

Executive Summary

Title: Electronic Commerce

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Executive Summary

The Department of Transportation, District 6 Information Technology unit launched a small business website: www.dot.ca.gov/dist6/sb.htm. The goal of this project was to provide the business owner with a one-stop shop resource for information in doing business with Caltrans and other state agencies. Small businesses comprise nearly 98 percent of all businesses in the state, employ more than 50 percent of California's workforce, and generate more than half of the state's gross domestic product. The website was developed as a result of the need for small businesses to electronically access information on doing business with the State of California. The website expands their ability to navigate the complex state processes via the computer. The website is one of the most effective resources to reach small business owners with tools and information to assist them in doing business with the State of California. The website was created to provide a mechanism by which small businesses can learn about government contracting and procurement processes at their convenience. The business owner are occupied during the day with the day to day functions of operating a business and cannot afford the luxury of spending precious time attending a government-contracting workshop during business hours.

Nomination

The project included identifying information that would be useful for the small business owner. Research involved the Best Practices process of viewing the websites from the Department of Transportation and other state agencies. Early on, it was evident that not all of the information regarding contracting with the State of California was available in one single location. The website was designed to remove the barriers in doing business with the state government, on the Internet. Information was gathered from business owners that attended government contracting workshops, business expos and from other local government agencies. The website is continually monitored for current information, broken links and ease of navigation. Best Practices is an on going process by viewing other small business websites for comparison. With the click of a mouse, the user can view information on Contracting with Caltrans made simple, locate current contracts out for bid, or find a prime contractor of an on going contract. There are links to

the California Contractor Registry, the Department of General Services Small Business Certification Resources and the Caltrans Office of Engineer to name a few. Just recently, a link was added to Caltrans local offices by County, a map that identified the 12 districts and includes a brief description of that district. This will enable the business owner to find the location of a potential contract. For example: the public is usually not aware that District 3 is in the Sacramento area. The website uses the Department of Transportation version of the template developed by the Governor's Office that is mandatory for all external state agency webpages.

How the Project Improved Small Business Participation

The small business website is a reference tool for all employees of District 6 and small business owners. The employee can become familiar with the small business goals and find information about the small business certification process. The business owner can access contracting information at his/her convenience. The website had 190 visitors for the month of May 2003. The results cannot be directly measured in dollars and cents. However, through the department's outreach and education effort, we have increased our pool of certified small businesses. Consequently, our small business participation numbers are over and above the 25% goal established by Executive Order D-37-01.

With the support of the District Director, J. Mike Leonardo's and his outstanding leadership, improvements in the small business utilization goals were right around the corner. In July of 2001, District 6 small business utilization percentage was 9% and for the FY 01/02 the small business percentage was \$3,366,086.96 or 34.7%. The latest report (January 2003 through March 2003) has District 6 at 48.9% of total expenditures awarded to certified small business firms.

Lessons Learned

When displaying information for public use, you need to use a format that is accessible to everyone. An example is the internally we use MS Office Suite products which the public may not own the software. Therefore, we use formats such as HTML and PDF files so that the public is able to read any information posted to the website.

The website should be continually monitored for current information and broken links. The web addresses to the links often change without notification from the webmaster. In addition, the calendar of events and various reports need to be current, outdated information is not helpful to the businessperson searching for work.