



Marie R. Gill

Miami, Florida



[M. Gill & Associates, Inc./MBDA Export Center](#)

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Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Marie R. Gill:

Originally from Jamaica, Marie Gill, Owner and Founder of M. Gill & Associates, Inc., and Operator of the Miami MBDA Export Center, moved to the United States in the 1970s, after briefly managing sales training programs for Sheraton Hotels in Freeport, Bahamas. She worked in Newark, NJ, for a few years before relocating to Denver, CO. In both cities, Gill worked with community development organizations in the areas of economic development and small business assistance. Gill settled in South Florida in 1989 where she found her “home” with the Minority Business Development Center (MBDC).

“After eight great years with the MBDC, my boss ‘threw’ me out of the door, literally encouraging me to follow my passion to start my own business,” she said. “There were services the MBDC didn’t offer to

minority businesses that I was able to provide. He knew I had the potential and encouraged me to go for it.”

By September 1990, M. Gill & Associates, Inc., was open for business. As a full-service, hands-on, Management and Economic Development Consulting Firm, Gill and her staff serve a diverse clientele of Minority, Women, Small and Veteran-Owned Businesses; as well as government agencies, academic institutions, multi-national corporations and nonprofit organizations that operate in the domestic and global markets. They provide a full menu of services geared toward providing access to capital, access to government and commercial contracts; and access to multicultural communities and business partners in the domestic and global markets. They also provide innovative ways of identifying and connecting their clients to business financing, bonding and investment capital; as well as to accessing government contracts and exporting opportunities.

Gill shared several reasons why her firm is unique. “Through our MBDA ExportConnect Platform, we connect clients with contracting and financing opportunities and resources throughout the U.S. and worldwide markets,” she said. “We provide personal and one-to-one consultations, coaching and technical assistance services for our more advanced clients, and training services for Start-up M/W/SBEs. Through our strategic partners, we operate from offices in Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Belize, Martinique, Trinidad; and Johannesburg, South Africa.”

Gill continued, “We still offer that special touch by making site visit consultations and services for those clients for whom that method of

service delivery is most convenient and beneficial. We are big on maintaining the highest integrity and accountability; we track results to ensure that promises are kept, and desired outcomes are achieved.”

Gill said that the City of Miami has been her strongest supporter and cost-share, strategic partner on her MBDA Programs since 2008. “The City’s support provides an anchor for the program, and the MBDA is pleased with the local and federal government collaboration on behalf of minority businesses and the community.”

Through hard work and a passion for economic development and serving the minority business community, M. Gill & Associates has built an impeccable reputation by delivering exceptional results. However, as Gill shared, she faced several early challenges along her entrepreneurial journey.

“I had a big following as a staff consultant with the MBDC,” she said. “However, I realized that when I went out on my own, I didn't have THAT big of a following. At first, I didn't have the US Department of Commerce behind me. Without their support, it wasn't quite the same. I had to establish myself all over again.”

Gill continued, “I put together a team of people from the businesses I helped while at the MBDC. At first, they became my focus group, and later my Planning Committee for the Annual Minority Enterprise Development Week (MEDWeek) Conference that is hosted by M. Gill & Associates in Florida. Over time, I got their commitment and started getting referrals. I reached out to other organizations that I had brought to the MBDC. Stepping out was definitely a challenge. I didn't have a staff yet and I had to launch the company using personal savings.

Eventually things fell into place and companies started utilizing my services as a PR and marketing consultant.”

A significant opportunity presented itself when the company that was originally contracted to operate the MBDC program lost its contract. The MBDC Program came up for bid and Gill was encouraged to submit a proposal. She ended up winning the contract in 2000 to operate the Miami MBDA Business Center, which she operated for 16 years, until she was contracted by the U.S. Department of Commerce to operate their new MBDA Export Center and Disaster Recovery Programs in Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. As Gill shared, that opportunity has since paid many dividends for M. Gill & Associates and the countless number of businesses they’ve assisted over the years.

“As an MBDA Federal Contractor for the past 19 years, we have facilitated \$4.3 Billion in Financing and Contracts to our M/WBE Clients,” Gill shared. “As a result, we’ve created and retained over 12,000 U.S. jobs, branded the MBDA as a Minority Business Focused Agency of the Federal Government, introduced the MBDA Programs in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and Launched the “MBDA Her” Initiative to focus on improving the scalability of Minority Women in Business.”

The Miami MBDA Export Center is one of four similar export centers across the country. As operator of the Florida Center, M. Gill & Associates is able to maintain a stable stream of business and help more minorities enter and thrive in global markets, while consulting with other government agencies and with large private firms. According to Gill, her relationship with the federal government provides an anchor for

the firm to pursue other opportunities that are more difficult to land. Gill also has a strong past-performance relationship with the US Department of Housing & Urban Development when she managed the Miami-Dade Empowerment Zone Programs throughout the 1990s to the mid-2000s.

These experiences also strengthened her firm's ability to provide technical services to companies seeking to procure government contracts. These federal government relationships also allow her company to help federal and local government agencies and corporations promote their economic development initiatives to inner cities and multicultural communities. Ultimately, these partnerships give M. Gill & Associates a strong niche in the economic development space and a chance to help a wider cross-section of businesses, as well as low-moderate income residents.

For Gill, coaching and watching her clients grow is what she enjoys most. "The success of my clients is my priority," she said. "When my clients succeed, I succeed. When my clients are happy, I am happy. Seeing my suggestions put into practice and getting the desired results for my clients is so rewarding."

Looking ahead, Gill has several goals for the future. First and foremost, her number one priority is to help minority women-owned businesses scale. By her estimates, doing so will also allow M. Gill & Associates to grow by 100% by the year 2022. Along the way she plans to develop an online platform to allow domestic and international contractors to better meet bidders, and financial resources a better way to meet those looking for financing. They'll conduct webinars and will also track opportunities that have come about as a result of the platform.

Perhaps one of Gill’s most exciting future goals, which will become a reality in 2020, is the launching of her “Women Mean Business Initiative” which will have an “MBDA Her” component to identify, train and grow a certain number of minority businesswomen each year.

Gill explained, “The year 2020 will represent the 10th year for us to host the Women Mean Business Conference,” she said. “The ‘MBDA Her’ Initiative is an outgrowth of these conferences. More and more women are attending and we want to help them. We plan to identify, through a process of elimination, a certain number of minority businesswomen and help scale their businesses. We’ll take them through an incubator training and help them to grow from under or at \$1 Million to \$5 Million within three years. From HR to financing to contracting and legal, we’ll provide the assistance they need to scale. The program will be intense, but very targeted.”

What advice does Gill have for aspiring entrepreneurs? “Hold steadfast to your entrepreneurial dreams,” she said. “Don’t be afraid to ask for help – it abounds in all sectors. Also, I know the paperwork can be intimidating at times, but please do it, or get it done. Lastly, in all you do, business and personal, never compromise your integrity.”

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