

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

MADE
EASY~~IER~~

SECOND EDITION

JUDY BRADT



Chapter One: Strategy



Your federal strategy starts by answering critical questions that get to the heart of your plans to grow your company. This chapter presents the hard-hitting questions you'll need to ask your team as you begin your quest for more government contracts – and gives you the tools to find the answers. Get ready for straight talk – and candid insight – into how you can lay a foundation to win new government business in the year ahead.

By the end of Chapter One, you'll have a much better idea whether or not this giant customer makes sense for you.

What You'll Do

- Evaluate Strategic Fit
- Understand & Affirm Your Core Business
- Set Goals & Metrics
- Identify Critical Resources
- Address Constraints
- Assess Your Strategy
- Make a Go / No-Go on Selling to Government



Part 1: Overview

Concept – Why Sell To Government? The Opportunity

Government – federal, state, and local – buys just about everything. The question is not so much whether government buys what you’ve got, but whether you want to do what it takes to reach those buyers.

The federal government spends between \$400 billion and \$500 billion (\$471 billion in FY2016) on contracts for goods and services. (In Part Two, you’ll learn how to find out how much federal buyers spend on services or products like yours, and what else you need to know before you begin). Moreover, the total purchasing power of over 80,000 state and local buying authorities tops two *trillion* dollars.

Combining all levels together, the American government is the world’s biggest buyer. Who knew?

Who sells to government? All kinds of people – quite possibly including your competitors. What are their secrets to success?

Strategic fit is absolutely critical. How will the effort to pursue, win, and perform for this new and demanding customer – whether that’s Northrop Grumman or the Department of Homeland Security – be in harmony with the direction you plan to take your company?

If you don’t already have a reasonably strong business plan, believe me, selling to government is going to make things harder, not easier.

Selling to government may be the biggest challenge your business has ever taken on. If you’re ready, winning this business can catapult your company to the next level of success. If you’re not ready to take on federal business, the effort just to pursue, never mind to perform, a federal contract can put your business out of business.

If your focus is fuzzy, if your mission is mundane, if your finances are weak, if your strategy is sloppy, if your back office is out to lunch, and certainly if your performance is sub-par, that’s going to show up big time when you start out on the road to win government business.

I’ve never heard anybody say they deliberately went after government contracts because they wanted to get their business into shape. But if you’re successful, that can be another benefit for you.



Venture capitalists have told me they often like to see young, strong businesses plan to win government business in order to drive growth that will make the company attractive to buy. And I have definitely heard dozens of companies say, “Before we did our GSA Schedule proposal, our pricing and discounting were somewhere between inconsistent and nonexistent. That proposal forced us to get our act together and create more consistent business practices in the commercial market, and strengthen our internal corporate management. ALL our customers appreciated that, and we’re more profitable as a result!”

In addition to being the world’s biggest buyer, and one that is often very loyal to vendors who provide good service and delivery, government is also one of the most demanding customers, and one of the least forgiving if you don’t perform well.

If you’ve been meaning to get around to updating your business plan, beefing up your back office, or improving your infrastructure, this is the perfect time to do it. Getting ready to sell to government may turn out to be the best thing you ever did – even if you decide, long before the end of this book, that you have no intention of EVER selling to government after all.

EXERCISE ONE: Gut Check. What’s Special About These Clients?

A Quick Market Comparison: Government and Commercial Clients

The chart below is a starting point for a discussion with the team that’s going to be tackling and supporting your effort to win government business. If you’re just thinking this through on your own, you can work through the right column. To use this chart for a planning session, you can start with a blank chart topped with just the headers, and ask your team to fill it in, based on their experience or perception of the market. How do government buyers stack up against commercial customers?

