

This is a general guide (along with some example language) for how to structure your engagement with your federal contracting prospects.

The tenets of this communication plan were influenced greatly by the following resources:

[Same Game New Rules](#) by Bill Caskey

[Selling to the C-Suite](#) by Nicholas A.C. Read and Stephen Bistriz

[The Challenger Sale](#) by Matthew Dixon and Brent Adamson (5 min summary [here](#))

- **OPENING**

**Why does this matter? First impressions.**

Be prepared, be professional, control the narrative.

- **GREETING**

**Why does this matter? You can gauge their disposition based on their answer (apprehensive, guarded, skeptical or excited, motivated, and intentional).**

*“Would you like me to start and provide some background on myself and the company, or would you like to start and tell me a little about your company and federal contracting journey?”*

- **WHO WE ARE...**

**Why does this matter? Set the frame, make them comfortable, get them to let their guard down and reciprocate.**

*“The team includes senior executives in federal data science and analysis, decades in federal procurement as Contracting personnel, and leaders in marketing and branding to the federal market. Most of our clients fall into one of three buckets – first are the brand new companies trying to figure this out, and then we have the really experienced, really successful clients that have won millions in federal contracts and keep us on retainer...but most of our clients are in the middle category – they’ve been registered for a while, but they haven’t had success – or as much as they would like – pursuing federal work...which category would you say you are in?”*

- **UPFRONT AGREEMENT | SETTING A “CLEAR FUTURE”**

Why does this matter? Because they assume this is a high-pressure sales call, you are just trying to get their money...and because you need them to be comfortable with you and your process so that they answer your questions honestly and from a position of vulnerability without worrying that you're going to use what they say to you against them to “close” them.

*“The goal on this call is for me to understand your business and your goals, ensure I answer your questions and provide information about who we are and how we do business, and if together we feel there may be a fit and possible value, we can decide if its worth continuing the conversation – does that sound reasonable?”*

- **INSIGHTS “MOVIE TRAILER”**

Why does this matter? Simple – this creates “specific curiosity”. In other words, they may have a number of things they THINK they want to talk about, but it's likely none of them are as intriguing as THESE topics. You want to hook them in.

*“I've done a number of these consultations, and I've learned over that time that there are a few ‘a ha’ moments that resonate over and over. For example, most of the people I speak with are surprised to learn that not everything is posted for the public to bid on, and a high percentage of contracts are never posted for bid – they are awarded without being competed publicly. Here's another example – most people think all the contracts are highly competitive, but a high percentage of the contracts in your industry only get one offer prior to being awarded...**has anyone taken the time to explain any of this to you, or why it happens...or most importantly – how you can participate in this ‘closed market’?**”*

- **SETTING UP DISCOVERY**

Why does this matter? Once again, setting clear expectations and building trust – you don't want them to be surprised by anything.

*“In order to advise you, I need to first learn a little more about your company and what your experience in the federal market has been thus far. In order to do this, I'm going to ask you a series of questions about your experience and*

*opinions about the process thus far. Then, once I better understand your situation, I'll be able to provide more effective guidance – does that make sense?”*

## **- DISCOVERY**

**Why does this matter? THIS IS KEY...you need to find their pain points and/or challenges and goals. Specifically, you're seeking responses like "I don't know", "I need help", "I'm not aware"...these are clear signs that they are (a) being honest and vulnerable, and (b) these are the issues they need help resolving – regardless of any other objection, resistance, etc. they may provide later in the conversation. ALWAYS come back to these pain or gain points – they are the core of your "Bullet-proof and bullshit-proof" Value Proposition.**

Some of the questions you can ask:

- *“How did you get started in the federal market, meaning what triggered you to register as a federal contractor?”*
- *“How has the journey been for you thus far?”*
- *“What is your role with the company as it pertains to federal contracting?”*
- *“Have you been with the company since you registered as a federal contractor?”*
- *“How does what you've experienced compare to what you expected?”*
- *“Is there anything about the process you find particularly challenging or frustrating?”*
- *“Have you sought counsel or guidance from anyone in the market? Has the guidance been helpful? If not, why not?”*
- *“Has anyone taken the time to research the federal market in order to help you target your best potential customers? Do you have anyone on staff that can do that?”*

- **SUMMARIZATION OF JOURNEY UNDERSTANDING**

Why does this matter? You need to make sure you understand what they told you from BOTH your perspective and theirs. The only way to confirm this is to summarize the most salient high-level points back to them, and seek their feedback about whether you got it right or missed something. If you got it right, move on. If you missed something, re-calibrate and repeat the process with the new information incorporated. Keep doing this until you both confirm you have it correct.

*“OK...so let me recap what you told me to make sure I have it right...”*

- **REVIEW THEIR MACRO MARKET DATA**

Why does this matter? Two reasons. First, it’s important they see the top-level federal spending related to ***their specific*** industry. Showing tens of millions in relevant federal spending is significantly more impactful than showing hundreds of billions in general federal spending. Second, they need to get a sense of how often work is awarded in their industry sector in ways they can’t connect to without our help (not posted for public bid, single-offer contracts that they don’t know how to find or compete for, etc.).

*“Let’s take a look at your overall market to see if there are opportunities for you to take a different approach in order to overcome these challenges – or avoid them altogether.”*

- **DOPPLEGANGER REVIEW & CONFIRMATION**

Why does this matter? If at all possible, we want to show them another company that looks like them – same industry, same location, same size...a company they see as comparable or even inferior to their own. We want to show them their contracts to create both confidence that it “can be done” and jealousy that “they are doing it”.

