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Business developers make the most of marketing

Washington Business Journal - by [Joyce Bosc](#)

What a year this has been! Writing this column has given me the unique opportunity to examine some of my own best-practices advice for the business-to-government market. I hope you have also learned a few useful tips to strengthen your B2G programs and that 2007 has been a record-breaking year for your team.

We've covered a lot of ground so far, taking a good look at everything from working in harmony with your marketing department (yes, it can be done!) to handling a company crisis. Today, let's review some of the B2G topics we've explored this year:

Begin your contracting journey with a question.

Before you launch your business development efforts into the government market, be sure that you can answer one very important question from government: "So what?" If you can't answer this question, it doesn't matter if your products or services are less expensive and higher quality, and fancy collateral and flashy Web sites won't help you either.

You may need to work with a government consultant to help you determine the easiest market entry points. And, as you begin your adventure in the pursuit of government contracting dollars, remember to build measurement tools into all of your marketing campaigns and business development activities. Paying attention to ROI will help you evaluate what works and -- more importantly -- what doesn't.

Business development pros, make the most of your marketing department.

Instead of tolerating the marketing department as a necessary evil, take care to educate your marketing team about the unique requirements of business development in government contracting. This is a great way to create a powerful ally.

Invite marketing to the strategy table to make them an integral part of the process, insist on metrics in the marketing plan, advocate for the marketing team's budget and -- listen up, folks -- stop wasting marketing's money on expensive ventures like fun events that don't yield a real payoff.

Finally, when you sign on with industry partners, get marketing dollars and other marketing support included in the contract legalese.

Marketing gurus, make the BD team part of your team.

The marketing and business development relationship is a two-way street. Just as the BD team needs to respect the marketing department, you marketing experts need to recognize the importance of the BD effort. Make sure your business development experts really understand what the marketing department is all about, and recognize that business development can provide you with invaluable intel -- after all, they spend the most time working directly with prospects, customers and industry peers.

Make sure that marketing understands the channels that BD uses to pursue federal contracts, and always,

always, always insist on metrics for every part of the marketing process. Metrics will help justify your budget as well as ensure that you're making the biggest impact possible with the resources you have available.

Doing your best means preparing for the worst.

If you're in business long enough, negative press is just like death and taxes -- everyone has to deal with it. But how you handle your crisis communications can determine whether an incident has a long-term impact on your bottom line.

In business development, you're talking with prospects and customers every single day; it is up to you to make sure you understand and support your company's crisis communication plan. And remember, business development teams are often the first to hear industry news (or even gossip, which travels faster than the speed of light in the B2G world) that might adversely affect your company. Pay attention and share what you hear with your department head and marketing department. Forewarned is forearmed!

You can survive -- and thrive in an acquisition.

While B2G companies typically fare better in acquisitions than their commercial sector counterparts, integrating multiple companies while maintaining effective business development is a tough proposition in any market. Do your part: embrace the new company brand and image (delaying the inevitable wastes your time and prolongs the pain); make sure you are up to speed on the integration plan, so you can help keep customers and prospects informed; and assist senior executives in planning and executing one-on-one meetings with key customers, partners, and even prospects to explain how the acquisition will improve company services and capabilities.

Now get out there and get that contract!

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