



Marketing to the Federal Government

A research guide for small
business federal contractors

WHITE PAPER



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Executive Summary:

The differences between marketing to the federal government and the private sector

When it comes to marketing to the federal government, small businesses need to understand that their approach must be different from marketing to the private sector. While a commercial business and a government buyer may need the same item, their approach is very different.

In the private sector, marketing is often about creating a need or desire for a product or service, generating interest and demand through advertising, promotions, and other activities. In contrast, marketing to the federal government generally means selling to a specific set of customers who have specific needs, requirements, and budgets.

In the government world, your "market" is a single customer or a small number of customers who are specifying what they want from you. There are few salespeople, and little "typical" marketing is required. Most businesses that deal with the government don't do much in the way of marketing as defined in the commercial world.

The term "marketing" is a common term but its meaning in the government world is very different from the commercial world. In the government world, selling is the primary objective of marketing. It's not about generating demand, but about responding to specific customer needs and providing solutions that meet those needs. Government buyers, on the other hand, buy the product, not the process.

To successfully market to the federal government, small businesses must understand the differences between marketing to the private sector and the government, and prepare to market accordingly. They need to shift their focus from generating demand to meeting specific customer needs, and be prepared to adapt their products and services to the government's unique requirements. By doing so, they can increase their ability to win business and be successful in the government contracting arena.



Executive Summary:

Importance of targeting internal customers within the agency

When it comes to marketing to the federal government, the approach is very different from the private sector. Unlike commercial businesses, the government operates differently and has a much more structured buying process. In the government world, the term "marketing" is more closely aligned with "selling" and the focus is on understanding the needs of a single or a small number of customers who are specifying what they want from you.

Most of your marketing plan should include targeting the internal customers within the agency and aligning your business' solution to the government's needs. This approach will increase your chances of winning business with the federal government.

In this chapter, we'll discuss the importance of targeting internal customers within the agency and how it can help you achieve success in the federal marketplace.

Understanding the Internal Customers

In the government world, there are three types of customers: Procurers, Influencers, and End Users. These customers are the key decision-makers in the buying process and can influence the success of your marketing efforts.

Procurers are the "gate-keepers" to the program managers and end users. Although program managers know what they want, contracting specialists help them get the needed materials/services and give advice on the best way to get those services. The contracting officers/specialists are key customers because of their influence over the project manager/end user and their responsibility for selecting the contracting method.



Executive Summary:

Importance of targeting internal customers within the agency (cont.)

Influencers are individuals who generate the contracting requirement or are responsible for facilitating its execution. These individuals may exercise influence over an individual contracting or organization-wide contracting policy but do not conduct the contracting process itself.

End users are the staff who use your service/product. They do not care how they get the contractor; they want the quickest mechanism to get the contractor. End users often have input in selecting the contractor and can be a key contact in the working relationship with the contractor.

Why Target Internal Customers?

By targeting internal customers within the agency, you are essentially focusing on those who are in the best position to understand the government's needs and requirements. These customers have a direct role in specifying the type of solution required and can provide valuable insights into the government's needs.

When you target internal customers, you're also more likely to build relationships and partnerships that can be beneficial for future business opportunities. By working with internal customers, you can develop a better understanding of the agency's needs and how your business can provide solutions to meet those needs.

Additionally, targeting internal customers can increase your chances of winning contracts that are not publicly posted on sites like SAM.gov. These contracts are often awarded through personal relationships, and by building connections with internal customers, you can position yourself as a trusted partner for future business opportunities.



Executive Summary:

Importance of targeting internal customers within the agency (cont.)

Conclusion

In the government world, most of your marketing plan should include targeting the internal customers within the agency and aligning your business' solution to the government's needs. By doing so, you can increase your chances of success in the federal marketplace, build relationships with key decision-makers, and position your business for future opportunities. Understanding the internal customers and their role in the buying process is essential to developing an effective marketing plan for the federal government.



The Government Operates Differently:

Marketing in the government world means selling

In the commercial world, marketing is often associated with creating buzz around a product or service in the hopes of increasing sales. However, in the government world, the term “marketing” takes on a different meaning. It typically refers to the process of selling a product or service to the government.

In the government world, most marketing plans focus on targeting the internal customers within an agency and aligning your business’s solution to the government’s needs. This is because the government operates differently from the commercial sector. In the commercial world, a buyer typically knows what they are buying, what the processes are, and what machines are used. In contrast, government buyers are primarily concerned with the product or service itself, not the process behind it.

Furthermore, in the government world, a single customer or a small number of customers are often the ones specifying what they want from a vendor. This is because there are typically few salespeople and little typical marketing required.

