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B2G Insights

Make marketing your ally in fight for fed contracts

Washington Business Journal - February 16, 2007 by [Joyce Bosc](#)

Those of you gearing up for a strong push into the federal market this year might have noticed that Uncle Sam neglected to leave a very important present under the holiday tree. A budget.

That's right. Since the beginning of the year, all but two federal agencies and departments had no 2007 budget. And depending on what Congress does -- or does not -- accomplish this week, the budget situation could get much, much worse.

Whatever happens, your government prospects have been treading carefully for quite a while when it comes to allocating precious and limited resources, and that mind-set can mean extra challenges for your B2G business-development efforts.

And if that's not enough, you have to duel with a marketing department when you need support. Well, guess what? That marketing department can be a powerful tool for business development, especially now, when business development needs all the help it can get.

Here are six ways to make your marketing department an ally and a positive force in your business-development program.

Give marketing a Six-pack

1. Educate the marketing department. In business development, you are the one getting the firsthand information. You rub elbows with customers, prospects, partners and peers. Failing to share what you learn is a serious mistake.

Make sure the marketing department understands the specific channels you are pursuing within the federal market. Give them periodic updates on changes or concerns you hear about in the government arena.

Just as a clueless marketing department can be a hindrance, an informed marketing department can be a powerful tool for B2G business development.

2. Invite marketing to the strategy table. The business-development staff should invite the marketing staff to the strategy table. In fact, you should insist that marketing gets a seat at your early planning meetings for 2007 (if not this year, then certainly for 2008).

Developing the right message -- and making sure that message reaches the people you need it to reach -- is the key service the marketing department can give you.

When marketing is up-to-speed on your plans for the year, you'll get better messages, better tools and better support. In addition, you won't waste as much time begging for last-minute materials from a surprised (and perhaps uncooperative) marketing department later in the year.

Give your marketing team a clear vision of where business development is headed for the year and let them bring their expertise to your strategic planning. You'll be glad you did.

3. Remember the metrics. Don't accept a marketing plan without specific, relevant metrics to track progress.

Yes, some people will tell you that marketing activities are qualitative, not quantitative. After 28 years

working in B2G, I can tell you that almost anything is measurable if you build in the metrics from the beginning, and marketing is no exception. Marketing metrics will help you see what works, and what doesn't, in support of business development.

4. Advocate for marketing's budget. Admit it. When the company needs to pare down and save a few bucks, the marketing department feels the cuts first. If you are going to get the support from the marketing staff that you really need for your federal efforts, help them get the funding.

Advocate for your marketing department. It needs specific budget dollars allocated to support your critical activities.

5. Stop wasting marketing money. This is the flip side of the business-development/marketing budget coin. Business development must take the initiative to eliminate activities that waste marketing dollars on expensive ventures that don't have a real payoff.

Fun, fancy trade shows that get little or no qualified leads are a waste of time and a big drain on the marketing budget, taking money that could have been spent helping you reach prospects and close big deals.

6. Get marketing into the partner contract. When you sign on with industry partners, be sure to get marketing dollars and other marketing support into the contract language. Partnerships should result in opportunities for your marketing department to make announcements -- if a well-known industry partner is running your software, for example -- and leverage partner budgets for joint efforts such as trade-show activities.

Those are just a few of the important ways business-development teams in the federal market can make sure they get the most from marketing. And in light of the federal budget's status, the strategic inclusion of marketing in the business-development plan is especially important in B2G right now.

But remember -- there are two sides to every story. In my next column, we'll review how the marketing department can make sure you business development types are a useful part of their process.

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