



Event + Response = Outcome!

Firm size and diversity preferences cannot be the only song we sing when serenading potential customers.

by Beverly Kay Kendall

Remember the game we played as children where we'd form a line and start a message by whispering in the rear of the person sitting next to you? By the time the message got to the last person in the line, the content and context of the message had no resemblance to the original message. No matter how many times we played the game, we could never end the game with an accurate message.

Opportunities for VOBs remind me of that game. There seem to be so many different interpretations of how VOBs can benefit from their status as small businesses in both the corporate and government arena.

Many of these interpretations come from VOBs themselves. I talk to numerous small businesses and when I ask "what core competencies does your firm bring to the table?" The conversation usually deteriorates into a very vague and generally not-so-accurate discussion. Never one to offer constructive criticism without a recommendation, I implore VOBs and indeed all small businesses, that we must do our homework!

All categories of small business DO have the ear of corporate America, we DO have the ear of the government, but WHAT are we saying? HOW are we saying it? WHAT are we communicating? Let's not merely set up shop based solely on our status. We must be able to articulate what our firm brings to

the table that enhances the offerings of partner firms and that meets the needs of our customers.

Do Your Research

Let's prepare ourselves to offer solid ideas that will generate an increase in business from existing customers or new business from a first-time customer, or realize significant cost savings over what they are currently doing or using. We can accomplish this by conducting a little research on the firm. What is their business? Manufacturing? Distribution? Construction? Information technology?

Our offerings must enhance the ability of the corporation or agency to accomplish





★ **Ron Johnson, Veteran Business Owner**
RC Consolidation Services

its mission. This pre-supposes that we know and understand the mission of the customer. We won't fully understand the mission unless we conduct some level of research and begin to ask specific questions.

Recently, I met with a small business owner who wants to expand his business. We discussed what was working with existing customers in an effort to consider how he might increase the volume of business. The business owner had neglected to ask himself key questions. He had not yet anticipated resource needs for business expansion. He had not yet identified which customers he planned to target to meet his expansion goals. If we are not sure where we are going, then we cannot possibly figure out what mode will get us there.

Small business owners have to be tough because they have a tough task with seemingly formidable obstacles. Many of us are in markets dominated by giants who have significant infrastructure, history, brand recognition and past performance. Comparatively, they have what appears to be limitless resources. Market penetration strategies should be based on something more than business size and preferences.

Seize the Advantage

Size and status can be strategic market advantages. However, size and preferences cannot be the only song we sing. We need to investigate whether our potential customer prefers jazz, classical, blues, rap, R&B, Rock or Hip Hop. Then, we need to deliver what they prefer by the mode of their preference.

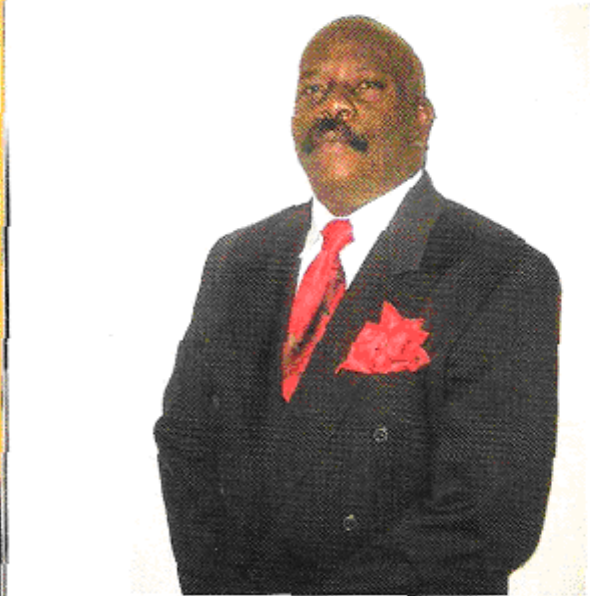
Ron Johnson, is a service-disabled veteran. He owns RC Consolidated Services in California. Ron is a consummate salesman. He spends a minimum of three days every week in VA medical centers and state facilities selling to hands-on technical users in the departments that actually use the products that he sells. Once Ron generates the need for his products, then he talks to the contracting officer about his firm and his status as an SDVOB. He informs the contracting officer of the number of procurement options available to purchase his products. Ron also carries a copy of the SDVOB legislation with him during sales calls and can explain in detail the contracting rules for

SDVOBs. Ron sells his product to the technical user. Next, he discusses his status with the contracting officer. He is experienced enough to understand that he must deliver the right message to the right audience.

Master Your Delivery

Netsis an IT and general construction firm located in Arizona, is owned by a service-disabled veteran, Sam McCline. Netsis is also an 8(a), minority firm. Sam's approach differs only slightly from that of Ron Johnson. Sam is a master at delivering a message to large prime contractors that results in sub-contracts. Sam also understands how to enter into the right relationships with large corporations so that his firm is the prime contractor performing a quantifiable percentage of work. Sam understands how to have the conversation that sells the large business on entering into a relationship with his firm. Sam is also great at developing and maintaining key relationships. His mind is like a chess board, he is adept at seeing the possibilities that exist in key relationships. Sam sells his core competencies and is well-versed in the laws governing SDVOBs. Not only can he talk about his products and services, Sam can discuss how contracting officers can work with SDVOBs.

Both Sam and Ron bring something to the table and they understand how to express it in a way that results in a "win-win" for all involved. They do their homework! Ron and Sam both understand that the law is only the beginning. Both gentlemen focus on what they do best and what they can control. Their description goes something like this Event (Opportunities for VOBs, laws, contracting officers, procurement officers, agency missions, corporate objectives) + Response (They can only control their response to the opportunities) = Outcome (They must be seeking a specific outcome based on their chosen response to people and events over which they have no control). Event + Response = Outcome! ■



★ **Sam McCline, Veteran Business Owner**
Netsis

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www.navoba.com/bigbusiness

- Beverly Kuykendall's biography.
- Link to the Netsis Web site.