In summary, the government operates differently from the commercial world, and as a result, marketing techniques customized for the federal government are essential to increase a business's ability to win government contracts. Understanding the government’s unique approach to buying and selling is crucial to successfully market and sell to government customers.



The Government Operates Differently:

Marketing in the government world means selling

Marketing to the federal government is a unique experience that differs significantly from marketing in the private sector. Unlike the commercial world, where marketing and sales are essential to business success, marketing to the government requires a different approach. In the government world, your “market” is a single customer or a small number of customers who are specifying what they want from you. As a result, there are few salespeople, and little “typical” marketing is required.

The government has its own set of rules and procedures, and the way they purchase goods and services is different from the private sector. For example, in the commercial world, a buyer usually has a good idea of what they are buying, what the processes are, what machines are used, and so on. However, in the government world, most buyers focus on the product or service they need, not the process used to provide it.

Furthermore, the government operates differently from the private sector in the sense that the government is not always looking for the lowest price. Instead, they often prioritize factors such as quality, compliance, and past performance. Thus, as a business owner, it is essential to understand how to market your business in the government world and how to stand out from the competition.



The Government Operates Differently:

Marketing in the government world means selling (cont.)

Marketing to the government requires understanding the needs of your customers within the agency and aligning your business' solution to the government's needs. As a result, most of your marketing plan should focus on targeting the internal customers within the agency. Knowing your government customer, understanding the three types of government customers, and getting in front of the decision-makers is critical to your success.

In summary, marketing to the government requires a different approach than marketing in the private sector. While little typical marketing is required, it is still essential to understand how to market your business and stand out from the competition. Knowing how the government operates and what they are looking for can help your business succeed in the federal marketplace.



The Government Operates Differently:

Buyers in the government world buy the product, not the process

When it comes to selling to the government, it's important to remember that the buyers are looking for the product or service that will meet their needs, not necessarily the company or the process behind it. This can be quite different from the private sector, where the process and the brand can be important factors in purchasing decisions.

In the government world, the product is what matters most. This means that companies need to focus on clearly communicating the benefits of their product or service and how it will meet the needs of the government buyer. The government buyer is often focused on fulfilling a specific need or requirement, and it's up to the vendor to show that their product or service is the best fit.

This is why it's important for companies to have a strong understanding of the government's needs and requirements. By doing research and engaging with government agencies early in the acquisition process, companies can gain a better understanding of what the government is looking for and how they can best position themselves to meet those needs.

It's also important for companies to be able to clearly demonstrate the benefits of their product or service. This includes not only the technical capabilities of the product, but also how it will provide value to the government agency and help them achieve their goals.

By focusing on the product and understanding the needs of the government buyer, companies can be better positioned to succeed in the government marketplace.



Understanding Federal Market Capture Strategies:

Reactive vs. proactive

The reactive approach to federal contracting involves waiting for a bid to be posted on government websites, such as SAM.gov, before attempting to secure a contract. This approach is often referred to as "chasing bids." While it may seem like a low-risk strategy, it limits a business's opportunities to secure federal contracts and can be very competitive. Additionally, it doesn't allow businesses to build relationships with potential government clients before a contract opportunity arises.

On the other hand, the proactive approach involves identifying your best customers in the federal market and establishing relationships before a contract opportunity is posted. This approach is known as "targeted marketing" or "strategic business development." By targeting specific agencies and developing relationships with procurement officials and program managers, businesses can position themselves to be the go-to solution provider for a specific agency or program. This approach allows businesses to stay ahead of the competition, better understand the needs of their clients, and proactively provide solutions that meet those needs.

Overall, the proactive approach allows businesses to better position themselves for federal contract opportunities by building relationships and gaining an understanding of their customers' needs. Rather than chasing after individual contract opportunities, businesses can take a strategic approach to win more work from the government.



Understanding Federal Market Capture Strategies:

Benefits of early engagement

Engaging the federal government early in the acquisition process is a crucial strategy for small businesses looking to win federal contracts. This approach involves interacting with the government during the acquisition planning stage, well before the solicitation is posted for bid on sites like SAM.gov. By doing so, small businesses can gain a better understanding of whether to pursue an opportunity, and they may even have the ability to influence or shape the acquisition strategy.

There are three primary stages of a federal acquisition: acquisition planning, contract formation, and contract administration. The acquisition planning stage is where federal agencies determine their needs and plan for the acquisition of goods or services. This stage could take weeks or months and involves determining the requirements, budget, and acquisition strategy.

The contract formation stage is where the solicitation is posted, and bids are accepted. If a solicitation is to be posted at all, it will be posted on websites such as SAM.gov. This is the stage where the competition is at its peak, and businesses are vying for the contract opportunity.

Finally, the contract administration stage involves the actual administration of the contract. This stage involves monitoring the contract's performance, making payments, and ensuring that the contractor meets all contract requirements.



