

FYI For Your Information

September 2004

As the Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center continues to make an economic impact on Michigan's small businesses through counseling, training and research, the staff members have carefully researched educational products to fit the increasingly complex needs of small business. Their trainings focus on building a business plan, fiscal management and strategic positioning. Among these are:

Strategic Needs Assessment

This assessment helps small business owners and managers identify priorities and action strategies to evaluate a company in areas such as management vision, finance, marketing, human resources, operations and information technology.

Strategic Problem Solving

The Implications Wheel® by Joel Barker is a decision-enhancing tool to help organizations identify and evaluate short- and long-term implications of making a specific decision or change. The Implications Wheel® identifies potential unseen consequences of initiating a new policy, introducing a new product or implementing a major change. The systematic and graphic process provides a structured tool that yields valuable information about the potential outcomes of a decision.

Strategic Planning

The Strategy Matrix® is another simple, group-facilitated discussion process that allows a business to evaluate proposed strategic initiatives against current goals, and the key characteristics and culture of an organization. It is a quantitative tool, exploring the impacts of internal and external events on an organization's strategic goals. The Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center network provides Strategy Matrix® trainings statewide.

Fiscal Fitness

FIT™ 2000 takes up where accounting packages leave off. It is not accounting software, but a financial analysis tool that provides fiscal checkups while comparing a business to industry norms. FIT™ 2000 takes financial statements and turns them into decision-making tools.

The program computes ratio analysis, break-even and growth analysis, and cash budget projections for small businesses,

allowing them to manage a balance sheet for improved profitability and efficiency. The MI-SBTDC network provides FIT™ trainings statewide. Contact your local MI-SBTDC office for training schedules.

Marketing Upgrade

The Marketing Budget provides small businesses with a tool to determine a company's marketing mix, monthly marketing expenditures, and a credible method for projecting company revenue by month. The tool consists of a CD with a spreadsheet and walk-through presentation, and a book of instructions and case studies.

Market Research

The underlying success for a business is information—including the size and characteristics of an industry, the marketplace, competition, foreign trade, and customer demographics. In addition to local resources, the MI-SBTDC statewide network provides a full range of information services through the Seidman School of Business at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids.

NxLevel™

NxLevel™ is a concise, affordable tool that enables a new or existing business to develop a business plan or strengthen its operations. The 10- to 12-week program is offered through a multi-state network of non-profit organizations including the Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center and is conducted by MI-SBTDC consultants and prominent local business leaders. All NxLevel™ programs revolve around participants and their specific needs. Graduates of the training program leave with not only the benefit of sound business training, but also a comprehensive business plan to act as a roadmap for future business endeavors.

Continued on page 2



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Continued from page 1

Venture Forward

Growth companies are challenged with many issues. Preparing for alternative financing and having a complete business plan is imperative for a company's success. Develop a comprehensive business plan, learn what investors want to see, network with other high growth companies, and receive personal feedback from investors.

Class Projects

Local hosts can provide long- and short-term project assistance, via student support. Such projects include Web site assessment and marketing campaign assistance. Contact your local MI-SBTDC for details. *Service is not provided at all locations.*

How to Start a Small Business: From Vision to Reality

September 1, October 13,
November 10 or December 8, 2004
9:30 a.m.–Noon

September 15, September 29,
October 27, or November 17, 2004
6–8:30 p.m.

\$25 per person

A two and one half-hour seminar designed for those interested in learning a practical step-by-step process for starting a new business. The session will provide participants with a network and resources to use when questions arise.

How to Write a Business Plan: Your Road Map to Success

October 20, 2004
9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

September 8, November 17, or
December 15, 2004
6–9 p.m.

\$40 per person

This one-time seminar provides an overview of what is included in a dynamic business plan. It is designed for new and existing business owners who do not currently have a business plan in place. You will receive worksheets that outline the basic items in a business plan, allowing you to complete the plan on your own.

QuickBooks® Basics: A Fast Start to Setting up Your Accounting System

September, TBA
6–9 p.m.
\$60 per person

A training session designed to give participants a hands-on learning experience setting up and using QuickBooks® to help small businesses organize business-critical customer data more efficiently, intelligently and profitably.

How to Grow Your Business: Effective Marketing Techniques for Small Businesses

September 30, October 21, or
November 18, 2004
6–9 p.m.
\$40 per person

This three-hour seminar provides a comprehensive guide to *re-evaluating* your product or service and how to price, promote and distribute it effectively. The seminar is designed for new and existing business owners who want to get an edge on the competition and successfully compete in the marketplace. Participants learn how to identify and retain the right customers, as well as how to develop a winning annual marketing plan with supporting budget.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED for all seminars

For more information contact the Business Development Center at
734-462-4438 or inforeq@schoolcraft.edu

Watch your mailbox for additional seminar details or log onto our Web site
<http://www.schoolcraft.edu/bdc/seminars.htm>

What Does the Schoolcraft College PTAC Have to Offer You?

