



## **THE WRITING IS ON THE WALL: SELL, BE SOLD OR BE GONE!**

*Are you cultivating a revenue generation capability and building your pipeline to "graduate" to the next level?*

*Excerpt from the Washington Technology Column by Bill Scheessele*

Sell, be sold or be gone. Sounds harsh, but this may be the “wake up call” many 8(a) firms need to hear to succeed upon “graduation”.

In late 2008, the Appeals Court for the Federal Circuit ruled that the Defense Department’s small disadvantaged business contracting rule was unconstitutional. The good news is that this ruling only applies to the DOD SDB program and the court process took 10 years to reach this final decision. The decision can’t dismantle small business set-aside programs, created by federal laws. The bad news is that while a serious “re-engineering” of the entire 8(a) program may not happen immediately, it might happen sooner than later, given the attention given to this recent ruling on constitutionality.

Whether or not an overhaul of all the small business set-aside programs happens soon, this specific uncertainty should give 8(a) company leaders something to think about, beyond the day to day challenges of running a small business. When it’s all said and done, however, this situation is definitely something that can be addressed and should be tackled as soon as possible.

When organizations accept the advantaged position that an 8(a) program provides, during the ensuing nine years, they also accept the challenge of developing a Business Development culture, thinking, discipline and methodology along with an adequate pipeline to proactively influence their viability and growth. Whether the courts eventually negate the status or timeframe ... there’s always an hourglass running.

It’s very difficult to cultivate proactive thinking, methodology and pipeline under the pressure of a deadline.

Trying to recruit someone who brings a pipeline with them or find a “rainmaker” is frequently a grasp at futility when you’re close to graduation. These 8(a) firms

either tend to evaporate, or whatever contracts they secured are quickly absorbed by more aggressive and proactive firms.

If you take the scholarship and the advantaged position, there is no “forever”. Eventually, you will have to deal with the reality of surviving on your own and being self-sustaining. If you’re not, you’ve created an environment of dependency and vulnerability regardless of your technical capability and relationships.

Cultivating a Business Development, revenue generation capability involves more than investing in proposal writing, capture management, “how to” sell workshops or relying entirely upon a mentor-protégé relationship. Building a BD operation and developing a Business Development culture early on while in the program requires a number of critical steps, among them:

1. Developing a strategic and tactical BD revenue growth plan
2. Securing or growing a BD leader with hunting and farming ability
3. Understanding BD thinking
4. Building and installing a company BD process that everyone uses to build up the pipeline
5. Developing a team of strategic BD hunters and organic BD farmers to guarantee revenue growth

A Business Development Plan is not the same thing as a business plan. It requires that the company’s leadership focus on revenue generation strategies and tactics from a proactive stance rather than a reactive “pitch the next RFP that comes along” position. Get outside help with this critical first step.

Securing and/or growing Business Development leadership is critical to an 8(a) organization maturation

efforts. These professionals should have both hunting and farming experience in addition to the “interpreneurial” profile of a BD team builder. If someone with these credentials or at least someone you can grow into this leader is not already on the team, you will need to source an individual from the outside with experience in building a BD operation.

Acquire BD thinking that focuses on building long-term, trust relationships with clients. While providing top notch customer service is an important aspect of client relationships, knowing and understanding the on-going, real world challenges your customers face in doing their job, is even more important. It is critical that you invest in the training and development you need to expand your knowledge in BD from the many sources available.

Building and installing a company-wide Business Development process is a necessity for revenue growth. This needs to be a BD process that works for your firm and that everyone uses. Anyone in the company who

has contact with the customer is in BD and as such, should have an understanding of the organization’s BD process and use it to help build the pipeline.

Developing a team of Strategic Hunters for new business and Organic Farmers for add-on business is critical for on-going viability after graduation. Invest in the best BD education that fits your organization’s culture. Whether a firm continues in the future as an independent, viable organization or leadership is positioning the company to be acquired as part of a publicly-traded enterprise, a BD team’s capability can make the difference between succeeding with either of these strategies, or folding because revenue objectives and profit projections were not attained.

Many challenges loom that an 8(a) company or any size firm in Government Services has no control over. Proactively securing your organization’s long-term viability by cultivating Business Development thinking and methodology is something you can control ... *and there’s nothing unconstitutional about that.*

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*MBD<sup>i</sup> is an international services firm delivering resources to produce increased and sustained revenue growth. We serve as change agents for organizations in the Government Services industry providing solutions to their Business Development challenges and guaranteeing revenue results.*

- *Build, integrate and turn-around BD organizations*
- *Develop and implement strategic and tactical BD plans*
- *Conduct present state BD assessments*
- *Evaluate and source BD leaders and teams*
- *Design and implement BD processes*
- *Design, develop and deliver BD curricula*



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