

Shave and a Haircut!

Union Bank's Director of Supplier Diversity Richard Chacon

By Chuck Ashman

Richard Chacon's mother is probably more responsible than anyone else for Union Bank's director of Supplier Diversity's national reputation as the hard-driving, relentless supporter for opportunities for veteran-, women- and minority-owned companies.

After two years in Vietnam, two in Korea and finishing a 10-year, active-duty career, Chacon came home to momma. Like any great mother, she embraced his return ... and told him to get a haircut. And, she added that it wouldn't hurt if he found a job while he was out there.

Leaving the barber shop, he noticed a help wanted sign for Pacific Telephone. Now, armed with a proper civilian haircut—even clean shaven—he talked himself into a job.

Unfortunately, no one told him what it would be.

He soon found out he was the only male joining 49 other telephone company employees dealing with service calls and “making nice” to irate costumers.

That was then, and this is now. In the case of Richard Chacon and his achievements



Sergeant Richard Chacon (right), Seoul, Korea, September 1964

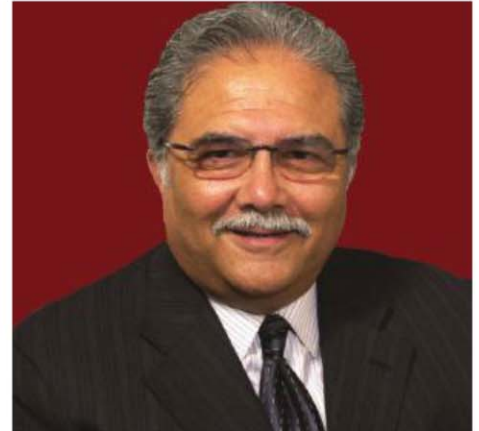
in 17 years at Union Bank, the best way to measure is, “Do the math!” When he joined the bank, it was spending \$13 million with companies of diverse ownership, providing a wide range of products and services. This past year, under his leadership, the company spent \$168 million dollars doing the same, but with a far broader geographic, ethnic and social reach.

Diversity Dean, Road Master

Simply stated, Chacon is rightfully considered one of the “deans” of diversity in the private sector. He enjoys telling people that “back in the day,” diversity opportunities were created because someone high up said they ought to be. Chacon, however, has earned his stripes by convincing many a corporation that diversity in hiring and diversity in buying are good business, in addition to being the right thing to do.

“I've always believed that in banking and every industry, our employees and our suppliers should reflect the customers we serve. At the same time, I think it's generally accepted that those with diverse interests bring a wave of energy and passion to the job, and that impacts all of us,” he said.

Currently, Chacon is the “road master” for a touring Union Bank teaching pilgrimage, along with giant security software firm Symantec, to warn small businesses about their vulnerability to becoming victims of cybercrime. Working together with FBI and Secret Service agents and local law enforcement, he has helped orchestrate dozens of cybercrime briefings for chambers of commerce, professional associations and individual companies throughout California, originally, and now,



Chacon is in his 30th year of supplier diversity leadership, with the most recent 17 serving as Union Bank's director of Supplier Diversity.

nationally.

“Some of the most impressive growth in small business are startup companies by Hispanics. That also means exposure to these cybercriminals [who] are stealing funds, data and other resources, and we are committed to helping them prepare, avoid when possible, and know what to do about it when it happens,” Chacon says.

“Richard is not satisfied just to lead Union Bank in its industry to the highest level of diversity achievement; he is committed to getting the rest of us following his lead. His personal dedication and his track record of success make a compelling argument for following him,” said Hewlett Packard Chief Diversity Officer Brian Tippens.

About the Author

Chuck Ashman is the founder and executive producer of Business Matchmaking, which has enabled 100,000 small-business selling appointments for veteran-, women- and minority-owned small businesses selling to the government and the private sector.