*“I think the best way to show you the value in taking a different approach is to show you the results another company similar to yours achieved by following the path I am presenting to you.”*

- **COMPARE AND CONTRAST JOURNEYS**

Why does this matter? This helps the prospect clearly see that a more successful company took a different path – one that looks very similar to ours and very different from theirs. Be sure to create “touchpoints of differentiation” – key moments where your prospect went left, and their doppelganger went right – and the impact each choice had on their respective journeys.

- **LEVEL-SET “STANDARD” INVESTMENT**

Why does this matter? You need to establish an investment baseline “anchor” to compare your Value Proposition against, and you need to show it from THE authority (SBA.gov) that the average small business invests \$80,000 to \$130,000 and up to 2 years in pursuit of their first contract.

- **SUMMARIZE THE INVESTMENT “WHY”**

Why does this matter? You need to help them understand HOW this type of financial and time commitment snowballs over time.

*“Just like you’re probably thinking ‘that’s absurd’...that’s the same reaction those people would have had if they were given that total cost figure up front...but they weren’t. It was the sum of their total tuition cost over that 2-year journey of learning what not to do before finally figuring out what to do.”*

- **PROVIDE THE INTELLIGENT ALTERNATIVE**

Why does this matter? At this point, you want to eliminate all nuance and complexity, and make it a simple, binary choice.

*“If you’re moving forward, you can take the \$100k / 2-year journey, or you can take the journey that will save you 75% in time and money cost to get to the same (or an even better) outcome...the same journey the most successful contractors take over and over.”*

- **GET BUY-IN**

Why does this matter? You want to know their commitment level. If they are wavering, you want to remind them of the prize...average contract size is one thing, but how many contracts the average business wins once they are in is a real eye-opener.

*"Does this make sense?"*

*"Now that you are armed with this knowledge, how do you want to proceed?"*

- **MOMENT OF TRUTH ("THE BIG TAKEAWAY")**

Why does this matter? There is a good chance at this point (especially if they give you positive "buying signals"), but also if they start asking "half-measure" questions..."what's my guarantee?", "do you have any testimonials?", "how long until I win my first contract?"...

You need to level-set them and double-down on setting a clear Value Proposition by using the takeaway.

*"This isn't for everyone. If your company isn't currently in a position or of the mindset to commit fully to this strategy, I understand. However, I would advise you that if you are going to do this, you need to have the same resolve and commitment as the businesses that are winning these contracts – or you'll be wasting your time and money. No half-measures. You need to commit to this strategy over the course of the next 5-6 months to build your federal revenue pipeline. While it's true that your pipeline will likely generate several federal contracts once its developed, it takes a total commitment to build the pipeline. If the pipeline needs to be 300 miles end-to-end, you can't build 30 miles worth and think that's going to be good enough. A partially built pipeline isn't a pipeline at all. It's nothing. So, the way I see it, you have two choices. First, do you want to build a federal revenue pipeline that has the potential to generate millions in federal contract revenue? And if the answer is yes, then the second question is do you want to spend \$100,000 and the next two years building it, or do you want to spend approximately \$25,000 and 6 months?"*

- **PROVIDE OPTIONS (BOTH PRICING AND TIMING)**

Why does this matter? You don't want to give only two choices where one of the choices is "no". When you give options, people more often tend to make choices other than no.

*"If you're fully committed and want the Best Value – invest in the full package for the maximum discount. Alternatively, if you want to invest in the research to make a more informed decision about whether this is the path, start with just the research and targeting phase."*

- **GIVE INCENTIVES FOR EARLY AND/OR FULL STRATEGY COMMITMENT (AND EXPLAIN WHY)**

Why does this matter? Our most successful clients are also our most committed – not just in terms of financial commitment, but in terms of dedicating the resources and prioritization it takes to win in the competitive arena.

*"We will position you to compete (and be a part of the competition), but you have to win – and that takes commitment. There are no shortcuts, just smarter more efficient ways to get there."*

- **COME TO AN "INTEREST AND COMMITMENT" UNDERSTANDING**

Why does this matter? You want to make sure you get a clear understanding of "where they are" mentally, so you can make a smart decision about how much continued effort you put into getting their commitment.

*"So, from my perspective I've now done my job. As I see it, the federal contracting market is extremely attractive and potentially lucrative – I don't have to 'sell' you on that – it's obvious. So, the way I see it, my job is to make sure you are armed with the data you need to make an informed decision about whether or not you want to pursue federal work, and if so what your options are for doing so. I feel I've provided that information on our call. Would you agree? OK, great. So at this point, my goal is to make efficient use of our time moving forward. The way I do that is by helping you come to a decision, whatever decision that is. Yes or no. What I don't want to do is waste your time following up with you if you're really not that interested, or delay the process of getting started if you really are. So, for the purpose of*

*respecting each other's time, what would you say your process looks like for making a decision about whether this strategy makes sense for your company? In other words, have you already come to a decision, and if not, what does the journey look like to get to a place where you are ready to decide one way or the other?"*

**MOST IMPORTANTLY...**try this approach and give feedback. Let us know what works, what doesn't, and suggestions for improvement.

We want to provide the tools, support and guidance you need to ensure your sales approach is effective and generates maximum results.