

## Technology Solutions for Government and Private Sectors



**Pallabi Saboo - CEO**

Harmonia is a small, economically disadvantaged, minority woman-owned, HUB Zone company. It is focused on creating game-changing technology solutions to today's problems and bringing about cost/process efficiencies in the way organizations - both in the government and private sector - conduct various aspects of their business. Harmonia received the Tibbett's Awards in 2007 and 2013, an award given to firms judged to exemplify the very best in Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) achievement and transition. Other recognitions Harmonia enjoys are: Hire Power Award (2013), Fast 50 Asian American Companies (2013), featured in Forbes magazine as among the top business leaders in VA (2013), ranked 5 consecutive years on Inc. magazine 5000 list of fastest growing companies (2009 – 2013), Top 12 to Watch small businesses in Virginia by the United States Senate Productivity and Quality Award Program (2011), and 'Technical Trailblazer' federal contractor (2011). Harmonia has been developing cutting edge technology solutions for several federal agencies such as the Dept. of Energy, Dept. of Transportation, Dept. of Treasury, Dept. of Defense, NASA, NIH, Dept. of Homeland Security, Small Business Administration, Dept. of Agriculture, Census Dept. and for several companies in the private sector such as Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, SAIC, General Dynamics and Northrop Grumman.

**Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine**

**CEOCFO: Ms. Saboo, what was the vision when you started Harmonia?**

**Ms. Saboo:** Perfection. When we started we aimed to hit a homerun every time up to bat. We labored intensively to get everything right and deliver the perfect solutions. We planned in great detail each solution/task and tried to produce superior and impeccable work.

**CEOCFO: What would you say your vision is today?**

**Ms. Saboo:** Our vision today is very different. We have realized that when we aim for what we think is perfection either we miss the mark because we haven't got iterative feedback along the way from the end users or we are late to the game where someone else brought a similar solution to the market before us.

Our mantra today is *failing forward* which is failing quickly so that we can learn fast. We now push ahead with a product as soon as possible to get feedback from the end users to determine where product addresses their needs and where it falls short so we can improve with each iteration. We encourage our teams to keep quickly trying new approaches and learning from their failures, thereby improving at every stage.

**CEOCFO: The fact that you have been on the Inc. list for several years definitely indicates Harmonia is succeeding. How are you ahead of the game with technology and how do you know what people will need five years from now?**

**Ms. Saboo:** We actually don't know what people will need five years from today or even sooner! That is why we believe in the *Fail Fast Fail Often* approach. We come up with several ideas/approaches. After quickly eliminating the obviously bad ideas, we try out the rest. We make mistakes but we learn from them quickly and thereby further weed out the not so great ideas. Finally, though this iterative process, we come up with a solution that has been tested and vetted by feedback from the end users. And since the user is involved every step of the way, the product is continuously evolved with the changing needs and feedback from the user. We believe success is an iterative journey of mistakes and corrections.

**CEOCFO: Would you be looking at a bunch of concepts and then decide what you can accomplish?**

**Ms. Saboo:** Yes. Like I mentioned earlier we try out several concepts, funnel out the bad ones and improve on the good ones by making mistakes and learning from them. Successful technology evolves from hundreds of mistakes and failures and revisions along the way.

**CEOCFO:** *You have a number of products today. Are you marketing them to companies outside of the government arena?*

**Mr. Saboo:** Yes. We have commercial work as well with license sales to Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, BEKO, SAIC, DoE, and more.

**CEOCFO:** *Many people I speak with that work with the government find challenges. Often with good intentions, the government is very slow moving and sometimes government personnel do not understand the rules and regulations that are in place. Do you find similar challenges when you are dealing with the government?*

**Ms. Saboo:** I look back at Harmonia when we were two people strong and now we are over a hundred! We ourselves have implemented several policies and procedures within the company to provide some direction and structure to how things are done. It does slow us down a little bit but if we don't follow these guidelines then the system would break, chaos would ensue and the company would not sustain growth. Therefore, I can appreciate the importance of the policies and procedures the government (given how large it is) has in place and the consequent slow movement in processing paperwork.

**“We believe success is an iterative journey of mistakes and corrections.” - Pallabi Saboo**

**CEOCFO:** *What was the most challenging project that really stands out for Harmonia?*

**Ms. Saboo:** Our most challenging project was one in which we won a large contract and had 72 hours to put a team of 20 together and be up and running with the first deliverable made. Our employees really came together as “one” to successfully conquer a seemingly impossible task to the clients admiration.

**CEOCFO:** *Why pay attention to Harmonia?*

**Mr. Saboo:** Harmonia is at the forefront of technology innovation. Its R&D arm has steadfastly built innovative and dependable technology solutions and its services arm delivers these technologies across various industries and agencies ensuring the highest level of performance with the lowest cost. These, coupled with our expertise in program management and our internal CMMI certified processes, get the job done efficiently and in a timely manner while still remaining flexible to our clients evolving needs.

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**BIO:** Pallabi Saboo is the Chief Executive Officer for Harmonia Holdings Group, LLC. She has a fifteen-year track record of building and operating successful technology and technology related services companies. Ms. Saboo acquired Harmonia in 2006 and has aggressively transformed it into a debt-free, fast growing company with a superb track record for developing specialized technologies and technology-enabled services for the federal and commercial sectors. Prior to Harmonia, Ms. Saboo held senior positions with Installation Included Inc. and Concept Software, which she co-founded.

Ms. Saboo enjoys many honors: Federal 100 (a distinguished list of leaders from government, industry and academia who had the greatest impact on the federal community – 2013), Fast 50 Asian Americans (honors outstanding achievements of Asian American leaders who through innovation, hard work and ingenuity, remain at the forefront as engines of growth in our national economy – 2013), Smart100 (100 CEOs recognized for their leadership, strategic vision, and character – 2009 and 2010), and Top 25 female CEOs in the DELMARVA area by Smart CEO Magazine (an honor given to women who have successfully grown their businesses while remaining active in their communities – 2008). Further, Ms. Saboo has served 8 years on the Virginia Governor’s Board of Directors for Small Business Financing Authority, an honor she has uniquely held under both Democratic and Republican governors. Ms. Saboo is also a Paul Harris Fellow of the Rotary Foundation and remains active in several community outreach programs.

Ms. Saboo is an Electronics engineer and has an MBA, with a specialization in marketing, from Virginia Tech, where she was awarded the Cunningham Fellowship. She is a member of the by-invitation-only distinguished alumnus Ut Prosim Society of Virginia Tech.

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