

CEO of Robbinsville Environmental Consulting Firm is SBA's 2009 New Jersey Small Business Person of the Year

In 1999, Ravi Gupta took a \$500,000 line of credit from a private investor and parlayed it into a multi-million dollar company. Today, he was named the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) 2009 New Jersey Small Business Person of the Year.

Gupta is the president of Sovereign Consulting Inc., a Robbinsville-based company that provides its private and government clients in 23 states with environmental and remediation services that include regulatory compliance, site and remedial investigation, remediation system design, and installation, engineering design, brownfield redevelopment, bioassessments and ecological evaluation, wetlands mitigation, and risk assessment.

In making the announcement, SBA New Jersey District Director James A. Kocsi said that Gupta was selected for the award based on criteria that include: Staying Power (a substantial history of an established business); Growth in Number of Employees; Increase in Sales; Financial Strength of the Company; Innovativeness of Product or Service Offered; Response to Adversity and Contributions to Aid Community Oriented Projects.

"Ravi Gupta is your typical entrepreneur; he is a risk taker who has a vision and passion and an understanding of what it takes to nurture an idea and build it into a successful company," said Kocsi. "All across New Jersey there are companies that are making enormous contributions to the local economy. Even during economic downturns, we see small businesses like Sovereign Consulting Inc. expanding and growing their firms, meeting payrolls and providing innovative services that shape the landscape of our economy."

After working for SECOR International, one of the largest environmental consulting firms in the country, Gupta and his colleagues, Iain Bryant, Paul Lazaar, David Volz and Jim Volz decided to start Sovereign Consulting Inc.

A turning point for the company came in 2001 when the firm became an SBA certified 8(a) company. The designation allowed the company to receive sole-source contracts from federal agencies with a \$3.5 million maximum for service businesses. SBA's 8(a)



An Environment for Success-Ravi Gupta, CEO of Sovereign Consulting Inc., a Robbinsville-based environmental consulting firm (Center) is seen here receiving his SBA 2009 New Jersey Small Business Person of the Year Award from SBA's New Jersey District Director, James A. Kocsi (Right) and SBA's Regional Advocate, Christine Serrano- Glassner (Left).

program also allows socially and economically disadvantaged firms to compete against other 8(a) firms on contracts in excess of \$3.5 million.

As a participant in the 8(a) program, Sovereign Consulting has earned millions in contracts from the United States Army and the United States Navy. "SBA's 8(a) program has given us the opportunity to compete for contracts from the federal government and expand our business," said Gupta. "Having 8(a) certification not only helps us gain access to contracts from federal agencies, but also helps us market our environmental services to major corporations we are looking to do business with as well."

Since receiving its certification, the firm has grown from 38 employees in 2001 to 171 in 2008; a 350 percent increase over seven years. The company also enjoys a 27.8 percent average annual revenue growth rate with sales nearing \$35 million.

In addition to the United States Army and the United States Navy, Sovereign Consulting's clients include Akzo Nobel, BP Corporation, El Paso Corporation, Pilot Travel Centers, Signature Flight Support Corp., Lukoil, Shell Oil Products US, Supervalu Inc., Wawa Inc., Cornell University, Motiva Enterprises LLC, and Siemens Corporation.

Over the last 5 years, Sovereign has built the infrastructure to provide professional environmental site assessment and remediation services throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast. In addition to its Robbinsville headquarters, Sovereign has offices in Parsippany, Cherry Hill and Burlington, New Jersey, as well as offices in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Alabama.

"We believe that delivering high-quality service is not merely a question of technical expertise. We've worked to expand our IT, accounting, compliance management, health and safety, and employee training as we've grown, to give our project staff the foundation to do their jobs well," stated Gupta.

Thanks to Gupta's full-service, strategic approach, Sovereign's Project Managers have the financial, technical, and support resources they need to manage large project portfolios, as well as multi-year, multimillion dollar, complex remediation sites requiring innovative technologies. Sovereign has more than 800 active projects.

"Our clients and the SBA have provided us with the training and experience to oversee large projects efficiently, including liability transfers and performance-based contracts, which require effective cost and technical management. We just keep working hard and looking for ways to grow the business," said Gupta. "We have assembled a great team with a proven track record. Our clients know that we are capable of resolving most environmental problems."

As part of SBA's National Small Business Week festivities (May 17th - May 23rd), Gupta was honored in Washington, D.C. by SBA Administrator, Karen Gordon Mills, where he competed for the title of SBA's National Small Business Person of the Year with representatives of 49 other states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam.