



Indatatech specializes in asset management

By Annette Crawford

Air Force Small Business Solutions Center

Finding a needle in a haystack would be easy...if that needle had been inventoried by Indatatech, a San Antonio-based firm that specializes in supply chain and logistics management and optimization.

The Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business was started in 2000 by retired Army officer Bede Ramcharan. The company's first venture was doing Y2K risk assessments in hospitals.

"We realized very quickly that what we were doing had a perishable date on it, because come Jan. 2, we were out of work," Ramcharan said.

The Y2K assessments included doing physical inventories, cataloguing and equipment databases. Ramcharan and his associates knew those skills were of value to their clients so they began to leverage that part of the business.

"We expanded our knowledge and expertise into overall supply chain and logistics, and that's where we are today," he said.

Indatatech, short for Instant Data Technologies, started with four employees and now has 15. A third of those are veterans. In 2005, they were named as one of the Top 10 Emerging Businesses

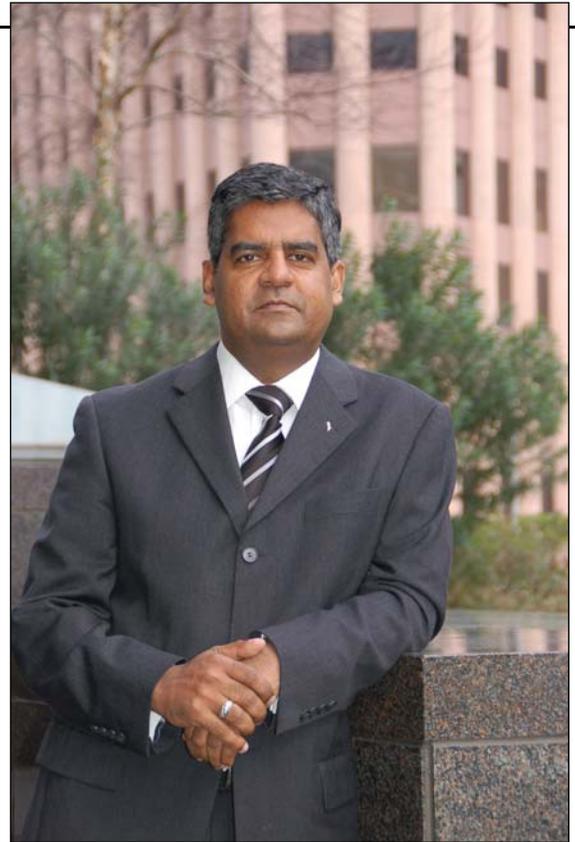
in Houston and as one of the Fastest Growing Companies in San Antonio. And in 2007, the United Space Alliance recognized them as the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Company of the Year.

One of their specialties is Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), touted as the latest solution for asset tracking, and Indatatech offers it as "another tool in our toolkit," Ramcharan said.

"You have to know where your assets, equipment and inventory are, where it's going to, where it's been. That's one of the things we help companies understand and implement so they can track that. Right now, traditional bar codes are the way 99.9 percent of people track things. RFID is just another technology that can be leveraged to help you track inventory in a different way," he said.

Ramcharan said RFID can be used to track anything.

"People, widgets on a manufacturing line or in a warehouse, boxes, pallets – wherever you can put a bar code, you can put an RFID tag, but what value is that extra technology going to bring? We help customers determine what



Bede Ramcharan
President and CEO, Indatatech

that value threshold is and whether they should implement it," he said.

One of Indatatech's government clients is the United Space Alliance, a prime contractor for NASA. Chris Fierro, chief operating officer for Indatatech, said their support for USA runs the gamut.

"We help them with procurement on a lot of hard-to-find items, things like food. We like to say it actually is rocket science to go through this process," Fierro said.

"When you think back to when we had the scare with contaminants in peanut butter, you can't have something like that up in space where there are

Recognition for Indatatech

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2005

- ✓ One of the Top 10 Emerging Businesses in Houston
- ✓ One of the Fastest Growing Companies in San Antonio

no doctors readily available. So there's a lot of quality assurance going on," she said. "It takes a lot of paperwork and a lot of legwork to do that so we can help NASA track down and procure those items that go into the space shuttle."

Even something as simple as candy comes under the scrutiny of Indatatech.

"Lifesavers – they went from a roll of 12 to a roll of 14. You wouldn't think it would be a big issue but it is. You just can't take two out and eat them," Fierro said.

"There are designs and packaging of how food is fit and formed and placed. We keep NASA abreast of the changes that are taking place with food, and that industry is changing constantly," she said.

With offices in San Antonio and Houston, Indatatech employees have worked on sites across the United States and in 12 countries. The bulk of their clients are commercial, but Ramcharan said they're trying

to balance that out and bring on more military clients.

Fierro said the company likes to have six to 10 contracts at a time, and have those roll over into new ones. They presently have six contracts valued at approximately \$3 million.

Ramcharan and Fierro are proud of the company's association with the Air Force Mentor-Protégé Program. Now in their third and final year, they said the program has been a tremendous asset and give credit to their mentor, SpecPro, Inc.

"We thought we had processes and infrastructure in place," Ramcharan said. "It was one of those things where you don't know what you don't know, and the Mentor-Protégé Program told me what I didn't know. As a result of that we were able to go back and put those processes and infrastructure in place.

"We just completely revamped



J.R. Larkin (left) and Randy Ramcharan display the plaque from United Space Alliance recognizing Indatatech as the 2007 Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Company of the Year. (Courtesy photo)

our accounting system," he said. "For us it was working fine but the Mentor-Protégé Program opened our eyes to 'If you want to grow up, you need an adult accounting system.'"

Fierro said she believes the program has raised the value of what the staff does.

"We're constantly reevaluating as we grow, and the reach-back that our mentor has given us has been incredible," she said. "It's a huge value to us to just pick up the phone and ask how to handle a situation or what their recommendation is – like having a big brother or sister. They're always there to help. As a resource, it's immense."