

8(a) Graduate of the Year

Illinois District Office

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With more than 20 years' experience in the construction industry, David Rambhajan and his company, Industria Construction Services, stand out as the Illinois 8(a) Graduate of the Year. Their success can be attributed to their commitment to customer service and professionalism. Industria demonstrates that a small, service-disabled veteran-owned small business can realize incredible benefits and elevate their business by leveraging SBA programs.

During his service as a Marine Corps Reservist from 1984 to 1992, David sustained an injury, but his injury did not impede him from achieving his goal of becoming an entrepreneur. Soon after his discharge from the Marine Corps, David started Industria, and by 1997, Industria's revenues had grown to more than \$3 million with only three employees.

By 2005, Industria was growing steadily, and it was then that David joined SBA's 8(a) Business Development and Contracting Program and also enrolled in SBA's HUBZone program due to the business's location in an underserved community. As a Service-Disabled Veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB), Industria was poised for new levels of growth. With new access to federal contracting opportunities reserved only for 8(a) companies, Industria immediately proved its value to the federal agencies with whom the company contracted. In addition, joint ventures with F.H. Paschen under the 8(a) program's Mentor-Protégé system, brought Industria to the table on a number of large federal construction projects in several states. Of the 8(a) program, David noted, "If you leverage the opportunities the 8(a) program provides, you can grow your business."

With the business growing quickly, David knew he would benefit by supplementing his training in business, and SBA's E200, also known as Emerging Leaders, was the answer. The E200 program provides training to small businesses in all aspects of business management and results in a strategic growth plan that helps the participants set goals and chart a path to growth. As a member of the first E200 class in Chicago, David was able to update his business plan and refocus his strategy and goals.

In 2014, Industria's sales exceed \$13 million and the company employed more than 25 individuals. With steady growth and success, David remarked on the values that brought him to this point, "In business, and especially as a small business bidding on federal contracts, come with humility, show your value and use the opportunities you have in front of you." Of his business philosophy generally, David says, "The core elements of business management are balancing communication, cash-flow and workflow. They are tied together and failing in one of those areas can impact all of them"

As someone committed to service and his community, David is active in several veterans' organizations including the Elite Service-Disabled Veteran Network in Illinois. He also served on the board of directors for the Illinois Warrior Summit, and is an instructor for the award-winning Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities at Purdue University. Of the Bootcamp, David states, "I just want to share my experiences and help guide other veterans on their path to small business success."

For all his success as a soldier, as a businessperson and as a community leader, David Rambhajan and his company, Industria Construction Services, are the 2015 Illinois 8(a) Graduate of the Year.