



Building our communities one small business at a time...

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Staying Alive - By Staying Informed



The Information Age has changed our society just as greatly, if not more than, the Industrial Revolution changed the farming society of the 1800s. It's a fast-paced, "wired" world, with news flashing around the world almost instantly, e-mail connecting far-flung correspondents all over the globe, and information bombarding us from all sides.

Unfortunately, often the information bombarding us is not information that can help our businesses thrive. We must learn to cultivate our own methods for staying abreast of developments in our particular field - and we must learn to ignore information we can't use.

Where to start? The following list of suggested resources is just that: a starting point. We hope you will use these ideas to develop and move on to your own, more sophisticated, network of information resources.

Ten Ways to Stay Informed

- **Subscribe to industry or trade publications** that focus on your business - or the business of your clients and customers.
- **Join a professional association, chamber of commerce, or network with other entrepreneurs in similar industries.**
- **Look for information on the Internet.** Watch for opportunities to interact with business or industry experts in "chat room" interviews. Put the interviews on your appointment calendar and be sure to show up.
- **Subscribe to Internet newsgroups** that focus on your industry.
- **Read newspapers** - local and national - to track business trends.
- **Talk to your customers and clients.** What issues are troubling them? What is their mission? What factors do they think will affect their business in the future? Ask yourself, "How might this affect my business?"

- **Invest in training: attend a conference or seminar on a subject that affects your business.** Once there, *do not be a wallflower*. Strike up conversations with other participants. If a session is particularly helpful, go up to the speaker to thank her ... or add a comment of your own. Ask for her business card. If she agrees, you'll have a resource who is just a phone-call away when you need a fast reality-check. Most people are flattered to be consulted - but remember, their time is valuable, so don't waste it. Ideally, information exchange should be a two-way street. Do you have information that might benefit your source? Share it with her.
- **Visit or call your city library - or check out the library at a nearby college.** Find out what resources - periodicals, newspapers, reference materials - they offer for someone interested in a business like yours.
- **Recognize that at some point you may not be able to know everything about your business.** Learn to use consultants or hire employees who can compensate for the gaps in your knowledge.
- **Cultivate your curiosity.** Don't be afraid to try new things. The most important skill you can develop is not the ability to remember information, but the ability to seek out and find the information you need, when you need it, and then use it for the benefit of your business.

SBA Nevada District Office Presents How to Sell Yourself & Your Ideas!

A Free Business Workshop
Featuring: Training Program Developer
Former SCORE Counselor, Joseph (Joe) Mitchell
at the
Las Vegas Business Center
1951 Stella Lake Street, Suite #30
Thursday, August 26, 2004
9:00 am to 11:00 am
For additional information, call (702) 638-0853.

Mark Your Calendar...

Presented by:

Nevada Small Business
Development Center

Business Expo for Veterans

at the
Tuscany Suites & Casino
255 E. Flamingo Road
on
Wednesday, September 15, 2004
from
9:00 am- 12:00 pm
Register for FREE:
Call: (702) 895-4270

SBA's Fun Times Again...



2004 Small Business Person of the Year for the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) Nellie Sue M. Nelson, President, Cookies for Life (center); Bob Cushman, SCORE (left); and Nevada SBA District Director, John Scott.

The Annual Small Business Awards Luncheon was held on Tuesday, June 8, at the Gold Coast and Casino. Outstanding small business owners and lenders were honored by the SBA, the Nevada Business Development Center, SCORE and the Nevada Microenterprise Initiative, along with various Chambers of Commerce.

SBA's Vision Statement

To increase economic opportunities for all Americans and to do this as a premier Federal agency recognized for its innovation and technology leadership.

How the Government Buys?

The government buys many of the products and services it needs from suppliers who meet certain qualifications. It applies standardized procedures by which to purchase goods and services. That is, the government does not purchase items or services in the way an individual household might. Instead, government contracting officials use procedures that conform to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR).

The FAR is a standardized set of regulations used by all federal agencies in making purchases. It provides procedures for every step in the procurement process, from the time someone in the government discovers a need for a product or service to the time the purchase is complete. The FAR can be accessed electronically at www.arnet.gov/far.

As of October 1, 2001, the government transitioned from Commerce Business Daily (CBD) to Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps) to "post" all procurement opportunities expected to exceed \$25,000. FedBizOpps is a web-based application and is the government-wide point of entry to communicate its buying requirements to potential suppliers. This very important website can be accessed at <http://www.FedBizOpps.gov>

When the government wants to purchase a certain product or service, it can use a variety of contracting methods. Simplified acquisition procedures, sealed bidding, contracting by negotiation and consolidated purchasing vehicles are key contract methodologies used to purchase products and services.

Contracting Methods

Simplified Procedures The Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act (FASA) of 1994 is intended to simplify government buying procedures. It removed many competition restrictions on government purchases of less than \$100,000. Instead of full and open competition, agencies can now use simplified procedures for soliciting and evaluating bids up to \$100,000. Government agencies, however, are still required to advertise all planned purchases over \$25,000 in www.FedBizOpps.gov.

Sealed Bidding Sealed bidding is how the government contracts competitively when its requirements are clear, accurate and complete. An Invitation For Bid (IFB) is the method used for the sealed bid process. Typically, an IFB includes a description of the product or service to be acquired, instructions for preparing a bid, the conditions for purchase, packaging, delivery, shipping and payment, contract clauses to be included and the deadline for submitting bids. Each sealed bid is opened in public at the purchasing office at the time designated in the invitation. All bids are read aloud and recorded. A contract is then awarded by the agency to the low bidder who is determined to be responsive to the government's needs. Government-wide IFBs are available daily for review at www.FedBizOpps.gov. This electronic government service also provides a direct link to the invitation.

Contract Negotiation In certain cases, when the value of a government contract exceeds \$100,000 and when it necessitates a highly technical product or service, the government may issue a Request for Proposal (RFP). In a typical RFP, the government will request a product or service it needs, and solicit proposals from prospective contractors on how they intend to carry out that request, and at what price. Proposals in response to an RFP can be subject to negotiation after they have been submitted.