Understanding Federal Market Capture Strategies:

Benefits of early engagement (cont.)

Engaging the federal government early in the acquisition process is important because it allows small businesses to gain an understanding of the agency's needs and goals. Additionally, small businesses can provide input and potentially shape the acquisition strategy. This approach also allows for more informal one-on-one communication with government officials, which can be beneficial in building relationships and understanding the agency's requirements.

Once the solicitation is posted, and the SOW (Statement of Work), PWS (Performance Work Statement), or SOO (Statement of Objectives) stages have passed, direct communication with decision-makers becomes much less common. This is because it would open them up to protests, which can cause delays and lead to legal disputes.

In summary, engaging the federal government early in the acquisition process is a crucial strategy for small businesses. By doing so, businesses can gain a better understanding of the agency's needs, potentially influence the acquisition strategy, and build relationships with government officials. This approach can increase the likelihood of securing a federal contract and provide a significant advantage over the competition.



Understanding Federal Market Capture Strategies:

Targeting customers and opportunities based on fit

Creating a comprehensive business plan and marketing plan for the federal side of your business is a critical component of success. It is important to remember that federal marketing requires a unique approach, one that is vastly different from commercial marketing. Your marketing plan should target the specific needs and requirements of the federal government.

As a small business pursuing federal work, you are most likely a better fit for the micropurchase and Simplified Acquisition Procedures (SAP) markets. These markets are characterized by smaller transactions, usually less than \$10,000 and \$250,000, respectively. The smaller transaction size is more commensurate with the size of work you typically get on the commercial side, and it is a lower-risk way for federal buyers to try you out. There is also a lower risk of the contractor not being able to perform because the job is too big.

However, the challenge for small businesses is that most of this work is not publicized for bid, announced or competed. Instead, most of these purchases are executed via relationships or familiarity and convenience. This means that your marketing strategy must include building strong relationships with potential customers, so that they think of you when they need to make a purchase.

In order to succeed in the federal market, it is essential to have a business plan that focuses on developing these relationships. This includes identifying the specific needs and requirements of potential customers, and understanding how your company can meet those needs. You should also research the federal agencies and departments that are most likely to require your products or services, and target them with your marketing efforts.



Understanding Federal Market Capture Strategies:

Targeting customers and opportunities based on fit (cont.)

Your marketing plan should be focused on building relationships with the key decision-makers within these agencies and departments. This may involve attending industry events, participating in agency networking opportunities, and establishing a presence on social media. You should also consider partnering with other small businesses to create a more attractive package of goods and services that can be presented to potential customers.

Overall, your success in the federal market will depend on your ability to develop strong relationships with potential customers, and to market your products and services in a way that meets their specific needs and requirements. By creating a business plan and marketing plan that is tailored to the federal market, you will be able to position yourself for success and win more business in this lucrative market.



Preparing to Market to the Federal Government:

Key questions to answer before marketing

Marketing to the federal government requires a different approach than marketing to the commercial sector. It is important to prepare thoroughly to ensure that your marketing efforts are successful. Below are some key questions to consider before starting your marketing campaign:

- 1. What agencies or departments are most likely to need your products or services?** It is essential to research the federal market to understand which agencies or departments are most likely to be interested in what you offer. Look at past contract awards and solicitations to determine which agencies have previously purchased similar products or services.
- 2. What is your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)?** Your USP is what sets you apart from your competition and is what will make federal buyers choose your company over others. It is important to clearly define your USP before starting your marketing efforts.
- 3. Have you reviewed your company's capabilities and experience?** Federal buyers will want to know that you have the capabilities and experience to deliver what you are offering. Review your company's experience, credentials, and past performance to ensure that you can provide the required products or services.
- 4. Do you have the necessary certifications or registrations?** Many federal contracts require specific certifications or registrations. It is important to ensure that your company has the necessary certifications, such as a Small Business Administration (SBA) certification, and is registered in the System for Award Management (SAM).



Preparing to Market to the Federal Government:

Key questions to answer before marketing

5. Have you researched the competition? Understanding your competition is essential to creating a successful marketing campaign. Research your competitors to determine what they offer and how you can differentiate yourself from them.

By answering these key questions before starting your marketing campaign, you can ensure that you are targeting the right agencies, have a clear understanding of your USP, and have the necessary certifications and experience to deliver what you are offering.



Preparing to Market to the Federal Government:

Adapting your output to meet the government's needs

Adapting your output to meet the government's needs is a critical step in preparing to market to the federal government. The federal government has unique needs and requirements that must be addressed in order to successfully do business with them.

One of the key ways to adapt your output to meet the government's needs is to understand their procurement process. The procurement process is often highly regulated and can involve numerous rules, regulations, and requirements. It's important to understand the process, so you can tailor your marketing efforts and business processes to meet the government's needs.

