



Successful Selling to the Government

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Back to Basics: Power Down Your PowerPoint

By Tom Basile, *Seneca Creek Consulting*

What is the number one rule when going on a sales call? Know your prospective customer... Yes, that is important and you should not be making the sales call if you don't know your prospective customer's business and perceived challenges. The number one rule is to **listen**. You can learn a lot from just listening. Ask probing questions based on your knowledge of their business and then listen.

A common mistake sales people make is not letting the prospect talk. New, as well as seasoned sales people, feel compelled to talk in the sales setting. They are so excited about their company and its solutions that they just have to share it with anyone showing any degree of interest. Guess what; most prospects are not the least bit interested in your company or what your company is doing.

They get many calls a week from other companies just like yours. Don't act like everyone else by pulling out the company brochure and PowerPoint pitch. You know what I mean, the 20 to 30 slides that tell a prospect everything they ever wanted to know about your company except the most important thing - how you are going to help them solve their pressing problem? PowerPoint presentations are often perceived by the listener as lectures or monologues rather than dialog.

How do you know what their problems are, you ask? Well, you must do extensive homework on the prospect's organization and needs. Even with extensive homework a problem may not surface. That is where the listening comes in. Ask an intelligent question based on your understanding of their business, stop talking and listen. Lo and behold, you might get the prospect to surface a problem or two. Now the prospect has opened the door for you to seize the moment.

If you have a solution, then focus on the problem at hand. If you don't, then ask more probing questions or end the call. Do not waste your prospects time or your own.

The GSA Corner: Contractor Assistance Visits

By Deborah Wolland, *The JDS Marketing Group*

You are probably noticing an increase in on-site visits from your Industrial Operations Analysts (IOA's) as they are now tasked with creating Contractor Administrative Report Cards. The following is a list of the questions the IOA's are required to complete along with some general information you may have to provide:

1. Based on a sample of orders, is the contractor delivering on time an average of 95% or greater of the time?
 - May be required to supply 12 months of Schedule orders with order dates and shipping dates.
2. If there are teaming arrangements, do these arrangements address how customer service and warranty issues will be resolved?
 - Written teaming agreements will be reviewed.

3. If the contractor has entered into BPAs, have they offered additional discounts?
 - Review BPAs
4. Is the contractor honoring the warranty provisions of the contract?
 - Invoice Review
5. Are warranty claims being handled promptly and efficiently?
6. Did the contractor demonstrate compliance with the Trade Agreements Act?
 - IOA will ask about internal control systems to ensure procedures are in place.
7. Did the contractor demonstrate that they comply with the scope of their contract?
 - IOA will review a list of all orders issued to determine that the scope falls under the correct Schedule contract.
8. If there are participating dealers, are the dealers listed and current in the contract?
9. Is the Contractor complying with the Billing Responsibilities Clause G-FSS-913?
 - The IOA will review the internal accounting system?
10. Is the price list being used by the contractor the current approved pricelist?
11. Is the Contractor complying with the Economic Price Adjustment Clause of the Contract?
12. Is the contractor being proactive in proposing to add and/or delete items from the contract?
13. Prices as listed in GSA Advantage. Match those on the current approved price list or GSA Advantage. Updates in progress?
14. Is the contractor free from bankruptcy proceedings?
15. Has the contractor made arrangements to accept payment by the purchase card?
16. Does the contractor accept purchase card payments for orders above the micro-purchase threshold?
17. In the most recent period of the contract, not to exceed 5 years, are the contractor's Report of Sales 90% or greater, on time?
18. If there are dealers, are the dealer sales being collected in the contractor's system and included in the 72A report?
19. FIOA will review dealer monthly sales reports.
20. For the past period of the contract not exceeding 5 years, has the contractor submitted the IFF 90% or greater, on time?
21. Has the contractor complied with Change of Name and/or Novation Agreement requirement?
22. Is the contractor registered with the CCR?
23. Is the basic contract load information correct (Advantage!)?
24. Are the 72A records located where the contractor says they are?

