



Successful Selling to the Government

AUGUST 2005

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VOLUME 1 NUMBER 4

Back to Basics: Let's Go Fishing

By Tom Basile, *Seneca Creek Consulting*

In previous articles we stressed the importance of knowing your prospective customer's business and perceived challenges. We talked about the importance of listening. Remember, the prospect is not interested in you. He or she is only interested in how you can help solve a problem or improve their services or cut costs.

Now let's discuss the sales cycle. There have been many articles written on the sales cycle. Some are 4 steps, some 5. I happen to prefer the seven step process: **interest, educate, demonstrate, design, pretest, propose, close**. Pretty straightforward! Think about all the sales you have made in your career and apply this model. I am sure you will agree that you went through each and every step. So, why do so many salespeople feel they can skip a step or two or three and go to close in a single meeting? Well, it's not to say that it can't be done, it's just that the likelihood is quite low when you are selling complex solutions based on services and/or products.

A sales call is like meeting a date for the first time. You go through all seven stages (although you may elect to skip the "propose" stage in this case). That's not to say there are not exceptions to the rule. But for the most part it takes several or many dates over weeks and months to feel comfortable with one another.

The protocols for selling successfully are equally well-known by professional sales people. However, do we stop and think about the discrete steps in the sales cycle and carefully hone each one? The IT sales environment is dynamic by definition. Ever changing market focus and technology demand up-to-date sales techniques and different methods of presentation. However, the elements that do not change are the same seven steps we learned as fledgling sales people. Let us up date them and apply them in our own market arenas.

Before going on your next call think about it as though you are going fishing. The end game is obvious; you want to catch fish for dinner. However, in the process you need to determine what bait to use, how deep your line should be, and where to cast the line. Generally, you must adhere to established protocols if you want to increase your chances for a successful outing.

The GSA Corner: Trade Agreements Act

By Deborah Wolland, *The JDS Marketing Group*

Now, more than ever, Schedule contract holders must be current on all Trade Agreements Act Regulations and approved countries.

In a recent decision by the Department of Justice, OfficeMax will pay over \$9M in fines and penalties as a result of selling non-compliant products under its contract with GSA. The violation of the contract terms was brought to the attention of the Government by a competing entity, Safina Office Products. Safina and two of its executives stand to receive a large sum of money as the result of the settlement, compliments of the Whistleblower provision of the False Claims Act.

Compliance should be easy for most manufacturers that hold contracts. Dealers have the most to lose as they are receiving country of origin data from a manufacturer, or worse, from a distributor. To ensure compliance to the best of your ability, require an annual production point re-certification from each manufacturer on contract.

Federal Opportunities

By Peggy Seefried, *Federal Sources, Inc. (FSI)*

FBI Looks To Industry To Help Keep Sentinel Program On Straight And Narrow

Zalmai Azmi, the chief information officer (CIO) of the FBI, spoke at an FSI Executive Breakfast on June 17, 2005, at which he focused on the FBI's Sentinel program. Sentinel will replace the Virtual Case File (VCF) program, the FBI's failed \$170 million effort to build a computerized case management system that was supposed to replace its largely paper-based systems and antiquated data systems.

Azmi, who has established a record for longevity as the FBI's CIO by staying for over a year in that position (he was acting CIO for six months before his permanent appointment), indicated that the bureau has learned its lessons from the VCF fiasco. Unlike the VCF program, the FBI intends to provide dedicated resources to the Sentinel management office, as well as a risk management team, a transition team, a communications team, and independent verification and validation.

The FBI also intends to establish an organizational change management strategy and implement the program in phases as it retires legacy case management applications. The cost of the program — which has not yet been determined — will be spread over two to four fiscal years and each phase will be paid for in the fiscal year in which the work starts.

Azmi emphasized that the FBI does not have all the answers, even with all the "lessons learned" that it has experienced with VCF. The bureau, he said, looks to industry "to provide many of the technical solutions to the problems that the FBI will need to solve in designing and implementing Sentinel." He further emphasized that he looked forward to working with industry to finding these solutions.

