

POWER *Players*

Memuna Williams, *President*

Isata Jones-Stanley, *Vice President*



Avantgarde Translations

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Avantgarde Translations is a language services company that translates written materials; organizes interpretation services; edits, proofreads and typesets translated documents; and provides cultural consulting.

❖ What is your business philosophy?

Our approach is driven by our belief that excellence in how we serve our clients and conduct our business is paramount. Striving toward excellence means continuous improvement, meticulous organization, quality assurance, being responsive and accessible, being upfront and accountable, and understanding that the work we do is not only a reflection of the clients we serve, but also a reflection of us.

❖ What made you want to go into business together?

Williams: We wanted to fulfill a need for high-quality translations in the marketplace by bringing together the best practices in Canada and the U.S. We had a shared vision and decided to start the business.

Jones-Stanley: We had discussed the idea of going into business together for a number of years and finally decided to actually do it rather than simply continue to talk about it. The timing was perfect as we both made major moves to new cities in 2004, which also meant moving in new directions in terms of our careers.

❖ How do your strengths and weaknesses complement each other?

Williams: Our strengths and weaknesses complement each other very well. We work better at different times of day and we have different areas of expertise and energy.

Jones-Stanley: We know when to draw on each other's strengths or ask for assistance in areas where the other partner may have a higher level of comfort.

❖ What are you most proud of?

Almost 30 years of marriage as well as watching my two children grow into wonderful adults.

❖ How do you resolve differences?

Williams: My partner is great to work with, and there are rarely any differences. When there are, we talk things through, make sure everything has been cleared up and then move on.

Jones-Stanley: Communication in any relationship is key and this is no different in a business relationship. When differences do arise, which is not often, we make sure each partner has a clear understanding of the other's position

to both partners.

❖ What has been especially challenging and rewarding about working as a team?

Williams: It has been rewarding to watch the business grow over time. The challenge has been in agreeing on the pace of growth as we strive towards our shared vision.

Jones-Stanley: It has been rewarding to grow a business while maintaining a balance between work and family life. Any challenges we have had inevitably involve working on our continued growth while remaining focused on our long-term vision.

❖ What do you wish you knew when you were getting started in business, that you know now?

Williams: I know now that it is very hard to start a business, but if I had known that then, we probably would not have started it.

Jones-Stanley: How much administrative work was really involved.

❖ What advice would you give other entrepreneurs and business owners who are considering partnerships?

Williams: Make sure you know your partner well and can trust them. Respect your partner's point of view and don't be afraid to tell them the truth.

Jones-Stanley: You must have a strong relationship with anyone you are considering to work with, and the key components are mutual respect and trust. Communication is vital and while points of view must sometimes be tempered (it's not what you say, it's how you say it), the underlying message must be conveyed clearly so that each partner is always aware of the other's position.

❖ If you weren't doing what you are doing, what else would you want to do?

Williams: Not-for-profit work related to promoting education.

Jones-Stanley: Work involving women's issues.

❖ What do you want others to know about entrepreneurs and small-business owners?

Williams: Being an entrepreneur is exciting and challenging because no two days are ever the same.

Jones-Stanley: Entrepreneurs work long and hard to start and run their own businesses, especially at the beginning, and are required to wear many hats. However, it is very rewarding to see an idea not only become a reality, but flourish.