25. Determine which IOA from which regional office is assigned to the contractor.
26. If a Commercial or Individual Subcontracting Plan is required, did the contractor meet the goals specified in the Commercial Plan or is the contractor progressing toward meeting the goals specified in the Individual Subcontracting Plan?
27. Are the DUNs Numbers correct?
28. Is the contractor's contact for contract administration information (address, phone, fax, e-mail) correct?

Federal Opportunities

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

Planning Ahead for an Automated Decennial Census

The Bureau of the Census is already actively preparing for the most automated decennial census ever in 2010. The proposed 2006 Census budget shows significant planned investments in systems design, integration, and modernization. The largest line item in the FY06 budget (\$93.9 million) is described as "an integrated set of tasks oriented towards developing an IT architecture that enables the Bureau to conduct a reengineered short-form-only Census in 2010 that mitigates risk, produces more accurate and complete data, and contains costs."

Thus far, the Bureau has indicated its intention to solicit contractor support for –

- Consolidated BlackBerry handheld device services for 500,000+ Census workers (Acquisition Strategy being developed)
- Development of an integrated dissemination system (IDS) to serve as a single point of public access to all Census data and data products (RFP expected Q2 FY2006)
- Continued development and maintenance of the Puerto Rico Master Address File (RFP expected in FY2006)
- Modernization of the Computer Assisted Interviewing Mobile Computing Polling system (conducting market research; plan to have new system fielded by late 2007/early 2008)
- Development and implementation of the Field Data Collection Automation (FDCA) Program (RFP expected in June 2005)

The RFP for the FDCA Program will most likely be the first solicitation to be released. FDCA will use automation to directly capture information collected during personal interviews and eliminate the need for paper maps, address lists, and questionnaires used in previous censuses. The five major elements of the program are Field Systems Integration and Services Management; Data Collection and Administrative Software Applications; Field Office Automation Equipment; Mobile Computing Equipment; and Automation Support Services.

These Bureau activities provide a wide range of opportunities for contractors that will most likely continue to expand in the next few years leading up to the Census.

For more information on these and other opportunities to win government IT contracts, please contact Peggy Seefried at SeefriedP@fedsources.com or 703.610.8781.

How Do I Start My Federal Sales Efforts?

By Peter Adler, *Seneca Creek Consulting*

Selling to the Government is a difficult task for those companies new to the Federal market. This is particularly true for a company with no federal experience or contacts. Many companies and salespersons, in their first attempts to develop federal business do not fully understand the need for, and the sources of, high-quality market research.

Several sources are readily available to the new, as well as the experienced, Federal sales and marketing organizations. Prominent among these is FedBizOpps, Carroll Publishing, Set-Aside Alert. Fed Sources and INPUT, Inc. One must proceed at their own peril if they ignore these valuable and omnipresent resources.

The very first question to ask is: "Who buys what?" Without the use of resources such as those mentioned in this piece beyond one's own tenacity, the answer is long and hard in coming, if at all. We start by searching all of the above-mentioned resources for those opportunities that are within our NAICS or SIC codes, where the place of performance is within our reach, and security clearance requirements are within our purview, along with other criteria you elect to use.

Once we have identified Government programs, along with forecast solicitations we start calling on all parties potentially involved in the acquisition process either as a buyer or another contractor. The names and contact information for these personnel are commonly listed in the pre-solicitation notices in FedBizOpps, along with most of the Government market research data stores.

We seek out Government Program Management that is ultimately the end-user of our products or solutions. Alternatively, we may choose to meet with established system integrators who either have, or are likely to have, involvement in the targeted procurement.

Given the myriad sources of valuable information and the means to access it rapidly via the Internet, makes this intelligence gathering phase an absolutely essential first step in approaching the Government markets. Absent the use of these tools, an enterprise is simply playing an expensive version of "pin the tail on the donkey" in approaching the huge and disparate Government markets.

Inside the Intel Community

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

The US Intelligence Community (IC) consists of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI). This group will oversee parts of 15 different agencies, including the CIA, the National Security Agency (NSA), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), the counter-intelligence, crypto logic, and some of the foreign intelligence elements of the military services (army, navy, air force, and Marine Corps intelligence), and the foreign intelligence and/or counter-intelligence elements of the FBI, the Coast Guard, and the Departments of Energy, Homeland Security, and State.

