

contracting checklist

1. Starting Up

- Write a business plan. The plan will change as you execute it, but most seasoned entrepreneurs will tell you that by far the most value in writing a business plan is the thought process used to develop it. Writing a business plan forces you to think about all aspects of the business!
- Talk to other small business owners, suppliers, competitors and others to see where you can establish an edge.
- Get business start-up education. A good starting point is your local community college or training programs sponsored by Veterans Corporation:
www.veteranscorp.org
- Contact your local SBDC (Small Business Development Center, run by the SBA): www.sba.gov/sbdc/sbdcnear.html
- Educate yourself on entrepreneurship and your industry by joining NaVOBA and other trade associations, talk with other business owners in your industry.
- Determine your company's legal entity (sole proprietor, partnership, LLC, corporation, etc.). It is strongly advised that you consult a lawyer for this. Most lawyers will do this for a few hundred dollars.
- If you plan to incorporate, get an Employer Identification Number (EIN):
www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=102767,00.html
- Select and register a company name that reflects what services your business offers.

2. Registration

- Determine if your company is considered a "small" business:
www.sba.gov/size/sizetable2002.html
- Determine your company's NAICS code(s):
www.census.gov/epcd/naics02/naicod02.htm
- Register on CCR (Central Contractor Registry): www.ccr.gov
- Determine your company's small business classification: SDVOB, VOB, 8(a), SDB, WOB, HUBZone, etc.
- Register on CVE (Center for Veterans Enterprise, run by the VA): www.vetbiz.gov
- Register on your state's contractor Web site.
- Register on your county and local government contractor Web sites.
- Register and consult with your local PTAC (Procurement Technical Assistance Center, run by Defense Logistics Agency) office: www.dla.mil/db/procurem.htm
- Register for a GSA schedule (General Services Administration). This is very time-consuming and can take 6-9 months to get on the schedule but can be worth the effort. Many firms offer to prepare your GSA application for a fee but you can submit on your own as well.
- Register your company with Dun & Bradstreet: www.dnb.com

3. Research

- Research government and prime contractor targets to find out which agencies and companies are most likely to buy the products and services you provide.
- Scan fedbizopps: www.fedbizopps.gov/
- Scan federal agency OSDBU (Office of Small and Disadvantage Business Utilization) offices:
www.osdbu.gov/Listofmembers.htm

- Scan state, county and local government Web sites.
- Talk to contracting officers at your local military base, VA hospital, IRS center, Army Corps of Engineers office and federal and state offices for local opportunities.
- Contact federal agencies and companies advertising in *Veterans Business Journal* ... they are paying to find you!

4. Networking

- From your initial research, develop a list of 5-10 target customers. Start with the ones that are most likely to do business with you. Don't expect overnight results. But, as a veteran-owned business, you will certainly have the attention of federal agencies, federal contractors and large businesses. Most all have specific supplier diversity goals for veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses. Use this to your advantage.
- When contacting target customers, lead with your ability to solve their problems and meet their needs. But don't forget to let them know that you are a veteran-owned business.
- Start with the small business personnel (SBLO, Supplier Diversity office, OSDBU office) at your target customers. They can lead you to the appropriate buyer or contracting officer.
- Be professional and treat them like any other customer. Wear a suit.
- Fully research your targeted customer's needs.
- Develop a capabilities statement.
- Develop company brochures and a presentation.
- Attend one-on-one counseling sessions with your targeted customers.
- Attend and actively work trade shows. Wear a suit and go prepared with company literature, business cards and be prepared to give a quick, professional synopsis of your company and how it can meet your target customer's needs.
- Ask for referrals.

5. Proposals

- Research other proposals to use as a template (target customer, SBDC, other small businesses, etc.).
- Submit proposals and follow-up on leads.
- Count no's as a learning opportunity. Ask why you didn't get the job. When encountering objections, ask for specifics so you can be better prepared next time.
- When you get a yes, perform the job in a professional and timely manner. Ask for referrals and testimonials. Post previous performance on your company's Web site and in company literature. Word of mouth of your company's abilities will spread and more business will follow!

Stay the course! Like any sales effort, expect many more rejections than successes. But as an entrepreneur you should be well-suited to handle rejection. It only takes a few agreements to build a successful business. And as a veteran-owned business, you can find no better customer right now than federal agencies, federal contractors and large businesses with veteran-owned goals. This limits the competition and puts you ahead of the game!