7 Secrets for getting more government business
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As you listen to the news telling you that government budgets are being pared, note that the same newscast reminds you that there is no downturn in threat levels. There are still plenty of contracts for government security systems. Some integrators seem to have a special knack for landing these lucrative projects. Here are seven of their secrets.

**Secret 1:** Get on the GSA schedule. You can greatly increase your opportunity for government business by accessing the Government Services Administration (GSA) system.

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Once on the GSA schedule, an integrator cuts out a slew of competitors and saves time. This is true even when selling to local and state governments as they can get Schedule 84 pricing. Since only those integrators are out of luck. In addition, the bid process is faster because pricing is already covered by the schedule. There is no time spent negotiating back and forth. And, when dealing with school districts, check if your prospect uses Schedule 84. It will give you a competitive edge.

To get on the schedule involves fees and, to stay on the schedule, an integrator must maintain a certain level of business. As a result, being on a GSA schedule will typically get you additional help from your manufactures as well since you have shown that you are serious about government business. In most cases, when a manufacturer gets a lead from a government prospect, one of the first things it looks for is which of its integrators are on the GSA schedule. Since the manufacturer wants the business as badly as you do and, by already being on the GSA schedule, you stand far greater chance of getting the lead from them.

**Secret 2:** Provide convergence. The government, probably more than any other industry sector, is demanding solutions that integrate physical and logical access control. FIPS (Federal Information Processing Standards) compliance is almost always mandatory. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12), issued to standardize federal security measures, is inciting smart card use in the government which in turn, is stimulating use by larger organizations counting on government business. Likewise, following their big brother, the state and local governments are responding to the benefits of smart cards and their readers as well. However, not just any smart card and reader will do.

In 2006, the FIPS Publications 201 (FIPS 201) was issued, defining the PIV (Personal Identity Verification) standards for federal employees and contractors. For access control providers, the government insists that smart cards and readers must comply with PIPS 201 requirements. Many agencies have been somewhat slow to incorporate smart card readers. However, those days are over and the government is now pressuring those that haven’t yet incorporated the FIPS 201 smart cards and readers for both physical and logical access control to do so quickly.

True security systems integration is a goal of most government security operations. Seamless integration of electronic access control with video, intrusion, perimeter and identification systems is a beneficial endpoint of any government project.

**Secret 3:** Push the latest technologies. Just as the government is demanding smart cards and readers, the government typically wants to use the latest technologies. Successful integrators lead with the credentials, readers and locking systems specified in FIPS 201 but don’t stop there. The government is where an integrator can really prove its mettle by proposing turn-key solutions, something that truly separates themselves from normal dealers and distributors.
Government buyers are interested in ideas that will extend their card systems, such as using wireless access control to connect elevators, remote doors and parking entrances to their access control systems. Show them how your wireless lock can read both the government’s CAC card as well as proximity cards for easier migration. They are not averse to using biometrics to provide an extra layer of security at especially sensitive areas or to challenge the holder of the smart card.

Government buyers are also interested in future-proofing their security investments. That’s why so many of them have incorporated multi-technology readers which read both proximity and the FIPS smart cards, they don’t need to pull out their present proximity reader as it is future-proofed to read the smart cards as well. Show them smart card reader that are also future-proofed to take advantage of the coming trend of using NFC-enabled phones as credentials. This is informations that will help you stand out from your competitors.

**Secret 4:** Use the BAA/ARRA Compliant Product Guide. It contains the products that currently comply with the “Buy American” requirements imposed by the federal government through the Buy American Act (BAA) and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Going back to Secret 1, BAA/ARRA products can be purchased from GSA Schedule holder and most manufacturers provide the BAA/ARRA Guide for download on their websites.

**Secret 5:** Tap into FedBizOpps. You can search for government opportunities for free. This website is an online tool designed to connect government buyers with qualified suppliers. Buyers create, track and award opportunities through this system and interested parties can search, review and monitor new business. Go to www.fbo.gov to register to start finding projects in your area.

Bidding services, such as Reed Construction Data or www.govemmentbids.com let integrators learn about bids once published and provide which A&E consultant is in charge. Integrators should sign up with one or more of these services. Developing relationships with A&E consultants will also give them a leg up over their competition.

**Secret 6:** Know your local standards and regulations. Don’t sell security solutions to the government legislative vacuum. Being aware of federal standards and regulations that affect government and non-government entities alike will help you gain the trust of your government customers and guide them toward solutions that will meet their needs today...and tomorrow. It will also keep them in compliance with the latest laws and regulations that affect them.

**Secret 7:** Work with your manufacturer. If an integrator gets in on a government project, they should work very closely with their manufacturer. The manufacturer knows how to market the implement government solutions. They will ensure that the integrator is meeting all compliances, from quoting and bidding with compliant products and making sure that the back-up paper-work to the bid has the required documentation. With approved GSA Schedules and cooperative purchasing programs for federal, state and local governments, they look to integrators to be strategic partners for increased sales to government agencies of all types and want to help integrators to be successful.