The Director of National Intelligence (DNI) is a cabinet member. He oversees the IC and works closely with the chairman of the National Intelligence Council (NIC). The DNI also oversees a number of specialized centers, such as the Counterterrorist Center (CTC) and the Center for Weapons Intelligence, Nonproliferation, and Arms Control (WINPAC). The NIC oversees IC production and analysis, including National Intelligence Estimates, the most authoritative written judgments of the Intelligence Community.

To work in the Intelligence Community, one must know some of the following acronyms:

ACTD: Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration.

ADCI: Assistant Director of Central Intelligence

C4I: command, control, communication, computer, and intelligence.

COMINT: communications intelligence.

CIALink: Classified computer intranet at CIA headquarters.

CERT: Computer Emergency Response Team

COMSEC: communication security

DARPA: Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

DODIIS: Department of Defense Intelligence Information System.

DEFCON: Defense Readiness Condition.

DEFCON 1: General Alert, Maximum Force Readiness.

DEFCON 2: Reinforced Alert.

DEFCON 3: Simple Alert, Increased Force Readiness.

DEFCON 4: Military Vigilance, Increased Intelligence Collection.

DEFCON 5: Normal Readiness.

In subsequent articles, we will cover in detail what these organizations and terms may mean to your efforts to work with the Intelligence Community. It is a multi-faceted and, at times, a confusing labyrinth that must be navigated successfully to have any type of substantial business arrangement with any of the facets in this community.

Procurement Spotlight

By Warren Corbett, *Set-Aside Alert*

Congress Blocks Energy Contracting Change

A House-Senate conference committee blocked an attempt to allow the Energy Department to count subcontracts as prime contracts, but directed SBA and Energy to study the matter and adopted language designed to discourage other agencies from asking for the same treatment.

Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM) had sponsored an amendment allowing the change in an effort to protect his home-state contractors at Los Alamos and Sandia national laboratories. After the conference committee dropped his amendment to the \$82 billion supplemental appropriations bill, the House approved the bill with new language on May 5. It was awaiting a Senate vote at press time and is expected to pass because of the urgent need for money to fund military action in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The conference committee crafted language ordering a study of whether the department should establish "a procurement agency relationship" with its large management and operating contractors, according to a joint statement by House Small Business Committee Chairman Donald Manzullo (R-IL) and Senate Small Business Committee Chair Olympia Snowe (R-ME). That would mean the management contractors' subcontracts could be counted as prime contracts.

The legislation directs the department and SBA to jointly study ways "to encourage new opportunities for small businesses to increase their role as prime contractors," and report to Congress before making any changes. Energy is required to negotiate an agreement with SBA on how to report small-business prime contracts and subcontracts. SBA has opposed allowing subcontracts to be counted as primes.

In their statement, Manzullo and Snowe said, "This replacement language does not change the Small Business Act's clear distinction between prime contracts and subcontracts, does not amend the statutory small business prime contracting goal requirements which are binding on the Department of Energy, and does not obviate Congressional and regulatory policies against contract bundling."

The language appears designed to allay fears that other agencies would push to count subcontracts as well as prime contracts toward their small-business procurement goals. No other agency spends as much of its money on large management contracts as Energy does.

Because about 90% of its budget goes to those management contracts, Energy has long been the government's poorest performer in small-business contracting. It awarded only about 4% of its prime contract dollars to small firms in fiscal 2003, but it estimates that about half of its subcontracts go to small businesses. Energy had been allowed to count subcontracts as prime contracts until 2000, when the Office of Management and Budget ordered the department to abide by the same rules as everybody else.

The bill directs the department to determine whether some of its large contracts can be unbundled to create opportunities for small businesses. It instructs the department to consider whether to require "a local presence for small business subcontractors." That language provides some protection for Domenici's constituents, who were afraid of competition from firms outside New Mexico.

Partner Corner

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