

SEA BOX OF NEW JERSEY THRIVING



Jim Brennan is the owner of Sea Box Inc., a business based in Cinnaminson, New Jersey. Brennan's company has expanded incredibly despite the tough economy. His company focuses on shipping containers and is a U.S.-based manufacturer. The company has been in business for 28 years, coming up with creative ways to use the boxes. Those ideas include stacking them 10 high for a movie screen, using them as living quarters for elephants, temporary emergency housing and mobile repair stations for military vehicles in war zones. The workforce for Sea Box, which was at 50 in 2004, has grown to 170 because of a large customer and design list (which includes 5,000 and counting). The annual revenue of the company has also expanded, from \$23 million to \$100 million. Brennan has been fighting for better government contract opportunities for small businesses, because simply operating a small business can put it at a major disadvantage. Sea Box is a small business, as classified by the federal government, because there are less than 500 employees on the payroll. Sea Box has turned to the United States Small Business Administration for help, seeking assistance through the procurement division of the SBA, the organization in charge of aiding small businesses doing more work with government agencies. Ricardo Sacidor, is a local SBA procurement-center representative, who had the following to say: "The good news for everyone is the DOD has some increased competition for these items," Sacidor said. "It's quite possible the pricing and delivery terms are better. It's a win-win all the way around." "Sea Box has advocated on several occasions for full and partial small-business set-asides with federal contracting officers at major acquisition offices at the Department of the Navy, the Department of the Army, and the Defense Logistics Agency," Robert Farber, who is the company's in-house counsel and director of contracts, said. "We have not yet been successful." Regulations for procurement say that a contract has to be set aside for bidding by small businesses if two of them are able to meet the government's requirements at fair-market prices. There is no objective description as to what fair-market value is, which causes purchasing agents to set aside requirements. "That's a bias we need to fight," Farber said, "and that's a battle we're going to be fighting." On December 9, officials from Sea Box plan to meet with congressional representatives from the state of New Jersey regarding government contracting with small businesses. Anywhere from 75 to 80 percent of the sales by Sea Box are to the United States government or to subcontractors supplying the government with products. Sea Box is in the midst of creating the Collapsible Redeployable Shelter, or CRS, that has been requested by the Army in an effort to house 22 soldiers and replace the tents currently used. These housing units would consist of eight storage boxes that would take up the same space as the 22-person tents they would be replacing. "We're trying," Brennan said, "to be the one-stop shop for all types of containers."

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