



3:01 am, July 8, 2009

SMALL TALK EXCLUSIVE

## SBA's Emerging 200 Initiative 'is like executive MBA training'

By [Nancy Kaffer](#)

Companies participating in the **U.S. Small Business Administration's** Emerging 200 Initiative were promised a mini-MBA — and so far, participants say, that's what they're getting.

Sixteen companies were chosen to participate in the e200 initiative, aimed at encouraging growth in inner city businesses. The program offers senior executives 60 to 80 hours of training in organization management, growth strategies and management, market development and strategic planning over a six-month period.

Qualified participants must have been in business for three years, have \$400,000 or more in annual revenue and be located within the inner city boundaries defined by the SBA.

Perry Mehta's Detroit-based **FutureNet Group Inc.** has experienced 100 percent revenue growth in each of the last four years, ending 2008 with about \$7 million in sales.

In the e200 program, Mehta said, he's acquiring tools that will help FutureNet keep up that pace.

"(The e200) is a real class, with a real homework assignments... this is like executive MBA training," said Mehta, president and CEO of FutureNet. "So far, there are two or three different objectives — one of the biggest objectives was the finance part of it. They brought in outside experts from CPAs to venture capitalists to bankers, and gave a good amount of detail to manage the business by the numbers, what metrics you should utilize, what kinds of ratios, and other parameters business owners should be concerned about."

Like Mehta, Loretta Watson is aiming for growth.

The president and CEO of Detroit-based **SPARKLE Janitorial Service**, Watson said she's ready to take the company — ending 2008 with \$800,000 in sales — up a notch.

"I am trying to move out of working *in* my company — I want to be able to manage the company," she said. "And this program is doing exactly what I would want it to do in order for me to gain the knowledge to become more of a manager, to be able to delegate to people, and hire the skilled people I need to move the company forward. We're moving the company from a mom and pop kind of operation into the corporation that it has the potential to be."

Watson hopes to end 2009 with \$1.5 million in revenue, almost double 2008's numbers.

The e200, she said, is "fabulous."

"I couldn't have asked for a better program," she said. "Just the time we have to spend forces you to really take a look at your company and what is causing your company to remain at a level that you don't want it at. For example, we're working on our financial piece, and it's forcing us to get into quick ratios, forcing us to look at our profit margins and to be on top of those things so we can move the company forward."

### e200 Companies

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