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CONTACT:
Mary Schnack, 800-529-7599
Mary@Prworks.ms

Bridging Cultural Language Barriers Leads To Unique New Business Venture

(Austin, TX) – An industrial engineer who repeatedly translated job tasks to Spanish-speaking workers during a friend’s home remodel has launched CommuniCard™, a new product that solves the problem of communicating with Spanish-speaking-only workers.

CommuniCard™, visual communication aids that include pictures for those who don’t read or who do not speak both languages, have been introduced by Sylvia Acevedo, president and CEO of CommuniCard™ LLC, headquartered in Austin, TX. The trade-specific cards focus on common tasks in the construction, housecleaning and lawn service industries. At less than \$20 each, they were originally designed for use by construction managers and household operators who need to relay instructions to non-English-speakers. For those seeking to learn the English/Spanish, the language translations are included.

“In starting CommuniCards, I didn’t look at the Hispanic community as consumers but as a demographic force having a major impact in U.S. society at large,” Acevedo said. “In this way, I perceived a pressing social need and created a solution that will benefit both the Hispanic community and those who hire its members.”

A bi-lingual entrepreneur who previously started and ran a successful technology company, Acevedo created CommuniCard™ after watching friends struggle to communicate with their house cleaners and construction workers. She perceived that a huge language problem exists nationwide, with more than 1.7 million people of Hispanic or Latino background employed in the United States, according to U.S. Labor statistics. Many of them hold entry-level service jobs and are unable to speak English.

To create the cards, Acevedo researched communication issues between English-speaking employers and Spanish-speaking workers, interviewing nearly 1,000 of them in construction and domestic work throughout California, Georgia, North Carolina, New Mexico and Texas. She chose illustrations of specific tasks and tools that make CommuniCards faster and easier to use than English/Spanish dictionaries.

“Turning the idea into a product, and the product into a business, meant doing a lot of research,” she said. “I wanted a product where no translator or reference books were required, and no pronunciation, so people would not be embarrassed.”

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The laminated, passport-size guides unfold accordion-style. The housekeeping CommuniCards contain 52 cards with the most common phrases used to communicate with a housekeeper. For those seeking to learn Spanish or English, language translations are included.

“With my cards, worksite managers do not need to be Spanish-language fluent and Hispanic workers themselves do not need to be able to read in their own language,” she added. “As my business gag lines says, ‘the pictures do the talking™.’”

CommuniCards are available as pocket guides or as a deck of cards, with each one focusing on a specific task area. They also can be customized to fit different types of workplace environments, such as Police Traffic Stop CommuniCards. They can be purchased at www.thecommunicard.com.

About Sylvia Acevedo

Before starting her most recent business, CommuniCard™ LLC, Acevedo was a founder and vice president of sales and marketing of REBA Technologies. She was previously an executive at top Fortune 500 companies including IBM, Dell Inc, Apple Computer and Autodesk Inc., where she had a track record of success in creating high growth in both domestic and international markets. At Dell Computer, she led the creation of the first Pan-American e-commerce website for Latin America. Acevedo has a Master’s engineering degree from Stanford University and a Bachelor’s degree from New Mexico State where she graduated with Honors and served on the Board of Regents.