

**Small Business Administration**  
**Ron Johnson's Interview with David Loines**

Marketing to the Federal Government

Ron Johnson: In 2007, the federal government awarded more than \$85 billion in government contracts to small businesses. Business owners need to take advantage of every marketing option in today's slowing economy.

Hi, I am Ron Johnson with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Your Small Business Resource, and with me today is a good friend, David Loines. He is acting Deputy Director of SBA's Office of Government Contracting. How are you, David?

David Loines: Thank you, Ron. I am doing fine.

Ron Johnson: If someone wants to sell to the government where should they start?

David Loines: I would recommend that a small business starting out start with their local Small Business Development Center or SBDC. We have those centers located at most of the local universities and colleges in the states throughout the U.S. What they provide is management assistance to current and perspective small business owners.

If you take a look at the SBA website, which is [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov), there is a listing of all the SBDCs throughout the country.

Ron Johnson: Thanks, David. Now how should they get started, by letter, networking, or a business plan?

David Loines: Well, they should start by first obtaining a Dun & Bradstreet Number or D&B for their company. That number is a unique identifier that identifies the company as well as the location of that company.

The second thing they need to do is register in the Central Contractor Registry or CCR. That is [www.ccr.gov](http://www.ccr.gov). Being registered in CCR will allow the company to do two things. Number one, it is a requirement to get paid by the federal government. And the second thing is that prospective agencies and contracting officers can actually search that database for qualified small businesses.

Ron Johnson: Now David, in your expert opinion, which businesses fair best?

David Loines: I would say the businesses that really do their planning or do their homework to really find out what and when the federal government buys products and services. There is a website that is called [FedBizOpps.Gov](http://FedBizOpps.Gov) and that is a listing of all federal procurements over \$25,000.

And what a firm needs to do is; first of all, identify their North American Industrial Classification System Code or NAICS Code. That is the code that the federal government uses to purchase all products and services.

Once a firm has identified one or more of those codes, they can go and search a system like [FedBizOpps](#) based on that NAICS Code. They actually have a e-mail electronic process that will actually notify a firm when a requirement under that particular NAICS Code is available.

Another thing they can do is agencies post what they call a procurement forecast. Every federal agency is going to have that at their website. And what that does is that shows a listing of products and services that they have purchased, what they pay for those, when those contracts expire, and for future purchases. So that is another good tool for identifying possible contracts.

Ron Johnson: This is good stuff. Now in closing, David, what are some of the more common mistakes that business owners should avoid?

David Loines: I tell you, one of the things is trying to be, I guess you would say, a jack of all trades. Sometimes I talk to small businesses and they say, "Well, just tell me what you want, and I can provide it, or I can build it." And that is not a good marketing tool. What you need to do is be good at what you do and expand on that.

A lot of the firms, they need to learn the process and understand the regulations. A lot of them are really capable of performing the work, but when it comes to filling out the

necessary paperwork or winning that proposal, they do not have a clue.

So, what they need to do is as they start to submit proposals on contracts, if they are not successful, request debriefings from the contracting officers, which will give them clues to what they need to do to strengthen their next proposal and hopefully secure that contract.

Ron Johnson: Well, thanks to David Loines, he is acting Deputy Director of the Office of Government Contracting, for providing invaluable insight to contracting with the federal government. Now you can learn more about all of these resources at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).

Until next time, I am Ron Johnson with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Your Small Business Resource.

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