Buyer Characteristic	Government	Commercial	Which One You'd Rather Do Business With: Government / Commercial / Both
Process Predictability	The buying process is published in the Federal Acquisition Regulations and the solicitation – in other words, it's transparent and predictable. Clear, published rules enforced by law. You know who's making the decisions and how. And, win or lose, you're entitled to a debriefing to find out how you did.	Varied, unpredictable. Who knows how they pick winners? If you think your loss was unfair, it's hard to litigate if you don't know what rules the buyer was supposed to be following in the first place.	
Power of Repeat Business	Complacency will lose you the business... but, do a good job and your success can keep on rolling. Government buyers are reluctant to change contractors if what they have is working well.	People do business with people they like and trust... but commercial companies can also be more willing to take a risk on a new vendor. So it can be easier to get in, but you may have to work harder to <i>stay</i> in.	

Buyer Characteristic	Government	Commercial	Which One You'd Rather Do Business With: Government / Commercial / Both
Reliability of Payment	If you did your job and the invoice is correct, they're good for it. They print the money. And they have to pay you a penalty fee if they pay late.	What percentage of your commercial contracts do you allow for bad debt?	
Payment Time Frame	The rules require federal buyers to pay a <i>correct, complete</i> invoice in 30 days, and to honor discounts offered for prompt payment. Although that doesn't <i>guarantee</i> you'll be paid on time, it's reasonably likely.	Many small businesses face challenges from delayed payment by commercial customers, especially large primes.	
Reliability of Client – Will They Be In Business?	244 years and counting	They come, they go. Even giant car companies can go under.	
Right of Appeal	Right and process of appeal guaranteed by law	No guarantee of being heard, nor of a consistent dispute resolution process	

Buyer Characteristic	Government	Commercial	Which One You'd Rather Do Business With: Government / Commercial / Both
Reputation Enhancement	Imagine telling a prospect, "The Navy is my customer"! Government contracts, even small ones, pack prestige.	Contracts with big-name companies get attention; less so, work with a client no one's ever heard of.	
Buying Cycle	<p>12-month fiscal-year cycle means that you could face 18 to 24 months of marketing expense and time before a solid flow of profitable sales can begin.</p> <p>It can be harder to build friendships with your government buyers, not least because they have to be above reproach.</p> <p>Ethics rules dictate who you can and can't talk to and when, and even whether you can buy them lunch.</p>	<p>Because businesses aren't bogged down by that huge public buying process, they can make decisions fast if you have what they want.</p> <p>Long-term sales can build from long-term relationships, and vice versa.</p>	

Buyer Characteristic	Government	Commercial	Which One You'd Rather Do Business With: Government / Commercial / Both
Fast-Track Purchasing Ability	<p>Government buyers are extremely risk-averse. Even for small purchases, they first choose suppliers they know and trust.</p> <p>Most agencies have Simplified Acquisition Procedures (SAP) for smaller purchases. If you know the rules, you can ask the buyer to tell you more about how they use SAP.</p>	<p>If they want it, they buy it, in accordance with their internal purchasing procedures.</p>	
Estimated Buying Power/ Market Size	<p>World's biggest buyer: well over \$400 billion at the federal level alone.</p>	<p>Some are big, some are small. However, none of them buys \$400B worth of anything.</p>	

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MAKING THE GRADE – EXERCISE ONE:

This exercise calls for a quick gut-check. Which market would you rather be in? What do you like about each? And what has you worried?

- If you're charged up about taking on a giant new customer, great – proceed to the next chapter!
- If your review has left you with more questions than answers, that's okay too: write 'em down. We're on the way to answers.

PROFILE IN SUCCESS: Marissa Levin

Meet Marissa Levin, CEO of Information Experts in Reston, Virginia, an award-winning provider of strategic and creative marketing communications and marketing and education services since 1995. Today, Information Experts is a multi-million-dollar company for commercial and federal organizations. In 2008 her flagship government contract, with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), was worth over \$6 million. Government contracts helped her company into the ranks of the INC500, which recognizes America's fastest-growing companies.

