



Woman-owned freight forwarder celebrating 25 years

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Nearly 25 years old, Transit Air Cargo stands among predominately male counterparts as a woman- and minority-owned exhibition freight forwarder where women have worked in key roles since the beginning.

A majority of the managers overseeing the seven departments of the Santa Ana, Calif., facility are women, including President Gul Khodayar; her daughter, Vice President Tania Khodayar; and Vice President of Domestic Operations Christy Colton, who has worked for the company since it opened on Nov. 1, 1989.



Tania and Gul Khodayar

In fact, most of the company's 53 employees are women. This earned the company certification from the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), the largest third-party certifier of women-owned businesses in the U.S.

"Getting the WBENC certification shows the power of females. The tradeshow industry is male and elderly male dominated. There aren't many woman-owned transportation companies, and being successful for 25 years is a huge accomplishment," said Tania Khodayar, vice president, Transit Air Cargo.

This milestone is cause for celebration at the company's annual Christmas party, which will be bigger than ever.

"We usually do the party at a restaurant; this year, it will be bigger at the Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach. It will be a formal banquet, and we're flying in agents and outside employees," added Khodayar.

While the party is still in its planning stages, one thing is certain — Transit Air Cargo paying tribute to its original president and owner, Jamshed "Jim" Khodayar, who is also known as "Dad" to Tania Khodayar.

Opening doors for women in the transportation and logistics industry, Jim Khodayar wanted to be his own boss, so he founded Transit Air Cargo. Although his background was in engineering, not logistics, Jim had the mindset of a salesperson, previously working as a door-to-door vacuum salesman, according to his daughter, and he also had Christy Colton as his right-hand.

"[Christy] knew about the logistics industry and where to start. She was his guide," said Khodayar. "She'd sit with my dad and call potential customers."

Until Jim passed away five years ago, he was a leader who understood the time sensitivity of the tradeshow industry. When a customer's freight was delayed, he chartered a plane to deliver it on time. Khodayar maintains the company values her father imparted.

"Even if we have to charter a plane, we make sure the freight gets there. That's what we do," added Khodayar. "We're not a common carrier; we have tradeshow expertise and are more like a concierge service. We build relationships, send onsite representatives to our customers and customize their experience."

Since age 10, Khodayar watched her father at work, learning from the examples he set. In her father, Khodayar saw the leader she aimed to be. So when she prepared to earn her vice presidency at Transit Air Cargo, Khodayar said she followed her father's lead; she worked from the ground up and studied international business at Chapman University.

"My dad thought I should start from the ground up. I traveled abroad with him and saw his managing style, and this influenced how I deal with people today. I told my mom that's how he did it, and she put her spin on it."

Becoming president and owner of Transit Air Cargo after her husband passed away, Gul Khodayar's medical degree wasn't applicable to the logistics industry. Similar to how Christy Colton guided Jim, Gul received assistance from her husband's friend who previously worked at UPS.

"My mom picked up the business really fast; she doesn't need anybody's help now," added Tania Khodayar. "As president, she also becomes a salesperson when needed."

Transit Air Cargo provides a one-stop shop for companies exhibiting nationally or internationally. It also offers warehousing, installation and dismantle services and guidance throughout the pre-show process through its sister company, Trans-Exhibit Solutions.



Tania Khodayar