Bid Match

The Schoolcraft College PTAC's Bid Match subscription provides solicitation notices for the products and services your company wishes to sell to the government. This service scans a variety of federal, local and state government agency and international procurement postings to provide a report specific to your company's products and services. BidMatch is \$300 per year. However, we offer a one-month trial so you may evaluate its usefulness prior to purchase.

Individual Business Counseling/Assistance

One of Schoolcraft College PTAC's most requested services, one-on-one-counseling, provides an opportunity to address specific client issues. These include applications and registrations, marketing strategies, bid preparation assistance, subcontracting opportunities, pre-award survey preparation, quality requirements, contract modifications, electronic commerce and troubleshooting.

Procurement History

(NSN, Part #, CAGE reports)

Our Federal Logistics Information System database provides military procurement history and technical data, if available, on National Stock Numbers, Part Numbers and CAGE codes. Reports will be provided to clients within 24 hours.

Requests may be submitted via:
Phone 734-462-4438 or
e-mail inforeq@schoolcraft.edu

Resource Library

Our resource library contains educational publications and books on government contracting issues. In addition, it is a Small Business and Technology Development Center Business Resource Center. The BRC offers the latest computer technology, hardware and software, and an extensive small business reference library of hard copy books and publications. Please call ahead for business hours.

Specifications

The Schoolcraft College PTAC has access to specifications that frequently are used by customers. Our collection consists of military specifications/standards and industry specifications/standards, available at \$1 per page. We pride ourselves on delivering specifications in a timely manner. The specifications available through the PTAC include military standards, (MIL, MIL STD, MIL HDBK, DOD STD, FED STD, MS, QQQ, and PPP) and DOD-adopted industry standards, including ASTM, SAE, SAE AMS and AIA/NAS documents. For additional information on obtaining these documents, please call 734-462-4438 or e-mail inforeq@schoolcraft.edu

Training Seminars/Workshops

The Schoolcraft College PTAC frequently offers training seminars to assist companies in becoming savvy in the government contracting arena. We constantly develop new training programs and always want to know your training needs and interests. To view information on our currently scheduled events, visit the following Web site: <http://www.schoolcraft.edu/bdc/seminars.htm#government>.

Debriefing

Learn the Rationale for Contract Award Decisions: Request a Debriefing

Federal statutes and regulations provide unsuccessful competitors/offers in federally negotiated procurements the right to a debriefing from the contracting agency. Debriefings are not required when sealed bidding procedures are used.

What Is A Debriefing?

A debriefing is a formal meeting between government personnel and an offeror (usually the unsuccessful offeror) for a particular procurement, to explain the rationale for the contract award decision. The debriefing normally occurs after the gov-

ernment has awarded a contract (FAR 15.506) for that procurement. However, a debriefing may, in some instances, be conducted prior to award (FAR 15.505). The government can give a debriefing to either the successful or unsuccessful offerors.

Debriefings may be conducted orally, in person or by telephone, in writing, or by any other method acceptable to the contracting officer.

The Purpose of a Debriefing

Debriefings serve a number of important purposes in the acquisition process. Considerable time and money are invested in preparing and

Continued from page 3

submitting a proposal. By explaining the rationale for the award decision, unsuccessful offerors may understand and accept the reasons for the government's choice—and, as a result, feel they have been treated fairly.

By learning the deficiencies in the proposal, an unsuccessful offeror may avoid repeating the same mistakes in future proposals. Ultimately, the government may broaden the field of competition and obtain better offers.

What a Debriefing is Not

A debriefing will not provide information related to the number or identity of offerors, or a page-by-page analysis of either the successful or unsuccessful offeror's proposals. Nor will the government provide a point-by-point comparison between the successful and unsuccessful offeror's proposals. Finally, the debriefing will not serve as

a platform to debate or defend the government's award decision or evaluation results.

Time is of the Essence

There are two critical requirements when requesting a debriefing. First, the debriefing request must be in writing. Secondly, the debriefing request must be received by the agency within three calendar days after the date on which the offeror receives notification of exclusion from the competition or award. Because timing is key in terms of the regulations, it is important to check the latest rules and revisions regarding the following: a) the date notice was received by the offeror, b) the date request was written, and c) the date it was received by the agency.

For More Information

Call your local PTAC counselor if you have questions about this or any other procurement related issue.

Article provided by the Louisiana Procurement Technical Assistance Center <http://www.la-ptac.org/>

Registration Assistance for Government Contractors

September 30, October 14 or
November 11, 2004
9 a.m.–noon
\$15 per person

Procurement Technical Assistance Center clients looking for assistance to complete their Central Contractor Registration, State of Michigan Vendor Registration, or other online registration are invited to attend this workshop. Counselors will be available to help clients understand and complete their registrations, using our computer lab.