In addition to understanding the procurement process, it's also important to understand the specific needs of the government agency you're targeting. Each agency has its own set of requirements and regulations, and it's important to tailor your approach to meet those needs. For example, if you're targeting an agency that has a strong focus on environmental sustainability, you may want to highlight the sustainability features of your products or services.

Another important consideration is to make sure your output is in the right format. Many government agencies have strict requirements for documentation, including formatting and content. By ensuring that your output meets these requirements, you can increase your chances of success when marketing to the federal government.



Preparing to Market to the Federal Government:

Adapting your output to meet the government's needs (cont.)

Overall, adapting your output to meet the government's needs is an important step in preparing to market to the federal government. By understanding the procurement process, tailoring your approach to meet the needs of specific agencies, and ensuring that your output is in the right format, you can increase your chances of success when selling to the federal government.



Preparing to Market to the Federal Government:

Collaborating with other businesses to offer a "total" package

One way to increase your chances of winning a federal contract is by collaborating with other businesses to offer a "total" package. The government frequently looks for solutions that can provide a complete end-to-end solution that may require a combination of products and services from different companies.

Teaming up with other businesses can offer a number of advantages, such as complementing your company's capabilities, expanding your geographic reach, and providing access to new clients. However, it is important to choose partners carefully and establish a solid relationship that is based on mutual trust and shared goals.

To build an effective partnership, businesses should look for potential partners that complement their own capabilities and align with their company culture. It is also important to agree on the division of labor, establish clear communication channels, and define roles and responsibilities from the outset.

Once a partnership has been established, it is important to maintain regular communication and ensure that all partners are aligned on the overall goals and priorities of the project. This can help to prevent misunderstandings and ensure that the team remains focused on delivering results.

Working with other businesses to offer a "total" package can also help to mitigate risk and ensure that the government receives a comprehensive solution that meets all of their requirements. By leveraging the strengths of each partner, businesses can offer a more competitive proposal that is tailored to the government's needs.



Preparing to Market to the Federal Government:

Collaborating with other businesses to offer a "total" package (cont.)

In summary, collaborating with other businesses can be an effective way to enhance your company's offerings and increase your chances of winning federal contracts. However, it is important to choose partners carefully and establish a solid relationship that is based on mutual trust and shared goals. By working together to offer a "total" package, businesses can provide a more comprehensive solution that meets the government's needs and delivers results.



Knowing Your Government Customer:

How to conduct market research for federal agencies

Knowing your government customer is an essential part of successfully marketing to the federal government. One of the most critical steps in this process is conducting effective market research to identify potential customers and opportunities.

Market research helps you to better understand the agency's needs, budget, and goals. With this knowledge, you can tailor your message, pricing, and offerings to align with the agency's mission and procurement objectives.

The first step in conducting market research is to identify your target customers. This process involves researching the agencies and their programs to determine which agencies and offices are the best fit for your business. You can use publicly available resources such as the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS), Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps), and agency-specific procurement forecasts to find information on upcoming procurement opportunities.

Once you have identified potential customers, the next step is to research the agency's specific needs and requirements. This information can often be found in Requests for Information (RFIs), Requests for Proposals (RFPs), and other procurement documents. You can also attend industry days, conferences, and other events to gain insights into the agency's needs and meet with key stakeholders.

It's also important to conduct competitor analysis to understand who else is vying for the agency's business. This will help you to differentiate your offerings and tailor your message to stand out from the competition.



Knowing Your Government Customer:

How to conduct market research for federal agencies (cont.)

In summary, conducting effective market research is a critical step in preparing to market to the federal government. By understanding your target customers, their needs, and the competition, you can better position your business to win government contracts and grow your federal business.



Knowing Your Government Customer:

Examining an agency's strategic plan and priorities

To effectively market to the federal government, it is essential to know your government customer. One way to gain insight into their priorities and objectives is to examine an agency's strategic plan. The strategic plan outlines the agency's long-term goals and objectives, as well as the strategies and resources they will use to achieve them.

By reviewing an agency's strategic plan, you can gain a better understanding of their mission, values, and priorities. This will allow you to tailor your messaging and marketing approach to align with the agency's goals and objectives.

In addition to the strategic plan, it can be helpful to examine other key documents such as the agency's annual report, budget request, and any recent congressional testimony. These documents can provide valuable information about the agency's operations, challenges, and opportunities.

When conducting market research for federal agencies, it is important to use a variety of sources and methods. This can include online databases, market research reports, industry events, and direct outreach to agency officials. By combining these approaches, you can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the agency's needs and preferences, and develop a targeted marketing strategy that resonates with your government customer.



