



100 | CEO Leaders in STEM

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Betty Manetta

Chief Executive Officer

Argent Associates Inc. / Asociar

Argent Associates, Inc. is an award-winning national tech-centric systems integrator and technology innovator. It develops and delivers an ecosystem of solutions across a number of technologies and at various stages of the lifecycle. This includes new product development, distribution of multi-vendor solutions, engineering, installing and optimizing technology systems and supplying environmentally responsible end-of-lifecycle solutions. With over 18 years of service to Fortune 100 companies, Argent continues on the leading edge of solutions for distribution services, manufacturing, products, Internet of Things (IoT), wireless provisioning, distributed antenna systems and more.

Founded in 2012, Asociar is an international technology system integration company that provides complete end-to-end supply chain optimization services and solutions which includes total equipment acquisition, rack & cabinet integration, data center efficiency and network modernization for telecom, utilities, and government and enterprise customers.

Beatriz (Betty) Manetta is CEO of Argent Associates Inc., a tech-centric systems integration firm with offices in Edison NJ and Plano TX, and Asociar, a global firm delivering complete end-to-end supply chain optimization services and solutions. Ms. Manetta emigrated from Argentina as a young girl and grew up in Elizabeth NJ. Her parents instilled in her a desire to learn and work ethic to succeed. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting and Marketing from Rutgers University and a Masters of International Studies from Seton Hall University. She was the recipient of the Beta Gamma Sigma Award from Seton Hall for her significant contributions to the strength and vitality of the economy combined with her business service achievement to humanity.

Ms. Manetta spent 20 years in Corporate America, primarily in the telecommunications industry, before leaving to launch Argent Associates Inc. in 1998. During her corporate career, she held national and international assignments in technical support, sales, human resources and quality management and control.

She believes true business success is interdependent upon the success of the community. She takes her commitment to continuous learning and social responsibility seriously. Ms. Manetta is a champion of ethnic minority, women and small businesses. She served on President George W. Bush's President's Export Council, where she advised on international trade matters and its impact on small, women and minority businesses.

"Education and economic prosperity go hand-in-hand as part of the American Dream," says Ms. Manetta. "STEM education and innovation are the cornerstones for building a stronger, more diverse economic base in our country.

Ms. Manetta serves on several boards including Tech Titans, TIA, Seton Hall University Board of Regents, QuEST Forum and the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. She has received numerous awards locally and nationally for her leadership and commitment to excellence.

The future of our economic success and the continuance of innovative concepts requires a concentration by business, academia and government working together to instill targeted attention to creating a more STEM-directed workforce. This cannot happen effectively without a collaborative effort between various groups to move in a common direction. There are a number of successful programs at all levels around the country initiating STEM education, internships, competition and hiring. We suggest that the following be included in these efforts to obtain the highest rewards for the efforts.

ENGAGING A DIVERSE STEM POOL. Young people respond to what they see. If you have never seen an engineer and what they do, it's hard to imagine being one. Further, if you have never seen a scientist, mathematician or computer scientist that looks like you, it is hard to imagine you can attain those heights. We believe that educational programs, mentorships, internships and seminars must be inclusive of minority and women leaders, business owners and representatives. While some young people will excel no matter the odds against them, we must engage successful women and people of color into the programs that do exist. We must create programs that target inner city schools to help young people dream BIG.

MEET STUDENTS AT THEIR VIEWPOINT. Finding new avenues to reach young people at their level can be helpful. Young people love video games, fashion, music, mobile apps, social media, etc. Our programs must seek to connect to areas of interest with STEM. We recently participated in a presentation to young high school women who participated in a STEM curriculum. We brought along one of our robots which rolled around the room talking to the young ladies. Not only did the young ladies get engaged with the robot, they became very interested in how it worked. The robot might have been more of a hit at the session than the actual panelist of women-business owners, who conveyed how STEM impacted their businesses. Everything we touch today has an element of STEM in it – genetically engineered food products, fashion purchase tracking (InternetofThings), mobile apps, game development, phones, computers, healthcare, etc. How we introduce the possibilities to young people is central to their developing an interest in what STEM can do and does do now and into the future.

ENCOURAGING INNOVATION. Innovation is more than coming up with a new idea. Innovation is a process of thinking differently than the norm. It's asking yourself WHY? It's trying to find out the how

and the why of things. For example, interstellar travel will require innovation on energy production that increases flight speeds exponentially. Innovation is allowing our innovators to fail. Thomas Edison once said, "I have not failed 10,000 times—I've successfully found 10,000 ways that will not work." With today's "right now" focus, research and development teams need willing financing and support behind ideas that may not even work. However, these ideas may provide the groundwork for concepts that do work. Young people must be given the latitude to innovate with limited consequences.

PROVIDING REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE. The business world is the most equipped to provide real world experience in the STEM fields. Internships must be more than making copies or running errands. We must allow interns to handle a project and understand the ups and downs of managing innovation. Real world experience also enhances our overall workforce. Everyone wants experienced labor, but we must all be willing to introduce, train and utilize the neophytes of today in order to create the giants of tomorrow.

At Argent Associates and Asociar, we acknowledge that technology is a crucial component of what we do and who we are. We encourage diverse participation in the field of technology. For us, it is a competitive advantage that keeps us on the leading edge. We develop, innovate, evaluate and continually utilize new technologies to help our companies and our clients operate more efficiently, more cost effectively and more environmentally responsibly. Continuous research and learning have enabled us to stay ahead of our competition. We have grown one of the largest women-owned technology companies in the country. We hire diverse employees because we are diverse. We hire women because we are a woman-owned company. We believe in our company's demographics reflecting the communities in which we live and work. Sometimes that means we hire and train people, too.

STEM is crucial to who we are. We believe it's crucial to our nation, our world economy and what we want to be. As Peter Drucker, organization management guru says, "the best way to predict the future is to create it." We want to create a future filled with STEM-centric individuals converting innovative ideas into world-changing products and services. Together we can! ■