- What spurred her federal pursuit? A focused strategy for corporate growth. “After 9/11, we nearly went out of business,” she said. “So we turned to the business in our own backyard,” and started to go after government contracts.
- How did she get started? “We got on several GSA Schedules; built strong partnerships with large integrators; and [did] a lot of marketing, including through many 8(a) shows produced by private-sector companies as well as events sponsored by government agencies themselves.”
- How long did it take to win her first contract? That happened surprisingly fast: “We were invited by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to bid on two task-order competitions for creative work...because we had strong commercial experience.” EPA was also looking for qualified 8(a) companies. But Marissa cautions that her initial experience isn't the whole story – “Steady profit took us a big investment of time and money.”
- What did it take to build that \$6 million success? “That took us nearly two years of getting to know the customer and what they wanted, and building trust. When the time came for the proposal, we had eight people working full time for six weeks and spent well over \$200,000 – and that wasn't billable time!”
- What was her biggest challenge? Financing! “From the day you win, you have to start executing! But you then have to bankroll your employees for 60 to 90 days,” before you might get your first payment. Without financing, that large contract could put you out of business! The day she won the OPM contract, Marissa declared in triumph to her new client, “My living room has no furniture in it, but I have this contract!”

Marissa's story highlights keys to success. Those keys are about to be yours.





Part 2: Strategic Fit

Marissa Levin's story shows the power of a good strategic fit. She invested time and money to learn how government did business – an investment that made good business sense because she'd thought it through. Once she made that commitment, she built relationships, figured out her competitors' weak spots, and attacked the market with tight focus on getting every advantage possible with prospects that offered the most potential.

How could YOU do that? Time to roll up your sleeves and figure it out. If your company has a current strategic plan and a planning process you like, then, for goodness' sake, start there. I'm not going to tell you to re-invent something that already works. On the other hand, if you *don't* currently have a suitable strategic plan, or if you're looking for some questions and ideas to get the ball rolling, then the rest of this chapter can help.

In my experience, when clients work through these questions, they can take anywhere from three hours to a day, depending on things like the size of the company, the number of key players who design and execute the strategy, the sophistication of their existing business plan, and the impact that a decision to pursue government business will have on the company as a whole.

EXERCISE TWO: The Right Stuff

Do you have the Right Stuff to win government contracts? Here's one way to find out.

Get together with your key managers – including executive leadership as well as sales, marketing, finance, and production. (If that's just two people, total, this is going to be either a really long meeting... or a really short one.)

Brainstorm, and ask yourselves: "Why do we want to sell to the government?" Then compare your reasons to the lists below.

List A: Some Potentially Really Bad Reasons to Chase Government Business

- I heard the government has a lot of money. There has to be some for us.
- Thousands of federal opportunities are published every day! We just have to get busy and send in some proposals.



- I just got back from a seminar about this, and they said all we have to do is follow the rules and we can win.
- The government has to buy from us because we're a small/woman-owned/service-disabled veteran-owned business.
- Our business needs a big contract to bring in some fast cash.
- I'm hurting for business, and a government contract could save me.
- I just came up with this great idea for a product the Army's gonna love.
- Government does a lot of stupid things, and our company's ideas could fix a lot of things.
- I heard that if we get 8(a) certified, the government has to buy from us.
- Our competitors just got a GSA Schedule, and we need to keep up.
- I'm a service-disabled veteran and just started my company because the government has to buy from us.
- My sister just got out of the Navy and needs a job; she can sell for us.

List B: Much Better Reasons to Focus on Winning Government Business

- They're the world's biggest buyer.
- We've got a great track record selling to Fortune 500 companies, so government could be a natural next step.
- Results of competitions and the rules of the game are in the public record.
- I'm passionate about using our proven expertise to save lives and keep soldiers safer.
- We've pinpointed a problem, and proved we can solve it, for a government buyer who has money to fix it.
- Government publishes tons of info about buyers and competition.
- They print the money – and pay their bills.
- If we win that Marine Corps contract and perform well, that'll build our reputation with those Fortune 500 companies we want to win!
- If we do a good job for that first Air Force base, they'll want to tell their friends... and we'll be in a good position for repeat business, too.
- We've been subcontracting to Lockheed for years, we've got strong end-user relationships, and we're ready to take it to the next level.

