

Labelmaster

Labelmaster, a growing privately held company that makes products to help industry comply with regulations governing the safe handling and transport of hazardous materials, wanted to significantly expand their sales to government, but felt they needed assistance dealing with the confusing paperwork involved. They turned to the North Business and Industrial Corporation's (NORBIC) Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), where they received expert help and timely answers to their questions. Today, Labelmaster's sales to the government sector are approximately six percent of their overall revenues and growing.

Labelmaster, founded in the late 1960's, employs 200 people on Chicago's North side. While the company has always sold to governmental entities, said Jeanne Zmich, Vice President of Research and Development for Labelmaster, the company saw that this was an area where there was considerable possibility for sales growth.

In particular, the company wanted to be included as a contractor to the federal General Services Administration (GSA) general schedule or catalogue of products available to all government agencies. Submitting the required information to be included on the GSA schedule is an arduous process. "We knew how complicated these forms and filings were, having tried to complete them several times over the years" said Ms. Zmich. "We were not going anywhere. We would try to get answers and find out how to fill out the forms, but they would just send them back" she added. Clearly a new approach was needed. In 2002 the company turned to NORBIC's PTAC for help. NORBIC's PTAC is a member of the Illinois Small Business Development Center network sponsored by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, in partnership with the U. S. Small Business Administration.

Labelmaster was familiar with NORBIC as they had been members of the organization for years, and were aware of the range of services available to their company. They met with William Hett-Dobricky, the PTAC director who provided expert advice to them on how to prepare the necessary paperwork to submit to GSA. "William helped us incorporate the company's products, along with terms and conditions, chapter by chapter in the proposal. William was highly involved with our submission, checked it, and was a helpful person to answer our questions. He also suggested how we should market our products to procurement officers, and what trade shows we should attend" added Ms. Zmich.

Mr. Hett-Dobricky noted "the PTAC met with Labelmaster to provide guidance and interpretation of the unique requirements of the GSA solicitation, and wrote the proposed response. Labelmaster developed and put in place, an electronic catalogue version of their current catalogue for the proposal. The electronic catalogue has future use in the client's commercial and government sales." Mr. Hett-Dobricky added "by providing this assistance, the PTAC center saved Labelmaster an estimated \$5,000 to \$10,000 in consulting fees to prepare this proposal."

"All told, it took us fourteen months to prepare and submit our proposal" said Estuardo Sanchez, Product Manager for the firm. "We submitted in April, 2003, and the turn around time was short, because William worked with us all along to make sure it was accurate and correct. He was very instrumental in our successful submission" concluded Mr. Sanchez. Today Labelmaster's hazardous material products can be found on the GSA Advantage! web site, the federal government's vast on-line shopping and ordering system.

"Being listed on the GSA Advantage! web site" said Mr. Sanchez "has been helpful for us, as many government installations that order from us, are around the globe and the time differences make ordering off the web most efficient for them." Labelmaster's contract covers essential hazmat compliance products, including labels, placards, UN Packaging and regulatory publications.

For Labelmaster's government clients, the GSA Advantage! web site is the quickest, easiest way to order supplies. When placing orders, government buyers no longer need to seek further competition, gather requirements or make a separate determination of fair and reasonable pricing. Government buyers benefit from the best value and the lowest overall cost alternative.

Labelmaster decided to start small, and offer only a portion of their product list on the GSA web site. Based on their initial foray into this form of government contacting, Labelmaster intends to submit additional products for the GSA schedule in the coming year.

The North Business and Industrial Council Procurement Technical Assistance Center is a member of the Illinois Small Business Development Center Network, working in partnership with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Small Business Development Center and the U.S. Small Business Administration.