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SUN 07 **Slow Money Cleveland NEO**
December 7 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Great Lakes Brewing

TUE 09 **The Opportunity Network Westside**
December 9 @ 8:00 am - 9:30 pm
brennan's banquet center

WED 10 **The Opportunity Network Independence**
December 10 @ 8:00 am - 9:30 am
brennan's banquet center

FRI 12 **ICF Cleveland - Holiday Book Exchange**
\$25 | December 12 @ 7:45 am - 9:30 am
Indiana Wesleyan University



Twinsburg-based Company Simplifies Acquisitions of Government Contracts

By LEEANNE HAY | Photo by Thomas Skernivitz

There is a lucrative customer channel in your area that wants to do business with your company. Every year these customers purchase a wide variety of goods and services from small businesses all over the United States. They will sign a contract, pay you on time, and if everything goes well, will renew their contracts with your company for multiple years. Your company will need to provide and deliver the product at the best possible price. Who are these customers?

Governments.

From the U.S. federal government to the many municipal governments that make up every city, county, and state, government business is consistently growing and adapting to find the best possible purchasing channels. But how can businesses get started and acquire government customers?

Government Contract Services Inc. is a Twinsburg-based, woman-owned small business that has been helping businesses work with the government on all levels for almost 30 years. Its goal is to help businesses navigate the red tape and organizational chaos that companies face when they make the decision to pursue government contracts. GCS strives to stimulate growth within businesses by being a place of knowledge and innovative ideas to accelerate success.

Government contracts, as lucrative as they are, are far from simple.



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“The federal government is required to spend 23 percent of their budget with small businesses, and 5 percent of that should be spent with women-owned small businesses,” Cristi Kaib, a marketing consultant with GCS, says.

Within the small-business category, there are several distinct groups that are required to get a percentage of the 23 percent aside from women-owned small businesses, including veteran-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned, hub-zone, and socially and economically disadvantaged business.

To certify as a women-owned small business, the burden of proof falls on the owner of the business. The Small Business Administration sets certain mandates on what qualifies as a women-owned small business, including 51 percent ownership and knowledge of day-to-day operations of the company.

Understanding the government’s complex jargon can be a stumbling block among all the other forms and documents needed to complete certification documents or to just register as a potential vendor. One such term is the “GSA schedule.”

“The GSA schedules are five-year pre-negotiated contracts with the federal government. Companies that apply for a GSA schedule go through a review process that pre-qualifies them to bid on government contracts,” Kelsey Dixon, an account administrator with GCS, says. “Getting a schedule contract gives your company a license, so to speak, to sell to the government. The schedules don’t guarantee sales, but by advertising that your company is GSA-approved, it opens up a whole new way to sell to the government.”

When assessing DIY vs. outsourcing routes to gaining government contracts, keep in mind the cost of your time and the amount of time away from your business. To precisely complete all of the complex forms, gather the time-sensitive documents, and accurately submit them to the correct agencies can take business owners away from the vital day-to-day operations they manage. One omission or mistake can pull your application out of line and have it placed at the bottom of the pile for another review, possibly extending your waiting time from months to over a year.

Considering the advantages of working with the government, small business should plan on budgeting for certifications and professional assistance as a line item in next year’s annual financial forecast. Think about this in terms of a capital investment. On average it is estimated that it takes between \$20,000 and \$130,000 annually for successful businesses to manage government contracts. Where most small businesses fail while trying their hands at government contracting is a lack of time spent on initial research. Commercially, businesses have target markets, and the same applies to the government marketplace. If the business is able to find out who is buying its products and services and market a value proposition to that agency, it will be more successful.

GSC works with clients all across the country from its Cleveland-area based offices.

“What is most impressive about the success we’ve found is that so many jobs have become available due to our clients opening their businesses up to a new revenue stream,” Sonya Nudel, a marketing consultant with GCS, says. “With our local accounts, our organization has been successful in introducing many women-owned companies to one



another to partner in pursuing government bids. Small businesses are uniquely qualified to team up to satisfy a multitude of government requirements under one umbrella. Generally, investing in government business is a sure way to make money if you do it right.”

For more information: govconsvcs.com

Nov 18, 2014

CBC Magazine

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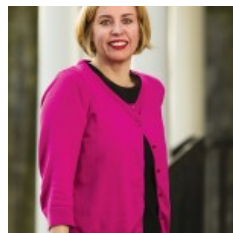
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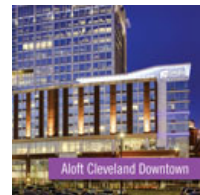
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