Networking Strategies for GACO Procurement Fair

The GACO Procurement Fair is just around the corner and attendees should have a good networking strategy in place to get the most out of this event. Networking is a key activity for business development. Through networking events you have the potential to gain from the knowledge and experience of others, promote your business and attain new clients. In this newsletter we are providing information on the GACO Procurement Opportunities Fair and suggesting marketing strategies that will be helpful not only at this event but at any networking event you attend.

GACO Procurement Opportunities Fair

On October 13, 2015 GACO will sponsor the 28th Annual Procurement Opportunities Fair at the DoubleTree, Mars, PA. This is an excellent chance for businesses to network with government agencies and prime contractors seeking to identify potential vendors and suppliers. A number of government agencies, major corporations and local purchasing representatives will participate in this fair. As of October 1 some of the agencies and organizations participating include DLA Land and Maritime, 911th Air Force Reserve, US Department of Transportation, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Pittsburgh Public Schools, Walsh Granite, Bechtel Plant and Rand Corporation. To register for the fair access http://www.calu.edu/business-community/government-agency-coordination-office/gaco-calendarevents/gaco-events/procurement-fair/index.jsp.

In addition to the networking component, two training seminars will be held. A brief description of each follows:

DLA Internet Bid Board System (DIBBS)

The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) is the Department of Defense's (DoD's) largest combat support agency and provides the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, other federal agencies and allied forces with a full spectrum of logistics, acquisition and technical services. Through DIBBS, DLA purchases goods and services under the simplified acquisition threshold of $150,000. DIBBS is a web-based application that provides the capability to search for and view Request for Quotes (RFQ’s), Request for Proposals (RFP’s), Invitation for Bid’s (IFB’s) and Awards for DLA items of supply. Bid submittals for RFQ's are also done through the DIBBS site.

The presentation will cover these topics: Accessing DIBBS, What is on DIBBS, Registration, DIBBS Solicitation Search, Obtaining Technical Data through cFolders and Quoting through DIBBS.

Doing Business with the Commonwealth of PA

Throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania there are many purchasing agencies that procure products and services. The Department of General Services (DGS) establishes policies and procedures for the procurement of supplies and services for most of these agencies. The Department’s Bureau of Procurement is the purchasing agency for statewide requirements contracts, purchase orders for supplies in excess of $20,000 and for services in excess of $250,000. All bidding opportunities (in excess of $10,000) for supplies and services for Commonwealth agencies are advertised at the Department of General Services web site while other bidding opportunities can be found by contacting an agency’s procurement office. At this session attendees will gain information on how to sell their products or services to the Commonwealth.
Networking Tips

How do you get the most benefit out of attending the Procurement Fair? Remember the goal of any networking event is to make a real connection, not just collect business cards. Business comes from relationships which take time, patience and nurturing. Before attending the fair review the confirmed exhibitors list and do some basic preliminary research on the fair participants. To review the list of confirmed exhibitors click here. Below are a few additional suggestions to prepare for the event and follow-up after the fair.

Prepare a Capability Statement

When you market to government buyers and prime contractors you need to present a capability statement. The capability statement is a summary highlighting your company's overall experience, expertise, resources, and specific services or products you provide. The statement should explain who you are, what you do and why an organization should choose your company. It is a factual presentation of your company tailored to your audience and should be changed often to present your company's relevant skills. Successful firms use their capability statement for a number of purposes: as a requirement for Sources Sought notice and Request for Information, as a door-opener to new agencies, as proof of qualification, and as proof of past performance. The format of your statement is individualized but all capability statements should contain five key areas:

1. Core Competencies - What are your company's skills and expertise
2. Differentiators - What makes you different from the competition
3. Past Performance - How your experience translates to government procurement or what is your government experience
4. Corporate Data - What is your DUNS number, CAGE Code, NAICS Codes, Business size or certifications
5. Contact Information - Where can you be reached, including website

If you need an example of a capability statement contact your GACO/GCAC office and we will provide you a sample.

Follow Up

Once the event is over and you have made the initial introduction, take the time to follow up with your new contacts.

• Use Your Exhibitors Directory - Send emails or make phone calls to follow up with the exhibitors that you met at the event. You may want to schedule an appointment to meet one-on-one. For those that you were not able to meet, do your research to determine if they purchase your products/services and if so, contact them to introduce your company.

• Tailor Your Capability Statement - Now that you know more about an agency or prime contractor adjust your capability statement to meet their needs and send updated statement to the appropriate point of contact.

• Use Your Attendee List - Other businesses that attended this event may be potential customers or good teaming/joint venture candidates. Contact the businesses that fit into these categories.

• Be generous about sharing referrals and leads to non-competitors - Did you meet someone at this event that would be a perfect contact for a colleague? Do you know a company who is a perfect fit for an agency or prime you met? By sharing this information you'll be remembered for your help which can lead to business or referrals in the future.

• Become an Active GACO/GCAC Client - If you are not using GACO/GCAC services or if you have an inactive bid matching profile you may want to consider becoming an active GACO/GCAC client. We provide assistance to help you determine which agencies purchase your products/services and provide guidance on how to market to them. New clients can sign up on-line at http://cupgaco.ecenterdirect.com/Welcome.action.