

SHE LEARNED THE SCIENCE OF BUSINESS

ADAM STONE

Kimberly Brown didn't go looking for cash or credit before taking charge of Amethyst Technologies. Rather than worrying about financial backing, she set her sights on gaining expertise.

She spent nine years in the trenches, toiling away in someone else's shop before starting her own company devoted to delivering quality and compliance services for laboratories, including FDA compliance for research, clinical trials, drug development and manufacturing.

"As an engineer, I had to take a lot of that time to learn about the business side of running a business," she said.

That investment has paid off: The firm now employs 10 in the U.S. and five overseas and is grossing about \$2 million a year. The Baltimore company has even garnered national attention, drawing a visit last year from the White House head of advocacy for the Small Business Administration, who wanted to talk about boosting exports among small businesses.

Passing the torch



JACLYN BOROWSKI

Kimberly Brown of Amethyst Technologies:
"You just don't know what you don't know."

Brown took a running start to launch her business. When her boss announced he'd be retiring in about five years, she set the wheels in motion. Together they agreed that she would eventually take over the assets of the company, assuming the client base and all operations for a token payment of \$20,000 (all her own money) once the present owner stepped down.

"During that time I focused on

AMETHYST TECHNOLOGIES

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Kimberly Brown



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Founded:
2006



Employees:
15



2013 Revenue:
\$2 million

cementing my relationships with the clients, doubling our existing work with Walter Reed National Military Medical Center to include more engineering services, helping them to expand into different facilities. And I learned to save money, to be more budget conscious," she said.

Brown had a lot to learn during that ramping-up time.

"You just don't know what you don't know," she said. "I knew what it took to deliver for the client. I understood that as a small company there are a lot of things you have to do, a lot of hours you have to put in. But as a scientist I still had to learn the accounting, the HR, the legal, the need to protect intellectual property."

To that end she enrolled in the University of Maryland, Baltimore County's ACTiVATE Program, a yearlong entrepreneurship training program focused on teaching women with some technical or business experience how to create technology companies.

"That was really the saving grace for me because most of the work was on the business side, and then there was building the network. To this day most of my contacts were in that program," she said.