



## Woman Owned Agency, Fraser Communications, Handles \$15 Million Statewide Energy Campaign — Gains Access with Certifications

Founded in 1992 by Renee Fraser, Ph.D., Fraser Communications is the largest woman-owned communications firm and 3<sup>rd</sup> fastest growing private company in Los Angeles. Fraser Communications was built out of Fraser's desire to use advertising and communications to make a difference in the world. Successful examples of this philosophy include: The California State's **Flex Your Power** campaign, which helped reduce Californian's electricity usage more than 1,500 megawatts; and work for the **Metropolitan Water District** that helped educate Californians about water conservation and steps individuals could take to "reduce their use." Fraser's entrée into these opportunities was the result of getting *Small Business Certifications*.

### Certifications Help to Gain Access

"There is no substitute for hard work and knocking on doors for the coveted new business meeting, but certifications can help," says Fraser. "Once you are certified you are given access to a set of businesses interested in your service or products. Our first certification was with the Los Angeles Unified School District back in 2003. This helped us gain access to the Metropolitan Water District and we pitched for their \$2 million contract which we were fortunate to win." Fraser also has additional certifications by the State of California Department of General Services, the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPCU).



Renee White Fraser, Ph.D.  
President/CEO  
Fraser Communications

### Certification – What It Gets You and What It Won't

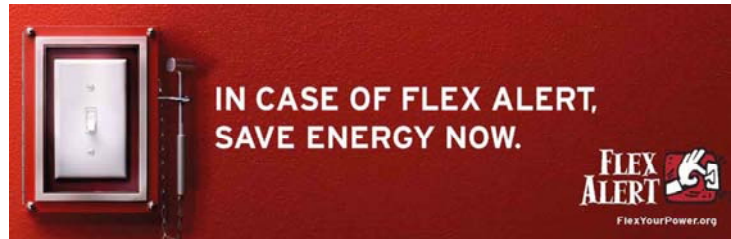
As a woman-owned business and a small business in California, I have tried many business development strategies. We are now a \$40million company and certification has been a key component of our growth. But becoming certified does not guarantee business and I do not recommend making it your only business development strategy.

Here are 10 tips for making certification a successful part of business growth:

1. Build a base of non-government, commercial business that is not based on certification opportunities. These customers will hire you for the services or products you provide and value your service. Focusing on the for-profit sector forces you to be cost conscious and to develop a "sales mentality."
2. Be sure to identify customers who pay regularly and on-time. Government entities may have longer payment cycles (90-120 days). Sometimes their

internal policies get held up and payments are delayed. This can be a big problem for start-up operations. And, the people one works with have little control over the payment policies and procedures. If a company relies on government work to make payroll and other major overhead commitments, there could be problems.

3. It takes time to get certified and you need to be selective in the ones you do. Trade association meetings are a great way to find others who have been certified and to learn what it takes. Carefully listen to the approaches they used and see what organizations are doing the kind of work you are interested in.
4. Make sure the work you do is on the priority list for organizations by which you are certified. They may have budgets set aside for products but not services and you are a service-provider.
5. Certification means you have “access” – that means you have a list of people who are procurement helpers. I liken them to a concierge – they can introduce people to you, but you still need to do the work and the follow-up. Being certified is no guarantee for business.
6. Relationships are key. Build relationships with the people who can introduce you and then build relationships with the decision-makers in your area of products or services. People do business with people they know and like. Go out of your way to build relationships. Find something in common – golf, a sporting team, your kids, etc. Build a relationship. You can talk about business some of the time, but make sure there are other reasons they will be happy to see you. If you can help them in some way, that is a great way to build the relationship.
7. Do your homework on the organization and on the department. Find out what their main priorities are. Determine how and why you are a good fit for them. Know the names of the key people you are going to see and the people above them. Try to obtain information about trends in their sector. Use the internet to read articles about their area of business or expertise before you meet them. Be prepared.
8. Follow-up. Just as in the private sector, following up with people is key. Send materials about your business and send follow-ups when you have new relevant information. Do this on a regular schedule. In sales you have to “touch” a prospect 7 times before a sale is made. That is the case when certified as well.
9. Presentations are extremely important. Make sure you do a top-drawer job. Leave no detail undone. Make sure your presentation is the same that you



would give to a Fortune 500 company in the private sector. Organize it around their needs, bring creativity and memorability to the presentation, double check to see there are no spelling errors or mistakes, clearly represent the assignment and be comprehensive in your presentation.

10. Don't give up. Even if you do not win a contract the first time. Follow-up to find out who won and what you could have done better. Demonstrate your concern and interest by learning how to improve. Maintain the relationships and determine when the contract comes up for review again. Stay in touch so you are ready for the next opportunity.

### **Flex Your Power Case Study**

Fraser's **Flex Your Power** campaign is a California-based social marketing campaign designed to encourage residents to take positive steps to be more efficient and reduce their use of energy. Given two weeks to prepare, Fraser Communications pitched and was awarded the contract to provide strategic development of the campaign, media planning and buying as well as market research.

Fraser's work with **Flex Your Power** has included developing qualitative research approaches to understand the attitudes, beliefs and motivations for efficiency behaviors and conservation actions among Californians.



The agency also implemented a quantitative research program to evaluate the impact of the campaign and to develop a sophisticated consumer segmentation model to identify Californians who are more prone to conserve energy and to understand what motivates them.

- Fraser was able to aggressively negotiate with all media vendors, ensuring that for every \$1 Flex Your Power spent on media, they received a documented \$1.43 in actual media value—far and above what the campaign experienced in previous years
- The company has been very successful delivering a billion impressions throughout California each year, 98% of adults see the Flex Your Power messages during the summer when efficiency is most needed.
- Flex Your Power has been a great business partner for Fraser and it started with certification.

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