

AMERICA'S LARGEST CORPORATIONS

# FORTUNE

APRIL 5, 2004 \$4.99

2004

HUNDRED

**50**  
YEARS OF THE  
FORTUNE  
**500**  
SPECIAL ISSUE

© 2004 Time Inc.

Special Advertising Section • Reprinted from the April 5, 2004 FORTUNE 500® issue

# PARTNERS IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Increasingly corporate America is turning to minority-owned businesses to supply a wide range of products and services.

STERLING FINANCIAL GROUP OF COMPANIES

## A PASSIONATE PREACHER

**C**harles Garcia urges people to follow their passions—and he certainly follows his. His newest claim to fame is a briskly selling inspirational book, *A Message From Garcia: Yes, You Can Succeed*, published last September by John Wiley & Sons.

But Garcia is most impassioned about Sterling Financial Group of Companies, of which he is chairman. The financial services concern, founded in Miami in 1997, serves a large Latino customer base, mainly by providing unbiased research on health-care and technology stocks to securities traders. That's a valuable product at a time when many Wall Street firms get low marks for research—sometimes tainted by conflicts of interest.

Minority investors are Sterling's bread and butter. "When you deal with Hispanics, you become part of the family," Garcia says. "They entrust you with all their assets." In contrast, financial consultants working in the mainstream rarely get more than two-thirds.

Garcia had a lot going for him, as a Columbia law graduate, former Air Force officer, and former White House fellow. Still, he began with just three employees in a cleaned-out utility closet. Garcia's ability to provide leads—as many as 20 a day—helped woo Latino brokers from bigger firms. Sterling now has over 400 employees and annual revenue of more than \$32 million. Its services include research, trading, wealth management, and investment banking.

Growth will continue, Garcia says, for "we can provide services that few others can match."