

Oculus Inc.

ARCHITECTURE | STRATEGIC PLANNING |
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OCULUS INC.
(MBE/WBE)



Job Loss Leads to a Thriving Business for a WBE Firm

When AT&T Inc. downsized in St. Louis, Lisa Bell-Reim's job as an architect was eliminated. She took a leap of faith and started her own architectural firm, Oculus Inc., and AT&T became her first client. Fourteen years later, AT&T is still a client and Oculus has offices in three states. The company covers all phases of the architectural process, interior design and strategic planning. An integral part of their business is working in "movement management" to facilitate the relocation of equipment, people and offices at the completion of a project. Their markets include retail, hospitality, government, healthcare and more.

In the early 2000s, Oculus became a Woman Business Enterprise (WBE) with the help of Business Diversity Development (BDD) at St. Louis Lambert International Airport (STL). "It's paperwork and making sure you have all the right pieces of information. Once you have all of that in place it's really just a matter of going through that effort and going through the process," Bell-Reim said. "It was fairly easy. It takes time, but it's not difficult." The BDD compliance officer was helpful and thorough.

Bell-Reim said the WBE certification and their classification as a small business has made Oculus highly desirable in government and public contracts. "It's the extra feather in our cap when we want to swing something in our direction."

Oculus Inc. recently landed a new contract with STL. Bell-Reim said design work might include interior design for vestibular airlocks and concourse lounge furniture. Prior to the STL contract, Oculus has completed architectural design work for large to small airports across the country.

Bell-Reim said their success is based on finding the right candidates and empowering their employees to take responsibility and become leaders, offering opportunity for growth. That business model is paying off. Oculus recently acquired Staicoff Design Company in Portland to help grow their hospitality portfolio and expand their footprint on the West Coast. By concentrating on the areas that Oculus excels in, they are growing as experts in their field – both locally and nationally. They have become a sought-after firm for architectural design work as a prime and subcontractor.

For more information about Oculus Inc., visit www.oculusinc.com.