

# Government Contracting: Lessons from the Trenches... and the Sidelines



Don't	Do
<b>As a Prime</b>	
Expect a quick sale	Grow and nourish long-term relationships
Assume there is money "lying around"	Understand market saturation, penetration
Base expectations on total contract dollars	Study your addressable market
Think "me too" / "I can hire the skill if I win"	Develop your differentiator and strengthen it
Skimp on proposal efforts	Invest time, money, and skills if you are serious about winning
Chase everything	Focus, focus, FOCUS on your "sweet spot"
Keep Asking Questions in Open Settings (or assume there's no such thing as a stupid question)	Realize there is a time and place. If you are in a setting where you can meet potential partners or clients, that place is not the best place to demonstrate how little you know about the procurement process.
Go It Alone & learn from your mistakes	Seek advice – SBDCs and PTAP are a great place to learn the basics
Work 100% "in" your business	Work "on" your business if you want to grow it. If you're billable 40 hours/week, how will you find new clients
Hide	Network! You will never meet a client by sitting in your office.
Expect a contract because you're on a GSA Schedule, 8(a), PMP, or any other acronym	SELL. There are thousands of companies that do what you do.
Cut costs on your business's appearance	First impressions can make or break you. Professional business cards, capabilities statements, email @you.com (not gmail) give credibility.
Scream 'shiny and new'	More experience = less risk. Try to appear established.
Sell every time you open your mouth	Listen more than you talk. Understand the client's needs. They will tell you what their challenges are.
Keep stating the obvious	Assume everyone knows that you are looking for work. Help people understand exactly what you're best at.
Spill everything at every opportunity	Polish your elevator pitch. A short engaging sentence is worth MUCH more than a rambling list of your technical skills
Fit square pegs into round holes	Offer thoughtful, tailored solutions that show understanding of customer's needs, instead of selling a pre-packaged, generic product.
<b>As a Sub</b>	
Think it's easier than priming	All of the above – to build and grow your business in the long term
Wait for your team lead to send you work	Bring work to your prime – and plan to eat what you kill
Do the minimum in proposal efforts	Engage your prime actively, volunteer to help with proposals & review teams – not only does this show your willingness to help, but you will get a LOT of insight into capture planning
Sign everything your prime sends you	Do your own due diligence. Seek legal advice, and don't be afraid to stand up for yourself – and even say NO.
Assume large primes "NEED" you	Find teaming partners where you add value