



OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

Center for Enterprise Innovation

IDEA FUSION

**WOMEN'S BUSINESS
CENTER**

Business Spotlight



Sharon E. Harrington, MA, CPLP is the Founder and Senior Managing Consultant of **Amediate, LLC**. We work with leaders in organizations to help them create workplaces where employees feel empowered with skills to self-navigate through conflict and differences. This is done through leadership and front-line training in communication skills for navigating through conflict, keynote presentations to jumpstart difficult conversations within the organization and administering and facilitating interpretation of the Emergenetics thinking and behavior preferences profile instrument. The purpose behind all of this is to assist organizational leaders in creating and maintaining work environments in which employees feel

respected and appreciated while also feeling safe and empowered to engage in important yet sometimes difficult conversations.

Being that communication breakdowns do occur in workplaces, Amediate, LLC also provide employee mediation services as well as employee complaint investigations that primarily result from charges of discrimination under EEO laws.

The most rewarding part of Sharon's business: "When I get called back for repeat business or someone refers me. I now get calls from people I don't know who will tell me they saw me speak at an event or they wanted to know more about Emergenetics Thinking and Behavior profile instrument. It is really exciting to have that happen. Most of my business right now is repeat and referral, although I plan to put a marketing strategy in place soon. I am also hoping to work with youths who have a passion for peer mediation.

How ODU Women's Business Center helped Sharon with her business: "The courses have been phenomenal. The ones that stand out the most are the Business Research, eVA training and Speed Mentoring. I took the Business Research and eVA training twice. When I first became aware of ODU's Women's Business Center, I attended everything that I could. The Center leaders, Erika Small-Sisco and Sadiksha Nepal, seem to always know where to send me for the resources I needed. Not only was the information resourceful but also having the network of others who were starting up as well. The encouragement is needed and when I found myself in doubtful mode I would just head to the Women's Business Center."

To learn more about Amediate, LLC, visit their website at

www.AmediateLLC.com



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What has been the toughest obstacle in starting her business: “Being able to navigate the networks. I started out going to everything but not really knowing what I was looking for or what to ask of individuals and businesses. It seemed I was going to everything but not walking away with much in terms of how to actually get a signed contract.”

Sharon's advice for someone starting a business: “This has clearly been a journey for me and I could go on and on. What comes to mind is:

- 1) Read and learn as much about your business industry. Become the expert.
- 2) Understand the trends and how your products or services are riding those trends.
- 3) Talk to anyone and everyone who will listen about what you do. This is great for practicing your “elevator speech.” Then remember to thank them for asking what you do and listening.
- 4) Ask Why? Be willing to ask questions –all the time. If something is not working for you or does not make sense–ask for an explanation, clarification or how to make it work for you.
- 5) Whenever you do get that contract or sale ask for an honest and hardnosed evaluation of your work. Keep in mind that you have to be willing to take it as it comes and not be defensive if you disagree. If you become defensive, you may not get the feedback you need in the future.
- 6) Ask yourself “What would critics say of the work I do?” Don't be afraid to go to those that you believe might be negative. You need to hear encouragement but also the other perspectives. Modify in ways that will make you or your product better --then ask again.
- 7) Understand that it is okay to fail or have a bad day. It is truly a necessary part of the experience in making you successful. Your passion and persistence will prevail.
- 8) Be willing to take risk. Think of the worst that could happen and how you could recover. Sometimes it is just taking a deep breath and diving in.
- 9) Be willing to partner with others. It can be the one business decision that can boost your revenue. Currently, I am a solo act and I find it quite rewarding when I can work with others.
- 10) Lastly, but not least, take good care of your physical and spiritual being. Sometimes this can be overlooked as you put everything into developing and growing your business. If you don't take care of yourself, none of this about starting and maintaining a business matters.”