Knowing Your Government Customer:

Targeting three types of government customers: Procurers, Influencers, and End Users

When it comes to marketing to the federal government, it's important to understand that there are typically three types of customers that you need to target: procurers, influencers, and end users.

Procurers are the individuals who are responsible for purchasing goods and services on behalf of the government agency. These individuals are typically the ones who issue contracts and make the final decisions about which companies to work with. To target procurers, you need to make sure that your marketing materials clearly communicate the benefits of working with your company, such as your expertise, your competitive pricing, and your ability to deliver high-quality work on time.

Influencers are individuals who have a say in the purchasing decision, but who are not necessarily the final decision-makers. These individuals could include technical experts, project managers, or other stakeholders who provide input and guidance throughout the procurement process. To target influencers, you need to show that you understand their specific needs and challenges, and that you have the knowledge and expertise to help them achieve their goals.

End users are the individuals who will actually be using the product or service that you are offering. These individuals may not be involved in the procurement process directly, but their feedback can be invaluable in helping you to refine your product or service offerings. To target end users, you need to understand their specific needs and pain points, and to show that your products or services can help them to overcome those challenges.



Knowing Your Government Customer:

Targeting three types of government customers: Procurers, Influencers, and End Users (cont.)

By understanding these three types of government customers, you can create targeted marketing materials that speak directly to their needs and concerns. This will help you to build relationships with key decision-makers, increase your chances of winning contracts, and ultimately grow your business in the federal market.



Getting in Front of the Decision Makers:

Importance of finding the right people and building relationships

When it comes to securing federal contracts, one of the most crucial aspects is identifying and connecting with the decision makers. These individuals are often high-level government officials, procurement officers, or program managers who are responsible for awarding and managing contracts within their agencies.

To get in front of the right people and build meaningful relationships, businesses need to conduct thorough research to identify the key decision makers within their target agencies. This may involve reviewing organizational charts, attending industry events and conferences, and networking with other businesses and industry experts who have experience working with the agency in question.

Once potential decision makers have been identified, businesses can begin to reach out to them in a variety of ways. This may include sending personalized emails or direct mail pieces, making phone calls, or leveraging social media platforms to connect and engage with these individuals.

It's important to keep in mind that building relationships with government decision makers takes time and effort. Businesses must be patient and persistent in their outreach efforts, and they must also be willing to invest time in developing a deep understanding of the specific challenges and priorities of their target agencies.

Ultimately, by taking the time to identify and connect with the right people, businesses can position themselves as trusted partners and increase their chances of winning federal contracts.



Getting in Front of the Decision Makers:

Different ways to network and reach decision makers

Once you have identified the right decision makers within an agency, the challenge is getting in front of them. The good news is that there are many ways to network and reach decision makers in the government world. Here are some common methods:

- 1. Attend industry events:** Industry events are a great way to network with potential customers and partners. Look for events hosted by the agency you are interested in, as well as events hosted by industry associations and other organizations.
- 2. Join associations and groups:** Joining industry associations and other groups can be a great way to meet potential customers and partners. Look for groups that are relevant to your industry or the agency you are interested in.
- 3. Utilize social media:** Social media can be a powerful tool for networking and building relationships in the government world. LinkedIn is a great platform for connecting with decision makers and sharing your expertise.
- 4. Request a meeting:** If you have identified a decision maker you would like to meet with, don't be afraid to reach out and request a meeting. Be sure to do your research first and come prepared with a clear value proposition.
- 5. Utilize teaming agreements:** Teaming agreements are a formal way to partner with other companies to pursue government contracts. By teaming with a company that has an existing relationship with a decision maker, you can increase your chances of getting in front of them.



Getting in Front of the Decision Makers:

Opportunities available through the Small Business Set-Aside (SBSA) Program

Small businesses have an opportunity to compete for federal government contracts through the Small Business Set-Aside (SBSA) program. The SBSA program reserves a portion of federal contracts for small businesses, giving them a better chance to win the contracts.

The SBSA program applies to a variety of contract types, including contracts for goods, services, and construction. To qualify for the SBSA program, a small business must meet specific size standards for the industry in which they operate. These size standards can vary based on the industry and can be determined by a variety of metrics, such as the number of employees or annual revenue.

The SBSA program provides small businesses with a valuable opportunity to compete for federal contracts that they may not have been able to win otherwise. However, it is important for small businesses to be strategic in their approach and ensure they are targeting the right opportunities within the SBSA program.

To take advantage of the SBSA program, small businesses should ensure they have a strong understanding of the federal agency they are targeting and the needs of the agency. They should also be prepared to work with a team of partners if necessary, as some SBSA contracts may require multiple small businesses to collaborate.

