

Joanne Genovese

Owner - Genovese Transport & Cartage & GENCO LLC

At forty-four, Joanne Genovese appeared to be quite settled— VP of a large non-profit trade association, fifteen years of past experience with NYS, a son starting high school, and a nice house around the corner from her childhood home—but she wasn't.

The death of her father and a clear view of the shifting culture within NYS government meant a need for change. Change meant acting on a long held desire to own a small business—a tradition that dated back to her grandfather's depression era food store in Albany's south end and her father and uncle's Genovese Coffee Services, the area's first mobile food service for construction.

Today, at fifty-three, Joanne has been operating Genovese Transport & Cartage (W/DBE) for nine years and is in the process of concluding the rehab of a 27,000 square foot warehouse owned by her other company, GENCO LLC. Genovese Transport & Cartage provides heavy highway trucking & transport services, snow services, and turf establishment. Genovese Transport & Cartage also holds certifications from NYS as a Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) and a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE).

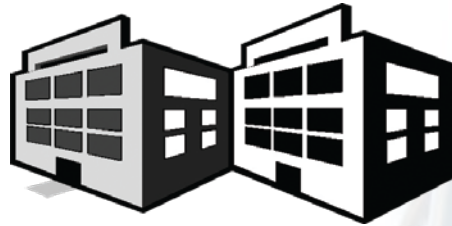
Success Magazine: How did you get approved as a woman owned business?

Joanne Genovese: The DBE (NYS Department of Transportation) and the WBE certifications (Empire State Development) are related to state and federal law that seek to provide economic opportunity to small businesses operated by women and minorities when federal and/or state tax dollars are used. The laws address the historical underutilization of women and minorities in government contracting.

My market research indicated a gap in the availability of certified companies that provided the services of Genovese Transport & Cartage and that NYS was falling short of meeting goals. GTC operated for three years prior to seeking certification as a DBE and four years before seeking WBE certification.

To become certified as a WBE or DBE or MBE the company and owner engage in an intensive government review process that looks at finances, past work, and personal net worth to name a few of the review areas.

SM: Did you receive any benefits in sending proposals to state government agencies when bidding on projects? Did the system truly work in attempting to assist you as a woman owned business?



JG: Only about a third of our work to date has been related to certification status. Most of the company's work is generated through active bidding. However, the playing field is not level, and every day remains a challenge.

Historically, NYS continues to fall short of maximizing opportunity for women and minorities. Certification itself provides no preferential treatment. However, the laws advise that when you are awarded a project using taxpayer dollars, receipt of the award is contingent upon utilizing and providing opportunity to women and minorities.

Since NYS and the federal government are now embracing regulatory compliance, accountability and bottom up economics, I am hopeful we will begin to see more opportunity for women and minorities in taxpayer funded projects.

SM: When you opened the business, did you receive any assistance from government agencies for funding grants or business planning? What organizations assisted you in your planning and development?

JG: The Albany Colonie Chamber of Commerce was very helpful—particularly in lending small amounts of capital. I am also happy to say that although I encountered poor banking behavior by a local lender, I did seek and obtain SBA financing and made my last payment on the loan a couple of months ago.

SM: How has your past work for the State and Trade Association prepared you for running your own business?

JG: Being responsible for generating your own income is very different from being employed. There are many obstacles to starting and staying in business. There are, however, the basics of operating any organization—following rules and maintaining fiscal soundness. My former experiences focused on regulation, Medicaid fiscal systems and the delivery of good service by sound organizations. My past experience and the near collapse of our financial systems tell us one very critical fact—you can provide or appear to provide a great service, but it won't really matter if the administrative and financial aspects of the organization or business are not in order and ahead of the curve.

SM: What are the benefits to being a woman in business?

JG: It's funny to talk about benefits right now. I am applying for SBA 8(a) certification, and part of that is documenting experiences of gender discrimination in business history. Unfortunately, there have been a lot of such experiences. Suffice to say that running your own business and remaining viable is very hard work and gender provides no benefit and discrimination does exist. Access to business opportunities that are traditionally closed to women and fostering small business should be goals we all subscribe to.

SM: How did you come to form GENCO LLC?

JG: Well, when you own several dump trucks you need a place to put them. I found and fell in love with 133 Edison Ave. in 2005. It's a 27,000 square foot, two-story steel and masonry block building located near Erie Boulevard and I 890 in Schenectady.

SM: Did you receive any grants or funding to assist you in the acquisition and renovation of the building?

JG: No, we have not received any grants or funding to assist in the acquisition. Mostly, I have received patience from the City of Schenectady as the rehab has proceeded

SM: You put your savings and future earnings on the line. Has your experience lived up to your plans and expectations?

JG: I believe so. Investing in my own development project and myself seems to have been a very good decision, given what has been accomplished at 133 Edison and the turn of economic events over the past six months.

SM: Is the current economy affecting your business?

JG: I have survived contract breaches by unscrupulous prime contractors and \$5.00 a gallon diesel. I remain concerned about fuel prices but believe the focus on infrastructure projects and vigilance in insuring small business participation will provide opportunities for business.

SM: What are your future plans? Where do you see your company in five years? How will you achieve your future goals?



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JG: 133 Edison is almost complete, and the primary business objective for GENCO, LLC is to obtain financing and achieve maximum occupancy and usage for this great building. 133 Edison will be available for warehousing, commercial or individual storage, and hopefully will house other small businesses.

SM: How did your life change once you became your own boss? If you had the chance to do it again would you?

JG: Opening my own business allowed me to subject myself to the same tests faced by my father and grandfather. It has enabled me to shape my daily world with their standards of ethics and business discipline. Most of all, it has encouraged me to keep turning corners. I believe once you know the end of the story it's time to open a new book.

SM: What has been your best experience since opening your own business?

JG: In 2007 I was low bidder on a project and obtained my first direct contract with NYS. This was an objective on my business plan and a milestone. It also insured work for a period of time, which allowed me to exhale. Most importantly, it permitted me to meet goals for M/WBE participation and I have viewed it as a great example of how small business can do the job best when given the opportunity.

SM: What does success mean to you?

JG: Right now, I equate business success with achieving concrete objectives and maintaining the fiscal viability of my companies so that I can continue turning corners and going down unknown and challenging paths. Success means always moving forward and meeting new challenges.

GENCO LLC.



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GENOVESE TRANSPORT & CARTAGE W/DBE



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