**Office of Trade and Investment Celebrates Women History Month**

**Women in International Trade**

**Lisa Waller – President – BDG International –** [**BDG International, Inc**](https://www.bdginternational.com/)

Lisa Victoria Waller (Anderson) is a President and co-owner of BDG International, Inc. located in Elgin, Illinois. BDG International, Inc was founded in 1983 by the Anderson family and is a full-service international freight forwarder, U.S. Customs Broker, Foreign Trade Zone and Trade Consultant. Lisa is a Licensed Customs Broker and Certificated Export and Customs Specialist. Over the last 30 years Lisa has developed a unique FTZ consulting and administration program for U.S. and Foreign Direct Investment companies in India (2007) and Jordan (2025). Lisa has dedicated her career to guiding her clients towards international success and gives back to the community through her leadership on the Illinois District Export Council. *“I learned from my father when I was very young, doing business overseas is something that requires more than just logistics and contracts—it takes cultural understanding, patience, and relationship-building. For me, international business is not just about transactions—it’s about fostering connections that last.”*

**Ashley Hoppe – Chief Executive Officer -** [**Cast 21**](https://www.cast21.com/)

Cast21 is a global medical device company focused on bone and joint care. Their flagship product is a waterproof alternative to a cast or brace for broken bones that helps streamline care and make the recovery process more comfortable. Ashley S. Hoppe cofounded [Cast21](https://secure-web.cisco.com/1dCCojr7kvfSDHRIcUZESbHzw8B_PbUK0EfOismB3FhaB3pyVmR4iVNU66Vu6bxCKHjfJIk_dfKDAvnk6R9LLQFPdOHtawMevbWEbMzCQxOsH1cuw4HzT95RIpXmgSazupxPqati5_9PM8_2y31toKsc3MvPrlKzdFPL-1QEv9nGK_niz14jZehqG28oWkX6oQrcbAzcuomQTZM5iPToj3dy11ILVafsrMYsTQA8-9LK2tL1WHdAEqNoWOjh-pPqiMfA4mqGFkGmTyvPahgbmaMCeIdvzXMJbeTFS2YGdFx-SL1ue7be00KrxkfBo4TJ5pYut5ErfEuMc8AAz7ReFbMsDtV_MA8ltxX0HhXGyZqn6y5oT-3cPSg0aTS01dqk2Qr2bi3cY8NRzQ9HddsGP62eJfGttudzTBdW8AUeSFMCOdjLKSzYbxZo3A3n8F5Gy/https%3A//r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp%3Ff%3D0010CwKg6tKE-Hm261UOr6hPvjS9wZeGgfhxVmks7R1Gti9Z4tg8IQy00hYeBufol_IblDfDyM_BHRe87RDyD_I36ohCYlIQgDjnftz-5C7kH4-f0MCte6HgA80lSrbtFfbjhqFnnQW6qBBQqJvjDsECA%3D%3D%26c%3D6mt6Qk9dcaLXcJwLNjzrDAJmn4dBd0RZycHBB7p0aI2xzRQdckRyFA%3D%3D%26ch%3D2f-k2yAlixZ470QeKCceMCrQrqFjmb3idvAVqm-MyQtkdb-OQX68Pg%3D%3D) after leading international, awarding-winning teams to develop medical devices and healthcare biologics. Ashley has been invited by government bodies, healthcare Fortune 500 companies, and globally acclaimed publications to contribute to their forums, panels, and articles on healthcare and innovation around the world. Ashley's advice to those interested in getting involved in international business*: “Ask for help! There are many great resources and kind people available to help light your way.”*

**Kathy Dudek – Projects Coordinator, Owner -** [**Dudek & Bock**](https://www.dudek-bock.com/)

Dudek & Bock is a family-owned, award-winning custom spring manufacturer. Established in 1946, it has been in Chicago for over 79 years. Products include springs, wireforms, light metal stampings, welded and value-added assemblies. Many of their products are in objects people use daily. Women make up nearly a quarter of Dudek & Bock’s workforce, and 2 of their employees have been awarded the Woman of the Year Manufacturing Award from TMA, Technology Manufacturing Association. Kathy’s advice to women wanting to expand their business internationally. “*Contact the State of Illinois Office of Trade & Investment, which will help you each step of the way, teaching how to market your product and how to export.”*

**Kathy Formella – Owner -** [**E. Formella & Sons, Inc**](https://formella.com/)

Formella is a woman-owned, global distributor of authentic Italian Specialties such as giardiniera, muffuletta, pasta sauce and infused oils, and is a fourth-generation company which prides itself on being leading edge, providing quality products in an SQF (Safe Quality Food) facility. Kathy started her career at Arthur Andersen/Accenture for the first 20 years upon graduation but moved to the family business to ensure the next generation can also share its family recipes, a labor of love. “My international business degree has been instrumental in helping Formella tap into the export markets.”