Overall, the SBSA program can be a valuable tool for small businesses looking to compete for federal contracts. By understanding the program and targeting the right opportunities, small businesses can position themselves for success in the federal market.



Marketing Your Benefits:

Emphasizing benefits to contracting officers/specialists, program managers, and end users

When marketing to the federal government, it's important to emphasize the benefits your product or service can provide to various stakeholders within the agency. These stakeholders include contracting officers/specialists, program managers, and end users. Each of these groups has different needs and priorities, and understanding these can help you tailor your marketing message to better resonate with each group.

Contracting officers/specialists are responsible for managing the procurement process and ensuring that government contracts are awarded fairly and in compliance with regulations. When marketing to this group, it's important to emphasize the quality and reliability of your product or service, as well as your experience and past performance in delivering results for other government agencies. It's also important to be transparent about your pricing and any other costs associated with your offering.

Program managers are responsible for overseeing specific programs or projects within the agency, and their priorities may be more focused on efficiency and effectiveness. When marketing to this group, it's important to emphasize how your product or service can help streamline processes, improve outcomes, and save time and money. Providing case studies or examples of how your offering has helped other agencies achieve their goals can be particularly effective.

End users are the people who will actually be using your product or service on a day-to-day basis. When marketing to this group, it's important to emphasize how your offering can help them do their jobs better, faster, or more easily. This might mean highlighting features or capabilities that are particularly relevant to their needs, or offering training and support to ensure they can get the most out of your product or service.



Marketing Your Benefits:

Emphasizing benefits to contracting officers/specialists, program managers, and end users (cont.)

Overall, emphasizing the benefits of your product or service to each of these stakeholder groups can help you build stronger relationships and increase your chances of success in the federal market. By understanding the needs and priorities of these groups, and tailoring your marketing message accordingly, you can demonstrate your value and differentiate yourself from competitors.



Marketing Your Benefits:

The advantages of having a GSA Schedule contract

A General Services Administration (GSA) Schedule contract is a pre-approved agreement between a business and the federal government that allows them to sell their goods and services at pre-negotiated rates. This type of contract is particularly useful for businesses looking to sell to the federal government, as it eliminates the need for lengthy bidding and proposal processes, and can significantly reduce the amount of time it takes to close a deal.

One of the biggest advantages of having a GSA Schedule contract is that it makes it easier for federal agencies to purchase from your business. Since the prices and terms have already been negotiated and approved by the GSA, agencies can purchase directly from your business without having to go through the time-consuming process of soliciting bids, evaluating proposals, and negotiating terms. This can be a huge advantage for businesses that are trying to break into the federal market, as it allows them to compete on a level playing field with larger, more established firms.

In addition to making it easier for federal agencies to purchase from your business, having a GSA Schedule contract can also help you establish a reputation as a reliable and trusted vendor. By going through the rigorous application and approval process required to obtain a GSA Schedule contract, you demonstrate to potential customers that you are a serious and committed player in the federal marketplace.

Overall, a GSA Schedule contract can be an extremely valuable tool for businesses looking to sell to the federal government. By streamlining the purchasing process, reducing competition, and establishing your reputation as a trusted vendor, a GSA Schedule contract can help you win more federal business and grow your company.



Marketing Your Benefits:

The risks of pursuing a GSA Schedule contract

Marketing your business to the federal government can be an effective way to grow your company's revenue and reputation. One avenue to pursue is obtaining a GSA Schedule contract, which can provide you with a streamlined purchasing process and greater exposure to federal buyers. However, pursuing a GSA Schedule contract also comes with risks that you should consider before making a decision.

First, it's important to note that GSA Schedules are intended for Commercial Off The Shelf (COTS) purchases only. If your company provides custom solutions or non-standard services, like commercial building construction, a GSA Schedule may not be the best fit for your business.

Second, obtaining a GSA Schedule contract takes a significant amount of time and resources. You will need to invest time in the proposal process, and if you are awarded a contract, you will need to comply with strict reporting requirements and meet ongoing compliance standards.

Third, negotiating "Best Pricing" with the government can be a complex process, and if you are not prepared to negotiate effectively, you could end up with a contract with less-than-favorable rates.

Finally, if you aren't prepared to market your GSA Schedule or do not know your target market in the federal government, you may not be able to monetize the asset. If you have little to no sales in the first two years on your Schedule, your GSA Contracting Officer may cancel your schedule.

In summary, pursuing a GSA Schedule contract can provide many benefits to your business. However, it's important to consider the risks and ensure that you are ready to commit the time, resources, and effort necessary to successfully obtain and market your schedule.



Getting on a Schedule:

Benefits of becoming a GSA schedule contractor

Obtaining a GSA Schedule contract is a great way for companies to gain access to the lucrative federal market. As a GSA Schedule contractor, your company is pre-approved by the government to offer goods and services at pre-negotiated prices, terms, and conditions. This enables government agencies to purchase products and services from you directly, without the need for extensive procurement procedures.

