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The Guide to Attracting and Keeping Great Clients

FedBizOpps: The Gift that Keeps on Giving

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FEDBIZOPPS: THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

Firms that are active in the federal market — or aspire to be — should regularly review the “Federal Business Opportunities” web site (www.fedbizopps.gov). This is where federal agencies and departments announce many competitions for contracts that exceed \$25,000 in value.

But too often, firms use FedBizOpps for a singular purpose. They perform pinpointed searches for competitions for contracts that are perfect fits for their firms.

To be sure, you should use FedBizOpps for this purpose, and it offers powerful tools to do so. You can search by date, subject matter, geographic region, type of procurement (e.g., you can limit your search to procurements that are set aside for small business firms), and other criteria. You can create customized “search agents,” store and update results of searches, and so forth. (cont. on page 3)

FedBizOpps: The Gift That Keeps On Giving (cont.)

I encourage my clients to use FedBizOpps for other purposes as well, using broader search strategies and objectives. Here's a rundown:

1. Get over-the-horizon hints about future potential procurements. Use FedBizOpps to search out "Special Notices" that often are not tied to specific upcoming procurements. For example, take a look at requests for statements of interest from small business sources, even if your firm is large. These documents are often the first hint of a procurement that might be a year or so away. That's perfect for firms who understand an iron law of federal marketing: those who aggressively (and legally) seek out advance information about future procurements have a huge advantage in developing a winning strategy.

Other examples of special notices include announcements of business fairs sponsored by a particular agency, draft statements of work for upcoming procurement; and the availability of acquisition forecasts — long-term views of the types of procurements planned for the future.

2. Do research on federal buyers. FedBizOpps can be part of your overall market research program. Which federal agencies are procuring services of the type you offer? What are the roles of these organizations' different divisions, branches, or regional offices? Which of them appear to be most active in contracting? FedBizOpps can be a useful starting place for performing this research, especially if you seek out announcements and special notices using relatively broad search criteria.

3. Identify networking opportunities among federal buyers. FedBizOpps can be a source of names, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses of federal contracting officers and other federal staff members in federal agencies of potential interest to your firm. Networking is tough. View FedBizOpps as one tool for finding new points of entry into an agency.

4. Identify competitors and potential teaming partners. Many FedBizOpps announcements will list other companies that have expressed an interest in a particular contract competition. Go to a site such as www.fedspending.org and mine for additional information about these firms. Which

federal contracts have these firms won in the past? With which federal agencies, and which specific branches or divisions? How large were these contracts? Whether you are researching another firm on a competitive basis or are interested in forming teaming partnerships (or both), this type of research can be quite valuable.

5. Find not-so-obvious subcontracting opportunities. FedBizOpps classifies some procurements too narrowly. While an upcoming contract might require dozens of different disciplines, the procurement might be classified in FedBizOpps with respect to one or two of them. If your search criteria are too pinpointed, you simply will not see these opportunities. Set your search criteria broadly, especially if your firm provides specialty services.

And if you are a small firm, don't restrict your search to small business set-aside competitions. Your major opportunities for subcontracting opportunities will be for large contracts, and these are usually procured on a "full and open" basis.

6. Let FedBizOpps help you help others. While networking among colleagues in other firms can yield valuable market intelligence, it rarely works if you are always on the asking end. FedBizOpps can help. For example, you might stumble across a "Special Notice" that turns out not to be of particular relevance to you, but which might be of intense interest to a colleague in another firm. This can be a valuable chit in the give-and-take of the process of sharing marketing intelligence with others.

Regularly reviewing FedBizOpps can be tedious, but if you define a broad set of objectives the time investment will yield better and more frequent results. By the way, you can subscribe to services which, for a fee, will scour FedBizOpps for you, in accordance with your criteria, and will deliver the results to your e-mail inbox every day. But even if you take this path, you need to be creative in specifying the search criteria, to ensure that you are obtaining optimal value.

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