

# WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

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## BizSmarts

### How I... Reopened a D.C.-area office

**Protocol School of Washington returns with first local digs in seven years**



Joanne S. Lawton

Pamela Eyring, who has been commuting from South Carolina, has set up shop in McLean. *Returning to its roots, Protocol School of Washington is reopening an office in McLean, a block from where founder [Dorothea Johnson](#) established the business in 1988. It moved to South Carolina seven years ago. With clients ranging from Microsoft Corp. to the Marine Corps, PSOW has provided etiquette training to more than 3,500 people in the domestic and international business worlds.*

*We spoke with owner and President [Pamela Eyring](#) about the challenges of opening a Washington-area office.*

**Why open up an office here?** Our roots are in McLean. Predominately all of our courses in the past 25 years have been held there at the Ritz-Carlton on Tysons Corner. It's really a great proximity to downtown D.C., where we have clients. Our administrative headquarters are in South Carolina, and all of these years I've been commuting from South Carolina. Now truly we're going to have a physical presence here again.

**Where is the office?** We are subleasing office space only one block away from our first office. Our office is at 6723 Curran St. and is approximately 1,000 square feet. It opened on June 1.

**How many people will you hire?** I've already hired [Wendy Jones](#) as our director of corporate and government affairs. Our projection is within the next three years will probably have four to six employees.

**How did you find the office space?** Although I do not live in the D.C. area, I do have great connections. I worked with [John Marvin Jones](#), who has 30 years of experience in commercial real estate. John Marvin is Wendy's husband, and I have known Wendy for almost 15 years when she worked for The [Boeing Co.](#) and was a "tenured" graduate of my school.

**How did you negotiate from afar?** Easily. Mostly through emails and phone calls.

**Will it require a major move from South Carolina?** Presently, only marketing collateral and materials. My goal is to expand the Virginia office in order for it to be the operational hub to support our D.C.-area trainings. This would require more space in order to prepare the materials, manuals and books needed when conducting our courses and customized programs for our clients in the D.C. area. We will also need to hire additional staff to support these operations.

**What are your next steps in the D.C. market?** Maintaining and growing the client base that we have in the D.C. area. We also want to be registered as a preferred vendor with a lot of the corporations here in the Washington area. We want to be on their team, so if they're going after federal procurement, we can assist them with that and be a subcontractor to them.

**Why not open the Washington office earlier?** When I bought the school from our founder, [Dorothea Johnson](#), seven years ago, my husband and I moved to South Carolina. His job took him to Columbia. Because our programs at that time were in Washington, D.C., we knew we could run the administrative process in South Carolina as long as I had an office and staff. We also knew that we could just commute for the five-day programs. That's been fine for the past couple of years, but we've had such a surge of growth in the past two years, where it's not just the programs that we do at the Ritz-Carlton. Now we're doing more on-site, customized work for clients, so it's bringing us to Washington more often.

**How do you tailor your sessions to D.C. customers?** We understand operational protocol. We also teach cross-cultural awareness and official entertaining. You know you're here in D.C., and there's a lot of military and government. If they're wanting to expand the business and they're a corporation, we adjust our trainings so they can have better relationships with the government. Maybe they don't understand the military. Maybe they don't understand the protocol — the different ranks, the different services, how to address a military officer, what to say, what not to say.

**How will you market to other local businesses?** Our first strategy is to attend events and support the local event associations. We are a certified woman-owned business. We're looking at expanding in the federal procurement for small business set-asides. And we are involved with the [Small Business Administration](#) and Woman Impacting Public Policy.

**Any plans of establishing a campus for PSOW?** That's the ultimate goal, to have an actual brick-and-mortar school. One where we can offer more programs on a regular basis. And my goal possibly is to establish a degree program that people can go through to learn protocol. It really is a vocation. Now when, I'm not sure yet. We're very niche, but we're very applicable to business, governments or associations.

**What was your 2012 revenue?** The 2012 sales have exceeded all prior year's sales volumes in the school's 25-year history. Our domestic and international gross sales for 2012 grew 30.8 percent from 2011 with 122 percent growth from 2010.

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### **The basics**

**What it does:** Offers protocol and etiquette training for government, domestic and international business clients

**Leadership:** President [Pamela Eyring](#)

**Location:** Columbia, S.C. Opening office in McLean

**Employees:** 10

**Clients:** More than 200; FBI, CIA, NASA, Defense Department agencies, The Boeing Co., Lockheed Martin Corp., [University of Maryland](#)

**Website:** [www.psow.edu](http://www.psow.edu)

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