The benefits of becoming a GSA Schedule contractor are numerous. One of the most significant benefits is increased visibility and credibility with federal agencies. A GSA Schedule contract signals to government buyers that your company has been vetted and approved, which can help you stand out from competitors who have not yet earned a Schedule contract.

Another benefit of having a GSA Schedule contract is the streamlined purchasing process. By having a pre-approved contract, government agencies can purchase goods and services quickly and easily. This can save both the contractor and the government valuable time and resources.

In addition to increased visibility and a streamlined purchasing process, being a GSA Schedule contractor can also lead to increased revenue. Government contracts can provide a steady source of income and can help your company expand its customer base.

Overall, obtaining a GSA Schedule contract can be a valuable investment for businesses looking to enter the federal marketplace. The benefits of being a GSA Schedule contractor can help companies establish themselves in the federal market and achieve long-term success.



Getting on a Schedule:

Five-step approach to marketing to all federal agencies

If you're interested in selling to the federal government, one of the best ways to do so is by getting on a GSA Schedule. However, getting on a Schedule can be a long and complicated process. The good news is that once you've completed the process, your business will have access to a huge market of potential customers.

Here is a five-step approach to marketing to all federal agencies after getting on a GSA Schedule:

- 1. Create a marketing plan:** Your marketing plan should include a clear definition of your target market, your value proposition, and your unique selling proposition. You should also define your marketing mix, including the channels you will use to reach your target audience.
- 2. Develop a strong brand:** Your brand is the first thing potential customers will see, and it needs to be memorable and effective. Your brand should communicate the value you offer and set you apart from your competitors.
- 3. Build relationships with decision-makers:** Once you've identified your target market, you need to build relationships with decision-makers within those agencies. Attend industry events, reach out to potential customers on social media, and offer to provide demonstrations or presentations to show your capabilities.
- 4. Leverage your GSA Schedule:** Once you're on a GSA Schedule, you should promote it as much as possible. Use your website, social media, and other channels to let potential customers know that you're on a Schedule, and be sure to highlight the benefits of working with a GSA contractor.



Getting on a Schedule:

Five-step approach to marketing to all federal agencies

5. Track your results: As with any marketing effort, it's important to track your results and adjust your approach as needed. Keep track of which channels are working best, which agencies are showing the most interest, and which marketing messages are resonating with your target market. Use this information to refine your marketing plan and improve your results over time.

By following these five steps, your business can successfully market to all federal agencies and grow your government contracting business.



Requesting a Debrief:

Importance of understanding why your business won or lost a bid

When you submit a proposal or bid for a federal contract, you have invested significant resources, including time, money, and effort, to put forth the best possible proposal. But what happens when you do not win the bid? Instead of accepting the loss and moving on to the next opportunity, requesting a debrief can provide valuable insights into why your business did not win the bid.

A debrief is a process where the contracting officer provides information on the strengths and weaknesses of your proposal, as well as an assessment of why the award went to the winning bidder. By requesting a debrief, you can understand the areas where your proposal may have fallen short, and use that information to improve your proposal in future bids.

Some of the benefits of requesting a debrief include:

- 1. Understanding your proposal's strengths and weaknesses:** A debrief allows you to understand the strengths and weaknesses of your proposal, and can help you refine your approach for future bids.
- 2. Gaining insight into the selection process:** A debrief can provide valuable insights into how the contracting agency made its decision, including what factors were considered, how the scoring was done, and what the evaluation criteria were.
- 3. Identifying areas for improvement:** The feedback you receive during a debrief can help you identify areas for improvement and fine-tune your proposal approach.



Requesting a Debrief:

Importance of understanding why your business won or lost a bid (cont.)

5. Building relationships: A debrief provides an opportunity to build relationships with the contracting agency and demonstrate your commitment to understanding their needs and providing quality solutions.

Overall, requesting a debrief is an important step in the federal contracting process. It provides valuable information that can help your business better understand the needs and requirements of the contracting agency and improve your proposal approach for future opportunities.



Requesting a Debrief:

The transparency of the government contracting process

When it comes to the federal government contracting process, transparency is key. It ensures fairness, accountability, and a level playing field for all businesses competing for contracts. One way the government ensures transparency is through the debriefing process.

A debriefing is a formal meeting between a contracting officer and a business that has submitted a proposal, in which the government provides feedback on the proposal and offers insights into the decision-making process. Debriefings are available to businesses that have won or lost a contract, and they can provide valuable information on how to improve future proposals.

