unknown — a chance Ramcharan hopes potential clients will take. "We can stand on our own merits, we have a proven track record [and] we can save you money," he says. "All we ask is that you give us a few minutes of your time so we can show you that, and hopefully form a relationship from there."