



Vela McClam Mitchell

Founder and CEO
VIMM Global Brands

Vela McClam Mitchell is a strategic visionary with expert knowledge of the travel industry specializing in travel technology product development, financing and operations. Vela is the Founder and CEO of VIMM Global Brands. In this role she has focused her energy on building a world class travel advisory group performing global travel distribution analysis, travel management technology evaluation, analytics and reporting. Prior to forming Vimm Global, Vela was the CEO of Georgia International Travel (GIT), which was an American Express Travel affiliate. She sold GIT in 2016 to Direct Travel who sought out her successful mid-market corporate travel management company for its market placement and customer portfolio.

Previously, Vela was SVP and General Manager with operating responsibility for the Global Travel Supplier Solutions Group at Worldspan (a company formerly owned by Delta Air Lines, Northwest Airlines and American Airlines). Under her management were Worldspan's multi-million dollar travel distribution product software sales and operations to more than 500 airlines, 50,000 hotel properties and 40 car rental companies globally.

During her tenure at Worldspan, Vela developed and presented the business case to the Board of Directors which allowed the company to create an ecommerce division. The board funded the internal unit start-up at the business case requested \$10 million. As vice president of the new ecommerce unit from 1999 to 2002, Vela and her team were responsible for contracting significant online travel technology customers, including Expedia, Orbitz, and Priceline who utilized Worldspan's online global distribution travel products system platform. When Vela left the ecommerce business unit to take responsibility as the senior executive for Worldspan's Global Travel Supplier Group, the ecommerce unit had grown to more than \$600 million of Worldspan's revenue, and the company's global online bookings market share had grown to more than 60 percent of the total online travel distribution software market.

Vela's business and technology management career also includes a role as Director of Industry Sales Programs at Northwest Airlines, and as a Strategic Defense Systems Business Developer for Hughes Aircraft Company where she was one of the first women in the country with direct responsibility for missile technology sales to the U.S. Government. Prior to Hughes she was a market manager for Honeywell selling avionics systems for military and commercial aircraft, drones and missiles.

She is a former member of the board of directors of ET-China in Guangzhou, China, Jetspan in Singapore, Hotel Electronic Distribution Network Association, Ron McNair Foundation for Science and Technology, World Trade Center Atlanta, and the American Express Travel Services Advisory Board. She is currently on the advisory board of one of the largest wine industry trade shows in the world, Vin Expo America/Drinks America where she serves on the marketing committee, the St. Jude ALSAC Digital Strategy Advisory Board focusing on digital platforms for giving and the Johnson Research and Development Foundation Johnson STEM Activity Center (JSAC) Board where she serves on the finance and marketing committees.

Vela has received numerous awards including Top Performer awards at Honeywell, Hughes and Worldspan. She has also received awards from her technology industry peers with a special recognition award that she is most proud of from the Women of Color in Technology. Her GIT travel company won American Express' coveted Best 20 Affiliates award while she was also lauded personally by her local Cobb County NAACP as the business person of the year. She has been featured in or interviewed by business publications including Business Travel News, Black Enterprise, Business Week, Travel Weekly and others because of her travel technology expertise.

Vela began her career on Capitol Hill as a legislative aide to Congressman John Jenrette from her home state of South Carolina. She has an MBA from the Graziadio School of Business at Pepperdine University, a MS from Howard University and a BS from Claflin University. She has received certifications in Global Enterprise Management from Kellogg College at the University of Oxford, Oxford England and Strategic Business Management from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania.

She is married to Kentucky State Senator Reginald Thomas of Lexington, Kentucky.