Defending Our Nation is Everyone's Business

October 18, 2004
9 a.m.–4 p.m.
\$60 per person pre-payment required

An all-day seminar aimed at small businesses currently selling or exploring the capability of selling to the government. The following agencies and topics will be included:

- Defense Logistics Agency Buying Centers
- Department of Homeland Security
- Veterans Administration
- DOD EMall
- Legal issues with partnering and joint ventures

How to Become a Government Contractor

October 7, or November 4, 2004
9 a.m.–1 p.m.
\$40 per person

What does it take to be a successful government contractor? What services and resources are available to a small business pursuing the government market? If your company has been considering government contracting, this seminar will give you the insight you have been seeking.

Did you know the federal government purchases more than \$250 billion of goods and services a year? Find out what it takes to successfully sell your goods and services to the federal government and the State of Michigan. In addition, learn about the services and continuous support the Procurement Technical Assistance Center has available to help your company with the contracting process.

Proposal Writing Seminar

November 2004
Details TBD

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED for all seminars

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the Business Development Center at
734-462-4438 or inforeq@schoolcraft.edu

Government Contractors Need a Compliance Program

By George W. Ash

Recent reforms to government procurement regulations have made doing business with the government easier and more rewarding. However, one aspect of contracting that remains particularly demanding is compliance. Contracting with the government is different because only the government can enforce its requirements using the nation's criminal code and, with its limitless resources, can pursue its other contractual remedies without concern of cost or resources.

Anyone doing business with the government needs to think compliance, and have a compliance program. For most, it does not have to be elaborate or expensive—just tailored to your particular needs and implemented in a meaningful way. Here are some ideas on how to avoid trouble and get the most from your compliance program.

Comply with what?

Good question. It starts with reading your contract to see what you have agreed to do. There are numerous compliance related clauses in government contracts concerning such things as procurement integrity, kickbacks, independent pricing, drug free workplace and contingent fees. Many of these clauses require a written policy or plan. If you don't read the clause to see what is required, your chances of complying are slim.

In addition to requirements in clauses, there are other basic features that should not go without mention. First, be honest and truthful with the government – even when it hurts. Contractors are frequently in trouble because over zealous

employees tell the government what they think it wants to hear, or what they think they must say to get an item accepted, even when they know what they are saying (or signing) is not true. It is just as bad when they really do not know, and do not make an effort to find out, whether it is true or not.

An effective compliance program trains and educates employees on the company's expectation of truthfulness creating a culture of compliance, and gives employees a resource to find out how to get questions answered. It should include the designation of a compliance officer and function in conjunction with the code of ethics.

An effective compliance program works to avoid violations, but just as importantly, acts to mitigate the action taken against a contractor when the inevitable mistake is made. If you can demonstrate that you have taken your compliance obligations seriously and made the effort to properly train your personnel, you will be given the benefit of the doubt in what action the government takes.

Courts are fond of saying government contractors are expected to “turn square corners” when performing government contracts. A compliance program is an effective tool in meeting that requirement.

George W. Ash is a member of the law firm of Foley & Lardner LLP in Detroit, where he specializes in government procurement issues. He may be reached at 313-442-6434.

Note: This update provides information of general interest presented in summary form, and does not constitute individual legal advice.

Radio Frequency Identification Devices Seminar

October 19, 2004
Gaylord, Michigan
Contact: Deb Donovan 231-929-5076

October 21, 2004
Romulus, Michigan
Contact: Loretta Cannon 313-362-3442

October 20, 2004
Flint, Michigan
Contact: Nell Taylor 810-238-3288

October 22, 2004
Grand Rapids, Michigan
Contact: Pam Vanderlaan 313-722-7700

Attention all federal contractors. All new federal government solicitations for materials issued after October 1, 2004 for delivery on or after January 1, 2005 will contain a requirement for passive Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID) tagging at the case, pallet (2nd level packaging) and UID item packaging level in accordance with an appropriate Defense Federal Acquisition

Regulation Rule/Clause. RFID is a generic term for technologies that use radio waves to automatically identify tagged items. The PTACs of Michigan are hosting a seminar at four locations throughout the state to educate government contractors on how to become capable of fulfilling this new requirement.

Upcoming Seminars and Events

Financing Growth Roundtable

September 22, 2004
9–11 a.m.
No admission charge

TEAM SBA debunks the myths and demystifies the process of bank financing—in plain English. You will learn how your loan application will be analyzed, what underwriting criteria are used, and how banking regulations affect the decision. We will answer your questions based upon your business model. Over the last five years, TEAM SBA has helped hundreds of entrepreneurs gain a better understanding of the financing process. To help you, we require that you have good credit, a solid business idea, and money to invest in your business.

Certified: Woman Business Enterprise

October 20 or December 15, 2004
9–11 a.m.
\$25 per person

The Michigan Women's Business Council invites women business owners to learn what it means to be certified as a Women's Business Enterprise. If you have a product or service that you would like to market to American corporations, here's your chance to explore certification. The Michigan Women's Business Council is a program of the Center for Empowerment and Economic Development, an SBA Women's Business Center.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED for all seminars

For more information contact the Business Development Center at
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