**Nina Kshetry – President - [Ensaras, Inc](https://ensaras.com/)**

Nina Kshetry is an expert in wastewater treatment and resource recovery, with two decades of experience in process engineering, project management, plant automation, and advanced analytics.  Her company provides an AI-as-a-service web platform called the Ensaras AI Wastewater Stack, which was developed by wastewater process and AI experts specifically for wastewater treatment facilities.  The Ensaras AI Wastewater Stack provides wastewater treatment plants with streamlined data collection, processing, and storage across varied data streams, automated reporting, visualization, and KPI generation, and real-time advanced analytics powered by AI to derive actionable insights, saving time and money. Nina’s advice to women considering getting involved in international trade: *I highly encourage women business owners to consider overseas markets.  Not only can the business opportunities be great, but to be able to work with international clients to help them solve their most pressing problems is incredibly rewarding and exciting.*

**Holly Sher - Owner – [Evanger’s Dog and Cat Food Company](https://evangersdogfood.com/)**

If farm-to-table applied to pet food, it would describe Evanger’s manufacturing process. The company’s refrigerated trucks pick up fresh ingredients daily within a 50-mile radius of its production facility in Markham and sells Evanger's dog and cat foods to retailers and pet-parents across the US and internationally too.  A native of Chicago, Holly Sher purchased Evanger’s Dog and Cat Food Company Inc. in 2002, and this year the company is celebrating its 90th anniversary making premium, innovative pet food for dogs, cats and ferrets.  To complement Holly's ownership, vision and leadership, other Sher family members are involved in daily operations of Evanger’s. Holly has advice for women business owners: *"You can do it and don't give up!  I constantly encourage other women interested in owning or launching or managing any kind of business - domestic or international - to believe in themselves and trust that they can do it. I'm thankful that a challenging period of time pushed me to bet on myself, work hard, build this company and legacy, and set an example for my children, grandchildren and generations to come.”*

**Aarathi Singh – CEO -** [**MedGyn Products**](https://www.medgyn.com/)

MedGyn Products is a global medical device manufacturer focused on developing innovative products for women across their lifecycle. The company has a wide range of devices including diagnostic and surgical instruments, equipment and pessaries to OB/GYN professionals around the world. The company is present in over 150 countries and is a trusted partner in women’s healthcare.  Aarathi Singh, CEO has over 20 years of strategy and operations experience and is leading the company by focusing on innovation, building teams, and expanding operations to address the needs of women’s health worldwide.  Her advice to other women interested in international business: *Pursue what you are most passionate about see where there are gaps across the world in this area and how you can fill them. Be curious and surround yourself with people from different countries and cultures, understand country specific needs, develop strong partnerships, have persistence through changing country regulations, and be agile! all with the goal of making a positive impact around the world with your passion.*

**Danette Swank – President -** [**Philippi-Hagenbuch, Inc**](https://www.philsystems.com/)

Philippi-Hagenbuch has been building innovative mining, aggregates, steel mill, landfill and construction solutions since their founding in 1969. Their truck bodies**,** [tailgates](https://secure-web.cisco.com/18Tr22dFuds1VA5LmOpHb2wEJaBRSa8bLdC2EwBo0xwCF3CpFdbe_ZS0z_n66ROxlS8yo6Z0HFvA1F726XIbhGmbfNGCc3XmpZhp-HxfWWCrdhQ5m59WqyhFQm03xznHzi7ZgJK3yRRTw3ob0YEj_H94hhGIimFb4FjT-aeJSQKd3tIeHk1dzaOWJz8NAhAFUWoKcCcGGAm0tvqZRrYqk2Cbex6H-sxWFXMdW8X89Xcqv1zqkCfGhNwpkOEf19r2VPvsYMUvhvklqK4PLQ9J6R9AbpH7pQoWmyIc9rZXVZ4bePmcEIk6MYUoDp7hxNuMzxwzDl4VcpDIrWLbm3RJGeiFaJSn9uwESnOjZaVFe09LmYWbnzZ09ujcDil5SgguTO5QgkRMSx0i6gL_UXIp-mg/https%3A//www.philsystems.com/equipment-selector/autogate-tailgates)**,** water tanks**,** Lowboy trailers and accessories have helped countless mines, quarries, steel mills, landfills, power plants, oil refineries, forestry, heavy duty agriculture and construction clients address their challenges. Danette Swank started with the Company in 1997; in 2013 she took the reigns as President and in 2023 she was named to the CEO position, making her the 3rd generation to helm the family-owned, Illinois-based company. Her advice to women is: *Go for it, at the end of the business day we each offer unique perspectives and products to our customer base.  Be yourself, be genuine and be open minded when meeting new people and offering great solutions to business counterparts around the world. The opportunity to meet people across the globe while representing PHIL has been so rewarding both personally and professionally.*