MAKING THE GRADE – EXERCISE TWO

Which sounds more like your list?

- If you have more “A-list-type” items, then you’ve probably started to feel uncomfortable. Good. You should, because you’re recognizing that you may be taking more risk than you thought. But don’t worry; you’re now going to get what you need to mitigate that risk. The next exercise will be absolutely critical for you – please keep going.
- *If you’re lining up with the “B” list, your reasoning for market entry is probably sound, and Exercise Three will build on that foundation.*

EXERCISE THREE: Mission & Vision

This is another discussion you should have internally. Why? Because you care about the success of your company, and so do your employees and stakeholders. Your key company players need to buy into your company’s commitment of time and resources to go after government business. Otherwise, you can expect resentment, sabotage, and just plain failure to deliver results.

- a. Mission: Why does your company exist? What do you deliver, whom do you serve, and how?
- b. How would serving government clients fit with that mission?
- c. Vision: What do you want to create in the world?
- d. How does serving government clients contribute to realizing that vision?
- e. Think for a moment about the government departments, agencies, or buyers you would most like to do business with. If you were to win contracts with them, would performing and delivering on those commitments be consistent with the direction you have already defined for your company?

MAKING THE GRADE – EXERCISE THREE

The potential for government contracts to build your long-term business needs to be consistent with where you plan to take the company. Do the first two exercises give you a sense that pursuing federal business would be central to the journey your company is on?

► **NO – Then stop now. It’s okay not to do this.**

Why would you spend ANY scarce resources – talent as well as time and money – on a venture that’s just a distraction from your main line of business?

If you have no idea why your company would want to win government business, OR you really don’t like anything about the federal government but would take



their money if they offered you a contract, OR you figure you'll just throw some small change and leftover marketing money at a well-meaning employee who keeps bugging you about getting a GSA Schedule (whatever that is) just to make them stop pestering you about it...

... then I'd like to suggest that pursuing government business is not going to be good for your business. At least not now. If your answers change, maybe government business can become a good idea later. In the meantime, you can pass this book along to a friend who's asking questions like yours.

► **MAYBE – Then proceed with caution.**

If pursuit of government contracts would represent a major change in direction for your company, are you ready to do that, and is this the right time? Who needs to support that change, and are they on board? This book is here to help you figure this stuff out before you go charging ahead.

► **YES! – Then let's get into the details. What's next?**

Even these short exercises show you and your team that this is the right time to put more focus and effort into the federal market. The investment of time and money to develop this business gets everybody excited and ready to dig in for the long haul and kick some butt. Time for Exercise Four.

EXERCISE FOUR: Assessing How You Fit This Niche

4-A WHAT'S YOUR CORE CAPABILITY?

This is the foundation for everything that comes next. You will win more business faster in the federal market with a narrow focus on a product or service that you deliver or perform superbly well, and which represents a unique and top-quality solution to a federal buyer's problem.

What's a core capability?

Here's what it's NOT:

"We do everything, just ask us."

"We do everything Oracle."

"C++, C#, J2EE, COBOL, ASP, ASP.Net, VB.Net, JavaScript, PHP, Perl, Python, TCL, .Net, XML, XHTML, SOAP, WSDL, UDDI, COM+, CORBA..."

Your core capability answers the question, "What do you do?" by starting, "We specialize in..."

Your core capability describes what you do, and the outcome for your customer, that represents most of the value your company creates.



In three steps: When you consider your relationships with your best customers or clients today:

1. What do you do better than anyone else? Of all the things you do or make, what product or service do you provide so well and with so much value that clients consistently pay you fast, ask for more, and refer their friends to you?
2. What problem do you solve for them, and how do they benefit as a result?
3. Why did your customer choose your company to solve that problem rather than a competitor, and/or instead of doing the work themselves?

MAKING THE GRADE – EXERCISE 4-A

Your clients are the best ones to tell you how well you did here. If you haven't already gotten in touch with one or two of your best customers to ask THEM these questions, then it's time you did.

