



Annual State of OWIT Address 2007

Organization of Women in International Trade
January 21, 2007

Dear Members,

For the first time, I would like to offer you the first Annual State of OWIT Address that I will deliver at our first OWIT Board Meeting in 2007.

Do you know how we got to be here today?

Twenty to twenty-five years ago, our reach as a women's international trade organization extended only within city limits – and during those early days, there were only about five such groups in the United States.

Fifteen to twenty years ago, these groups discovered each other, and by 1989, our reach extended coast to coast. Our founding chapters are:

- ◆ Boston
- ◆ Chicago
- ◆ Los Angeles
- ◆ New York
- ◆ Northern California
- ◆ Orange County
- ◆ Texas
- ◆ Washington D.C

And then, we started expanding internationally.

Now, more than 20 chapters enjoy the benefits of the Organization of Women in International Trade (OWIT) in the United States, Canada, Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia. Within OWIT, we have representatives from all over the world and on our call today, we are pleased that representatives from Mexico and Switzerland have joined us. The benefits that were sought back in 1985 within a small radius such as networking, education and mentoring, now expand globally.

Essential to our growth as a strong and effective organization is a focus on serving the greater good globally. Our international scope continues to expand as we chart the future of OWIT with a foundation of sustainability and effectiveness with well established best practices that are inclusive of the cultures represented by all our members.

I honor the women who came before us for their will, their resilience, their motivation and self-empowerment to form the great organization OWIT is today. But, one person alone did not make such a great thing happen. Many women, as I mentioned before from



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coast to coast contributed to form OWIT. And, since then, many more women have volunteered

their time and expertise. As change is constant, we must enhance and build upon past effort as we look to the future.

It is now our turn to pick up a baton as we continue to build and strengthen. As I see it, we even have a greater responsibility than they did 20 years ago. Because, we have to help conserve the hard work and many hours they put in so that we could be here today.

And beyond conserving what has been accomplished so far, I would like to dedicate this year to strategically planning how we can have growth in a sustainable fashion. I have been called to lead our efforts this year—and I have stepped up to lead. I have called on members of our Executive Committee—and they have stepped up as leaders of my team. And, I am asking all of you to step up and lead at the local level since this effort to conserve and establish best practices for sustainable growth demands many volunteer members across the globe for issues of worldwide concern.

Your valuable contribution will strengthen OWIT by making sure that as we chart our course, we are inclusive of all our cultural distinctions, our international trade needs, our networking needs and our mentoring needs as well as respectfully becoming aware of your valuable contributions to the international organization. We can try...but we cannot do the best job to provide support and sustainability if we don't stand together, regardless of language, region, or size of chapter. We need to step up to support our core focus which is strengthening our organization. Let me offer a phrase in various languages that I think is essential and encompasses this thought:

In English

By one's own volition

In Danish

Af egen fri vilje

In French

De son propre gré

In German

Aus eigenem Willen, freiwillig

In Russian

no доброй воле

In Spanish

Por voluntad propia

OWIT needs our compound help. Let's reach across our borders - nationally, as well as chapter to chapter. Just imagine the benefits we can reap at all levels if we think as one! I'm a witness of great things that can happen when great minds come together. I have had the incredible opportunity to work with many of you incredible women. It has been very exciting and rewarding for me.

United Around the Globe to Foster International Trade and the Advancement of Women in Business



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For almost two years now we have been working on our communications flagship—the OWIT website. This will enable us to communicate, network, learn, seek resources and ultimately come together as we bridge our cultures and chapters. We will have an update shortly.

Last year, we had an incredibly successful annual conference hosted by our Northern California Chapter, who did a tremendous job. We will build on these successes to establish best practices and streamline the process for our future chapters hosting the

OWIT Annual Conference. This was also the first time that OWIT implemented its profit-sharing plan with the host chapter. We will have an update shortly on this as well.

We have established a new position of VP Fundraising whose focus is two-prong: To assist the host chapter of the OWIT Annual Conference in their sponsorship efforts as well as to raise money for the organization in general to strengthen our financial status. We will hear more on that too.

We thank our current as well as our new members of the Advisory board and I am very excited to hear about their “willingness” to assist us with our goals and objectives and I look forward to working with them quite closely.

This year, we will have two opportunities to meet with each other for networking, strategic planning and educational purposes: At the Spring Board Meeting in Monterrey Mexico, May 25 and May 26, and, at our Annual Conference and Fall Board Meeting in Miami. We will hear more about both of these shortly.

There are various other plans and projects that we are exploring and we will update you soon.

So, I will take this opportunity to virtually extend my hand, if you can imagine me doing so, and welcome all of you to OWIT in 2007. *Welcome, bienvenue, bien venidos, willkommen, velkommen.*

Thank you and now we will hear from each of our members of the Executive Committee.

Lilia Navarrete

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President & CEO

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LiliaNavarrete@lknnglobal.com