By requesting a debrief, businesses can gain insight into what the government is looking for, how they evaluate proposals, and how to better position themselves for future opportunities. This feedback can be invaluable in helping businesses refine their marketing and proposal development strategies.

In addition to the benefits for businesses, the debriefing process also helps ensure transparency and accountability in the government contracting process. It provides an opportunity for the government to explain their decision-making process and ensure that contracts are awarded in a fair and competitive manner.

Overall, requesting a debrief is an important step in understanding the government contracting process and improving your business's chances of winning future contracts. It also helps to ensure that the government contracting process remains transparent, accountable, and fair for all businesses.



Three Ways to Improve Your Company's Presence in the Government Marketplace:

Considering your value to government agencies

When marketing your business to government agencies, it is important to consider what value your company can offer beyond just the services you provide. One way to do this is to demonstrate how your company can help the agency achieve its mission and goals. This means going beyond just fulfilling a contract or providing a service, and positioning your company as a strategic partner that can help the agency accomplish its objectives.

Another way to improve your company's presence in the government marketplace is to consider how your company can offer unique capabilities or expertise that sets you apart from your competitors. This can be especially important in highly specialized or technical areas, where your company's unique expertise or approach can make a significant difference in the success of a project or program.

Finally, it is important to establish a strong reputation for reliability and quality in the government marketplace. This can be accomplished through a variety of means, including establishing strong relationships with key decision makers, consistently delivering high-quality work on time and on budget, and actively seeking out feedback and opportunities for improvement.

By considering these factors and taking steps to position your company as a strategic partner, unique expert, and reliable contractor, you can improve your company's presence in the government marketplace and increase your chances of success in pursuing federal contracts.



Three Ways to Improve Your Company's Presence in the Government Marketplace:

Defining a marketing strategy

One of the most critical steps to improving your company's presence in the government marketplace is developing a comprehensive marketing strategy. The strategy must define how you plan to target government customers, engage decision-makers, and differentiate yourself from competitors.

First, you need to identify your target audience within the government. You can leverage the knowledge you've gained from conducting market research and develop an understanding of your customers' needs, priorities, and objectives. Once you've identified your target audience, you can begin developing marketing messages that address their specific challenges and demonstrate how your products or services can help them achieve their goals.

Second, you need to develop a compelling value proposition that differentiates your business from competitors. A well-defined value proposition should articulate the unique benefits you offer to government customers, how you meet their specific needs, and why they should choose you over other businesses.

Third, you need to identify the most effective marketing channels to reach your target audience. The government market has unique communication channels, such as SAM.gov, GSA eBuy, and other agency-specific procurement portals. You must have a presence on these platforms and a strategy for engaging with government customers.



Three Ways to Improve Your Company's Presence in the Government Marketplace:

Defining a marketing strategy (cont.)

In summary, defining a marketing strategy is critical to improving your company's presence in the government marketplace. Your strategy should identify your target audience, develop a compelling value proposition, and select the most effective marketing channels to reach your target customers.



Three Ways to Improve Your Company's Presence in the Government Marketplace:

Actively marketing your business to government customers

Actively marketing your business to government customers is essential to building a strong presence in the federal marketplace. It's not enough to simply have a GSA Schedule contract or be registered in SAM.gov. You need to proactively engage with potential customers and decision-makers to showcase your capabilities and expertise.

One of the most important aspects of marketing your business to government customers is understanding your target market. Identify the agencies that are most likely to need your products or services, and learn everything you can about their mission, goals, and priorities. This information will help you tailor your marketing approach to the specific needs and challenges of each agency.

Another important aspect of marketing your business to government customers is building relationships with key decision-makers. Attend conferences and events where these decision-makers are likely to be present, and use these opportunities to introduce yourself and your business. Make a point of following up after these events to continue building your relationship.

Finally, use a variety of marketing channels to reach potential government customers. This can include direct mail campaigns, targeted email marketing, and advertising in industry publications or on social media. The key is to make sure your message is clear, concise, and relevant to the needs of your target audience.



Three Ways to Improve Your Company's Presence in the Government Marketplace:

Actively marketing your business to government customers (cont.)

By actively marketing your business to government customers, you can improve your company's visibility and reputation in the federal marketplace. This can lead to more opportunities, more revenue, and a stronger, more sustainable business.



Conclusion:

In conclusion, marketing to the federal government can be a complex and challenging process for small businesses. However, with the right approach and knowledge of the federal acquisition process, businesses can successfully enter the federal market and secure contracts that will help them grow and thrive. Key steps in the process include preparing a marketing plan, conducting market research, building relationships with decision-makers, and positioning your business to take advantage of small business set-asides and GSA Schedule contracts. By following these steps and staying attuned to the unique needs of government customers, small businesses can make a meaningful impact in the federal marketplace and achieve long-term success.