Sentinel will make extensive use of Commercial-Off-The-Shelf/Government-Off-The-Shelf (COTS/GOTS) components, unlike the VCF system, which was designed and built with proprietary software by SAIC.

For more information on Sentinel, the Sentinel Industry Day, Government-Wide Acquisition Contracts (such as CIO-SP2i) and other opportunities to win government IT contracts, please contact FSI at 703-610-8700.

Are You Using the Most Efficient Procurement Path?

By Peter Adler, *Seneca Creek Consulting*

Once we have successfully worked with Government program and project managers to provide them with the IT-based solutions, do we provide them with the knowledge and the means to suggest to the contracting officials the preferable manner to use in acquiring the solution?

As we approach the end of the Federal Government's fiscal year, there oftentimes is end-of-year money that is used to acquire needed contractor support services and/or products. Rarely do program people have in-depth knowledge of acquisition methods and procurement procedures. Why should they when they have a contracting shop that already possesses the essential knowledge for the execution of the contract?

Agency management and contracting officers have generally a keen awareness of the socio-economic goals that they are tasked with accomplishing. As the fiscal year closes, most oftentimes an agency must accelerate the money they spend and the contracts

awarded to each of a series of set-aside categories. Hub Zone, Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned, Small Disadvantaged Business, and small business as well as a handful of additional set-aside categories need to be considered for awards in order to fulfill the Agency's mission to meet the goals set forth in Public Law and Presidential Executive Orders.

The importance of informing your client of these set-aside categories can, at times, add greatly to the speed, simplicity, and effectiveness of the acquisition. For example, if your client requires a support service from you and there exists a mandate that this genre of service must go through the Agency's Government Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC). Generally, Agency sponsored GWAC'S are multi-award requiring competition among the GWAC prime contract holders. However, if you are part of, or aligned with, an 8(a) firm or a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business, a speedy sole source acquisition may benefit all parties.

Agency management and contracting operations are always striving to meet their goals, so you invariably have "buy in" by some of the most important constituencies in the Agency – always a good thing, but of particular importance when you are attempting to greatly shorten the contracting cycle. Since this "buy in" exists there should be little problem in exempting the "buy" from the mandated contracting vehicle, such as an Agency-sponsored GWAC.

Simultaneously serve the interests of your client, agency management and the contracting office by using one of the instruments described above. You can aid your client in obtaining quick, clean contracting methods while serving the goals of all parties to the transaction. All it takes is a little education by you for the client.

Inside the Intel Community

By George Comnenoi and Duane Love, *Seneca Creek Consulting*

The Intelligence Community under the leadership of the United States Department of Defense developed a standard called 5200.28, The Trusted Computing System Evaluation Criteria (TCSEC). This became the "Orange Book" which defines functional requirements as well as assurance requirements. All systems had to meet these qualifications for a particular level of certifications. There were attempts to limit the functionality from assurance. And these attempts were the German Green Book, the Canadian Criteria, the Information Technology Security Evaluation Criteria (ITSEC), and the Federal Criteria (1992).

However, computer systems technology moved faster than certification programs. As technology moved faster, computers were networked which caused dedicated encryption not to be used, and emissions from copper wire had to be suppressed. Also, user access from many different systems without any central security control was causing invalidation on the total network. Thus security became a complex mix of different solutions.

These solutions consist of communication security (COMSEC), which is necessary to protect information in transit. Emission security (EMSEC) is needed when others have the resources to read electronic emissions from your computer. Computer security (COMPUSEC) is necessary to control access on a computer system. And network security (NETSEC) is security on your local network. All of these solutions together provide information security (INFOSEC).

Now the issue becomes certification of the total computer system. All products used by intelligence community must be certified. This leads to two problems:

- (1) Because of the pace of technology products become obsolete before they can be certified.
- (2) It is impossible to prove something is secure. One is trying to prove a system cannot be broken into. It becomes hard to prove the negative.