If you did well, then your perception of your strengths will match theirs reasonably closely – and you'll probably find out some things you never realized about why they like you.

Pay attention to the SPECIFIC WORDS your clients use! Your own marketing language isn't as important as the terms that your clients are using to describe their pain and your solution. When you use their language, you help them see and hear themselves when you communicate your value to them.

Sketch out a table like the one below, and jot down the key words from Exercise 4-A in box A.

		Clients	
		Current	New
Offerings	Current	A. Current Offering Current Client	B. Current Offering New Client
	New	C. New offering Current client	D. New Offering New Client

The hardest position move in this chart is diagonal, direct from Box A to Box D. Would winning federal business represent that move for you: selling something untried to a risk-averse customer who has never bought from you?

A two-step approach might actually get you there faster. Options:



- A to B to D: Start by helping your new federal prospect get to know the service or product that your current clients love most. Maybe the federal buyer would like to try what you do now without any adaptation. As you get to know each other, then you might get the chance to tweak your commercial offering to better meet your federal buyer's unique needs.
- A to C to D: You might be able to collaborate with one of your current clients, who already knows and trusts you, to develop and test an adaptation or variation of your offering that would not only expand your effectiveness in serving today's customer, but create a track record for something that would be an even better fit for your new federal prospect.

4-B WHAT'S YOUR CORE OFFERING FOR YOUR FEDERAL BUYER?

Think about those clients for whom you solved a problem like the one you think your prospective government buyers may have.

Government buyers are notoriously risk-averse. They want to know that you've already solved their problem, just yesterday, for someone who looks almost exactly like them. Commercial customers need to fix many of the same problems that governments do: increase skilled employee retention, or lower costs, or improve effectiveness. Your commercial customers also might love you for other things that government doesn't care about – for example, most notoriously, “increasing profits.”

Sort through your core offerings to pick the ones that your top-priority government buyers would find most attractive. Federal buyers respond strongly – and are willing to pay -- for a well-defined offering that your past performance gives them confidence will solve their problems with low risk.

How much do you think you'd need to adapt what you offer, and how you talk about it, in ways that fit what government buyers say *they* need? Expect to evolve. Even if you think your commercial offering is absolutely identical to what you want to offer government, look and listen closely. These buyers generally perceive themselves and their missions as unique – and they're right.

Any time you're marketing to government buyers, and particularly when your offering isn't a commercial off-the-shelf product or service, focus your conversation on THEM: their experiences, their vision, their missions, their challenges. You don't want to start out saying to your federal prospect, “...and I know our regular stuff will suit you just fine.” Even if that turns out to be true, you need to take the time to listen to them. Share your insights and experiences respectfully, especially if you have an approach that's different from the way they do things now. Change is hard for everyone. Changing from a vendor they know (even one who is serving them poorly) to a new contractor (even one who offers a proven product or service) represents risk. You know you're on the right track when you hear, “Yes,



I really want that thing/seminar/expertise your commercial customers are raving about! Let's try it here!"

The table below might be one way to review each of your proposed offerings to new government buyers, and think about which ones would take the least – and most – adaptation from the way you're reaching today's buyers, whether commercial or government.

Your Commercial Offering	Government Buyer's Need and Profile	Importance to New Government Decision-Maker	Potential Adaptation Needed	Effort/Resources Required to Adapt
		High/Med/Low		
Product or service				
Why your client buys it from you				
How your client buys from you (Purchasing/Contract type)				
Marketing tactics				
Channels and partners – direct or teamed?				

1

2

3

4

Part 3: Business Plan Elements

The next analysis tools are basic ones you're probably familiar with from your current business plan. I've just adapted them as a way to think about the effect that pursuing government business might have on your strategy.



EXERCISE FIVE: The Mix – Government and Commercial

This exercise helps you figure out:

- How much government business do you think you want to win, and by when?
- How much can you actually perform?
- What do you need to step up to that level of performance?
- Can you get what you need to do the job?
- After everything you may have to spend to develop the business... would this be profitable?

