



The Link

to Supplier Diversity

A publication of the Indiana Department of Administration Division of Supplier Diversity

November 30, 2015
In This Issue
VBE Spotlight:
Andrew Conner,
Winergy, LLC

Event Calendar

- [Pay Audit Training Webinar](#) Dec. 9
- [Gov. MWBE Commission](#) Dec. 14
- [Certification Webinar](#) Dec. 16

More details can be found at:
<http://goo.gl/O5r9Ag>

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In Recognition of Veterans Day

The Division of Supplier Diversity is highlighting four Indiana business enterprises. The features will focus on their stories as soldiers and entrepreneurs. This week we honor Mr. Andrew Conner, president of Winergy, LLC.



WINERGY

Andrew Conner is president of Winergy, LLC, a young industrial hygiene company that has seen a lot of success on a national level. Winergy is based out of Fort Wayne, and is also Conner's hometown. Conner's life may have come full circle, but first it took him around the world.

As a child, Conner dreamed of being a pilot and grew up listening to the stories of his uncle's days as a midshipman at the United States Naval Academy (USNA) located in Annapolis, Maryland. During his adolescence, Conner had a few moments of doubt but was convinced the Navy was the way for him during the summer between his junior and senior year of high school. Conner was accepted into a special program offered by USNA called "Naval Academy Summer Seminar." The intent of the program was to give potential students a "week in the

life," type experience.

"I finished that week and really just fell in love with the whole idea of the naval academy. And after leaving that week, I knew that's where I really wanted to go to school...I applied and I was fortunate enough to get a slot," said Conner.

"Fortunate," may be a bit of an understatement. Candidates for admission generally must apply directly to the academy and receive a nomination, usually from a Member of Congress.

Conner says he could talk about those golden years at the academy for hours. He credits the time as an enriching educational experience and for molding him for success.

Though Conner has many fond memories of the academy, he recalls that his days

as a midshipman weren't just fun and games. The life of midshipman at USNA is highly regimented and rigorous. "You're very limited your first year. When you're a pleb you're not allowed to drive a car, you're not allowed to wear civilian clothes, you're not allowed to take naps during the day, you're not allowed to watch T.V. or listen to music... the only time you can leave the academy is on Saturday and only for a 10 hour window," said Conner. A pleb is an abbreviation of the Ancient Roman word plebeian and what USNA freshman are commonly referred to as.

Conner graduated in 2000, and was commissioned as a Navy ensign. After completing his additional officer training, Conner became a general aviation officer. "Essentially an officer that works on an aircraft carrier," said Conner, describing his mili-

VBE Spotlight: Andrew Conner, Winergy, LLC, (Cont.)...

tary occupational specialty. Conner's home port was Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia and he was assigned to the USS George Washington, an aircraft carrier. Conner was tasked as the assistant flight deck officer.

"It was really challenging, because of the intensity of the work when a ship is out at sea. There is no weekend, it's just constant operations every day of the week that you're at sea... We would start flight operations at nine in the morning and usually wrap up at eleven at night," said Conner, describing what a six month deployment at sea was like. "When you're dealing with an environment like the four acres of an aircraft carrier flight deck, it is not only a

long day, but a long, very intense, stressful day."

During his tenure on the George Washington, Conner lost two aircraft. Neither of these losses were combat related, but due to human shortcomings. He described the operating environment of an aircraft carrier as one where complacency can and will kill.

Conner oversaw the operational inventories and activities for the flight deck and the largest division of the ship, which consisted of 175 sailors. "If your head isn't on a swivel you could find yourself blown overboard or damaging millions of dollars worth of equipment, and of course as an officer I'm dealing with 19 and 20-year-

olds," said Conner, "It was an intense period of growth and learning for me."

Conner detailed some of the more cringe-worthy personnel stories, ranging from poor financial decision-making to general immaturity. He isn't cynical though, "All that being said, I was always impressed at the way that the Navy could take a high school graduate, put them through basic training, put them through an advanced school and out the other end you would have a radar technician for instance or someone working the avionics shop. It was less than a year ago they were graduating high school and now they're troubleshooting problems in high-tech aircraft avionics," remarked Conner. "That was always really impressive to me."

From 2000 to 2004, the George Washington was involved in both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Not only did it engage in many wartime missions, it also engaged in numerous training exercises with foreign militaries. The George Washington even made time for some R&R. Those four years would take Conner to and from eight countries and through at least five major bodies of water.

When asked about how his military experience has translated into his civilian

career Conner said, "The military has provided me some unique training opportunities to test myself in ways that I probably never would have, had I not been in the military. One was, 'How will I react in stressful situations?'... The military was a leadership laboratory. I really got to test myself. I got to fail a lot, and learn from those mistakes. I don't think that people that haven't had the opportunity to serve in the military would have the opportunity to learn in that very special way."

That culmination of his military background, his family history of entrepreneurship, and the love and support of his wife and daughters is what Conner accredits to his business endeavor's major success. Separating Winergy from its older more established competitors, is a combination of efficient business practices and professional expertise according to Conner. The proof is in the pudding. Within the last two years Winergy has won four major Department Of Defense contracts and ten federal Veteran Affairs contracts that are all across the United States.

To learn more about Mr. Andrew Conner and Winergy, LLC, visit www.winergyservices.com.



Pictured: Andrew Conner, president of Winergy, LLC