Therefore, not only in the Intelligence Community but all Federal Agencies must meet the annual certification process. Managers must ensure that all systems are documented and tested. This is becoming a compliance issue to which all agencies need help.

Procurement Spotlight

By Warren Corbett, *Set-Aside Alert*

DOD: Use GSA Schedules -- Properly

The Defense Department has emphasized that its buyers should not avoid GSA schedules and other non-DOD contracts, as long as they are used properly.

Deidre Lee, director of defense procurement and acquisition policy, issued a clarification of the department's guidance on the use of those contract vehicles following complaints from industry that some DOD contracting shops had shied away from them.

In a June 17 memo, Lee wrote that that some contracting personnel have "interpreted the October 29, 2004, memorandum as precluding the ability to utilize the services of 'Assisting Agencies' to meet DOD requirements. These interpretations are incorrect.

"As stated in the 'Proper Use of Non-DOD Contracts' policy memo, 'the use of non-DOD contracts is encouraged when it is the best method of procurement to meet DOD requirements.'"

The October policy memo established new reviews and procedures to ensure that buyers were complying with laws and regulations when they used the schedules and other non-DOD vehicles. That memo followed revelations of improprieties in GSA procurement practices. In one example, GSA's IT schedule was used to hire interrogators in Iraq. Lee has also cited instances when the IT schedule was used to fund construction of a building to house computers and to buy bumpers for a boat that carried a computer.

Since the DOD memo and the beginning of GSA's "Get It Right" campaign last year, GSA has reported that sales growth on the schedules had slowed from the double-digit growth rates recorded in recent years.

In recent appearances before contractor and federal employee groups, Lee has been underscoring her message that schedules and other non-DOD contracts are not off-limits. Speaking at the Federal Acquisition Conference and Expo in Washington June 8, she told an audience of several hundred acquisition professionals, "These are great tools. Let's use them properly...I'm not saying don't use the schedules."

Security Trends: Risk Identification Software

By Glenn Peterson, *Seneca Creek Consulting*

Most all computer users from preteens to professionals are routinely concerned about security on their PC's, Servers, and Enterprises. We run anti-spam software, create firewalls, use VPN's for secure communications, and we protect our enterprises with intrusion detection software. In short, we want to minimize the risks that make our systems vulnerable.

But what are we doing for risk assessment and risk mitigation for our physical assets? Modern security threats have made risk assessment and mitigation a necessity for every organization and agency. Have you adequately prepared for the threats you face today?

There are now new programs on the market to help assess an organization's or agency's risks. Several of these Risk Identification Software packages use a risk methodology to allow non-security professionals to perform a valuable risk assessment for security officers.

The typical risk methodology consists of extensive question sets. Typically over 1,000 to 1,500 questions need to be asked about physical and cyber-security. A combination of qualitative and quantitative rankings are used to compile the data. A qualitative approach is used to identify significant risks. A quantitative approach is used to identify losses and mitigation costs.

Risk mitigation is typically compiled into a ROI ranked report. Then decisions can be made to determine which policies needed to be implemented, which services are needed to be added, and what purchases need to be made for a cost effective solution. Other reports generated by these software packages provide potential loss information categorized by liability, replacement costs and mission impact.

In evaluating whether Risk Identification Software is appropriate for your organization or agency, look for flexibility. Every department within an agency will have different requirements. Therefore the software must be easily customized to each department requirements. Look for ease of use, the better packages use a "Turbo Tax" like questionnaire. The software should be web-based so that the surveys can be deployed using SSL on an Intranet or the Internet.

The benefit of using Risk Identification Software is that an organization or agency can identify areas that may or may not need further attention. Security officers will have a centralized secure database of vulnerability, threat and asset data from which a risk mitigation strategy can be quickly built. The comprehensive structured methodology used by most packages will insure that organizations and agencies have consistent survey responses, asset classifications, and threat assessments. What used to be unenforceable and unmanageable established policies can be broken down into small easy to understand steps with the use of a Risk Identification Software package.

Isn't it time that your organization or department implements Risk Identification Software?

Partner Corner

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