

Interview with SMI Advisor Chip Roth  
By Barbara Camile  
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*What is your background? What led you to work in the defense industry?*

My professional focus has always been in the engineering arena most likely due to background of my parents and grandparents. My grandfather was a well known structural engineer and worked on the Panama Canal when it was being constructed. My father followed in his footsteps and became a structural engineer and was president of a large steel erection company in Ohio at his retirement. My mother was a design engineer and taught mechanical drawing to high school students before she retired. I guess I was destined to be an engineer but decided to go the mechanical route.

I was always interested in the defense related field again due to the background of my grandparents and parents. My grandfather fought in Europe in the Army in World War I and was decorated for his service. My father was a torpedo bomber pilot in the Pacific Ocean in World War II and was involved in some of the more famous battles against the Japanese fleet during that time. My uncle was a B-17 pilot and flew 46 sorties against the Germans in Europe in World War II and my mother was a WAC in the war and spent some time in the Philippines and Japan after the conflict ended. I was interested in a career in the military and was nominated and accepted to the West Point academy after graduating from high school but unfortunately did not pass the eye exam. These are the reasons why I believe that I have had an interest in working in the defense industry and a passion for protecting the war fighter.

*How has your technical background helped you in the defense business development and marketing field?*

My technical background has helped me tremendously in the defense business and marketing field. The ability to understand the inner working of the client's technology; the strengths, potential weaknesses, possible improvements, etc, gives the client an advantage when I am dealing with military primes, government agencies, and congressional staff members. The design engineers of the client are more open to working with me due to my basic understanding of the technology and the learning curve is dramatically reduced

*What will your work as an Advisor to SMI entail and how will you use your expertise to assist SMI clients?*

One of my two main objectives at SMI is to locate and assist small and medium size technology based companies obtain federal and agency dollars to improve, scale up, and market their technology(s) for the benefit of the company and country. My main focus will be in the military, homeland security, and alternative energy related fields. My other objective is to open new markets for technology of current SMI clients. I have been fortunate to touch on many market areas for advanced materials during my professional career and this will be an asset for many current SMI clients.

*Do you foresee any challenges or opportunities in doing business with the federal government?*

I do expect both many challenges and opportunities in doing business with the federal government. The total amount of federal dollars that will be allocated by the federal government in earmarks, plus-ups, etc, will be reduced, which makes our job a little more daunting. SMI is positioned extremely really well in the advanced technology field which I believe is critical for the United States to keep its position as a superpower in the free world. Many technologies developed for military applications also have use in commercial areas, so it is critical for the US government to continue to supply funds to technology rich, capital poor companies. I believe the biggest opportunities are in the area of alternative energy, future military, and homeland security technologies.

*Beyond the appropriations process, what advice would you give someone hoping to do business with the government?*

Beyond the appropriation process, I would recommend that clients explore potential funding avenues with the federal agencies. The US Department of Energy and Agriculture department are aggressively looking at projects to spend money in the areas of loan guarantees and grants which will benefit our country. For military technologies, TSWG and JIEDDO are two avenues that are open to looking at and funding new technologies.