Boeing Hosts 17th Annual Supplier Diversity Marketplace

The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] Tuesday hosted the 17th annual Supplier Diversity Marketplace in Carson, Calif., offering more than 200 small and diverse businesses an opportunity to develop relationships with defense prime contractors and event sponsors Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Raytheon, as well as with other large businesses and government agencies.

With the theme *"Diverse Suppliers -- Strategic Strength,"* the event is the only one of its kind solely sponsored by defense prime contractors. Through conference displays, the event enabled the small and diverse suppliers to showcase their products, services and technical capabilities to more than 30 large companies, government agencies and other participating organizations.

Boeing Integrated Defense Systems served as the host company for this year's event. Joan Robinson-Berry, director of Boeing Integrated Defense Systems Supplier Diversity, and Small Business Liaison Officer for The Boeing Company, provided opening remarks.

"The Marketplace event reinforces the importance the four sponsor companies place on doing business with small and diverse suppliers," said Robinson-Berry. "Doing business with small business is simply smart business. Small businesses provide innovation, flexibility and value. Diverse suppliers certainly do bring us strategic strength."

Ron Marcotte, vice president of Business Development for Boeing Integrated Defense Systems' Advanced Systems division, and executive sponsor for Boeing's service-disabled, veteran-owned business outreach program, served as master of ceremonies. The Hon. Jim Dear, mayor of the City of Carson, Calif., addressed the marketplace attendees during opening ceremonies.

Alberto G. Alvarado, district director for the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Los Angeles District Office, the SBA's largest volume office, delivered the keynote address. He gave the perspective from the Washington administration on small business, and offered small and diverse business leaders advice on how to successfully engage with prime defense contractors.

"Suppliers: offer your buyers solutions, not just your certifications," Alvarado said. "You must clearly demonstrate to them the value of the products and services you provide."

Workshop topics included how to effectively navigate the request for quote, request for information and request for proposal processes, as well as the benefits small businesses realize in partnering with historically black colleges and universities and minority institutions.

Rounding out the slate of workshops was a session on strengthening small business through strategic means such as access to capital and investment planning, which was presented by Earvin "Magic" Johnson, chairman and CEO of Magic Johnson Enterprises, a multimillion-dollar company. Johnson, a former National Basketball Association player for the Los Angeles Lakers, shared his motivational story on his simple but strategic approach to building his company and his brand by aiming to meet the needs of urban America.

"Know your customer, stay disciplined and over deliver to their expectations," Johnson challenged the small and diverse businesses in attendance. "Above all, remember that you are your greatest marketing person."

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses specializing in innovative and capabilities-driven customer solutions. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $32.4 billion business with 72,000 employees worldwide.
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For further information:
Amy Horton
The Boeing Company
office: 314-233-4368
amy.e.horton@boeing.com