Most companies that sell to government aim for a balance of work between that market and their regular commercial clientele. Why? To spread the risk, more than anything. Just as a commercial client can close or relocate or be bought out, a government client can end a program or change its requirements. Furthermore, it takes time to develop government business – it’s not a tap you can turn on overnight.

I can guarantee two things: it’s probably not going to happen the way you plan, and your chances of success are much better when you set goals than if you don’t. So, look into the future, and jot down some ideas for the mix you’re going to aim for. Big-picture is fine for now. You’ll get the chance to figure out what’s going to drive that business a little later.

% or \$	Now	Year 1	Year 2
Commercial			
Government (as Prime)			
Government (as Subcontractor)			

EXERCISE SIX: Capacity Forecasting

So you want to step up to win those levels of government contracts? Great!

- Current Capacity: For each product or service you want to offer the government market, how much can you deliver today?
- Years 1 & 2 Forecast: With your current growth plans, what would be the maximum capacity or biggest project you could deliver to government buyers in each of the next two years?



- Years 1 & 2 Scalable: What constraints limit your current forecast capacity? And if you could address those constraints, how big a project or job could you deliver?

Product/ Service Offering	Current Capacity	Year 1 Forecast	Year 1 Scalable	Year 2 Forecast	Year 2 Scalable
1					
2					
3					
4					

EXERCISE SEVEN: Critical Resources

What resources do you have now, have access to, and/or think you need to find in order to support that growth? Even if you've got questions rather than answers ("Legal? Why would I need a lawyer to sell to the government? I only want to sub-contract!"), just jot down the questions. Don't worry – this is just a first cut. When we do this again later, you'll have more answers to your questions and a better ability to plan for what's ahead.

Successful companies get the inside scoop on both the resources they need and where to get good help from other companies in similar industries that are already selling to government. Why would potential competitors help you? "Compete today, team tomorrow." People help their friends, and you never know when you'll need a good partner who can do something you can't. (Where do you meet people like that? You'll find out in Chapter Six, Relationships.)

	Required – Estimated Cost – Availability		
Additional Resource	Today	Year 1	Year 2
Full-Time Client Service/ Production Staff			
Outsourced Client Service/ Production Staff			



	Required – Estimated Cost – Availability		
Additional Resource	Today	Year 1	Year 2
Administrative Support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• pre-proposal financial review• pre-contract audit• proposal production• contract administration• client relationship management• marketing support			
Delivery Channels			
Product/Service Development			
Management			
Financing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• equity• asset-based• other debt instruments			
Legal <ul style="list-style-type: none">• certifications• teaming support• proposal/contract review			
Outside Technical Support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• business management• government contracting expertise• proposal preparation• marketing adaptation			
Production Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• expert staff• office space• manufacturing and assembly			
Business Development <ul style="list-style-type: none">• forecasting• competitive research			
Marketing			



Additional Resource	Required – Estimated Cost – Availability		
	Today	Year 1	Year 2
Sales			
Relationships with Channel Partners			
Relationships with Government Buyers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> initial introductions business development client relationship management plan 			

How did you do with Exercises 4, 5, 6, and 7?

- If these exercises seemed like a tedious waste of time, and you want to skip right to where you can find the RFPs to start bidding on, I hope you’ll stick with me just a little longer. Bidding is expensive. Your patience will bring you more profit, because the cost of every win includes the cost of every losing proposal along the way to that win.
- If these exercises have given you new things to think about, or reminded you of business growth issues that you need to address, great! You want to have confident answers to those questions before you get any more deeply invested in the federal market. Early-stage clarity can keep you focused on a few high-potential opportunities, and on projects at a scale where you can perform well if you win. Great performance, even on small opportunities, positions you for bigger projects.
- If these exercises simply validated or strengthened strategies you’ve been working on – terrific!



Part 4: Strategy Snapshot

What criteria does your company use to evaluate new opportunities? If you have a decision process that works well for you, great! This next section might be a



refresher. If not, then I hope you'll get some ideas to tweak or even to create your own best practices.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats: A Classic Analysis Framework.

This is one of the first ones I learned, and still one of my favorites.

Strengths and Weaknesses are **internal** to your company. These reflect your company as it is today. They are things within your control, and reflect choices you make, conditions you created and, most importantly, things you can change. Consider each in view of what it would take to explore, pursue, win, perform, sustain, and build business serving government clients and buyers. The examples below should look familiar: they're the same things you've been thinking about throughout Chapter One.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Some typical considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commercial client track record• Reputation in marketplace• Subcontracting experience• Financing• Development & Adaptation Capacity• Production & Delivery Capacity• Knowledge of target government agency• Geographical Proximity to customer• Agency Relationships• Customer Contacts• Teaming Partner Relationships• Competitive Analysis• Government Contracting Expertise• Government Sales Experience• Eligibility for set-asides / special preferences	<p>Some typical considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start with the flip side of the strengths list.• If it's not one of your strengths, it's probably a weakness you need to deal with.

Opportunities, Threats & Obstacles are **external** to your company. They're not things you control. They are based on your observations and analysis of the business environment, the potential customer base, the competition, the market factors that affect your prospects' interest in doing business with you, and your ability to reach them.

Opportunities	Threats & Obstacles
<p>Some typical considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Administration / Congress: looking for new ideas • New programs or initiatives (e.g., Mentor-Protégé Programs; increase in Immigration Enforcement) • Urgent military or disaster response requirements • Long-term needs forecast to grow (e.g., qualified employee shortage, rehabilitative care for returning veterans) • Reorganization (e.g., new buildings, temporary moves, Base Realignment and Closure of military facilities) • Media / public pressure to fix problems • Competitor leaving the marketplace • Budget cuts demand more cost-effective solutions • New contracting preferences or vehicles that give your company an advantage 	<p>Some typical considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Administration = new regulations; budget cuts or changes to DoD and civilian agencies affect opportunities that you or your teaming partners are focused on • Urgent requirements favor established suppliers who already have contract vehicles • Change in government agency mission • Reorganization (e.g., Base Realignment and Closure relocates military facilities) • Fixing problems can divert program managers from ongoing programs and delay planned procurement • Tendency toward giant contracts or "bundling" makes it hard for smaller companies to enter the market • Credit crunch makes it harder to get financing • Focus on insourcing

Key Success Factors
Key Success Factors are things you can and must do to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play from your strengths• Address weaknesses that can prevent your success• Seize opportunities that offer the most potential for success• Develop ideas to neutralize threats and overcome obstacles• Ensure profitability over selected time horizon
Recommendations/Issues for GO / NO-GO
Based on your company's track record in opening up new market niches: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What would tell you that it's worth your time and money to explore your prospects among federal buyers?• Conversely, what are the danger signs that experience tells you to look for?

And finally – Your Initial Go / No-Go

This chart is one way to record your discussion.

First, list the factors for and against going after government business, based on what you know at this early stage. Those are the right and left pairs of columns.

Second, it's still early going – there may be things you need to find out before you can make a Go / No-Go decision. List those too. Those are the center columns.

Third, all factors are not equal! Give each factor a weight, from 5 (most important) to 1 (least important).

Con – I've Got a Bad Feeling About This	Factor Weight 1-5	Caution – Things We Have To Find Out	Factor Weight 1-5	Pro – Let's go for it!	Factor Weight 1-5
TOTALS					

MAKING THE GRADE – INITIAL GO / NO-GO

How does it look to you? The weighted totals can help you size up your current situation.

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP? STRATEGY CHECKLIST

- Be in this market for winning reasons
- Commit to realistic goals – a minimum of two years
- Draft a quarter-by-quarter work plan tied to those goals
- Get management support for the resources you need for the job
- Set interim goals & milestones for regular reviews

Find Out More

Visit www.GrowFedBiz.com for bonus materials like:

- Government Contracts Made Easier: The Strategy Workbook
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Government Contracts Made Easier

Second edition

by Judy Bradt

