

Success Factors for Selling Season

1. **Focus – know exactly who, what, why, and how (it’s too late for “meet and greets”)**
2. **Understand your customer’s pain points and preferences**
3. **Socialize alternatives that present better, faster, and cheaper alternatives**
4. **Provide multiple contract vehicle options to make the customer’s job easier**
5. **Invest in solutions that are “in the gates” – ready on a moment’s notice**
6. **Arm your customers to be able to lobby their constituents (help them help you)**
7. **Pay equal attention to both program and procurement shops**
8. **Adopt flexible bid submission processes and approvals that can be adapted for quick turnaround**
9. **Be patient – being too aggressive can be a customer turn-off at a critical time**
10. **The Selling Season supplements, it does not replace – do not neglect your post-September pipeline**

Handicapping the Federal Fourth Quarter (July – September)

- 🐾 Past performance is paramount – have a good story for why you are favored on a particular track surface or over a given distance
- 🐾 Preparation matters more than ever – tired, over-raced ideas rarely win, and neither do those that are too fresh or under-seasoned
- 🐾 As with jockey and trainer pairings, buyers want a team with a track record of success together – from the PM through to the subs
- 🐾 Study previous races between common contenders and understand which contributing factors are similar or different in this race
- 🐾 Much like lifetime earnings figures, scale and notoriety or brand awareness are poor predictors of the outcome in any given race
- 🐾 Federal procurement staffs lack Beyer speed ratings for contractors, so they tend to rely on price – who is the *lowest* on any given day

And They’re Off!

The passing of another Triple Crown season marks the beginning of the Federal Government’s annual Selling Season. This is that halcyon time of year when agencies’ use-it-or-lose-it funding promises an attractive purse. The consensus view is that the effect will be even more pronounced this year (assuming procurement shops can keep pace with the added volume), as agencies that underspent budget in the face of sequestration now race to meet budget targets.

Prep Races

Many savvy business development and sales organizations began testing their horses earlier in the fiscal year cycle. Through deliberate preparation, planning, and hard work, these services and solutions are now seasoned and have garnered enough career winnings to be taken seriously in the major stakes races. However, as competition intensifies, new entrants are increasingly drawn to these major races, and all it takes is a bad pole position draw, an off track, a stumble at the gate, a tactical rider error, or, closer to home, a tantalizingly low-priced bid to dash these better prepared contenders’ hopes.

Pick Your Starts

Seasoned handicappers are rightfully wary of horses that bounce around from longer to shorter distances, or from turf to track, and who entertain a revolving door of trainer and jockey combinations. On the other hand, horses that are consistent performers – specialists at one distance / surface combination – command a betting premium. Federal customers are no different than horse handicappers in this regard. They discount the “also rans” who are struggling to find their niche, and are most comfortable betting on favorites.

Focus on your core capabilities, research which agencies need those capabilities, and, for each opportunity, focus on what makes your solution unique. The Selling Season does not favor longshots.

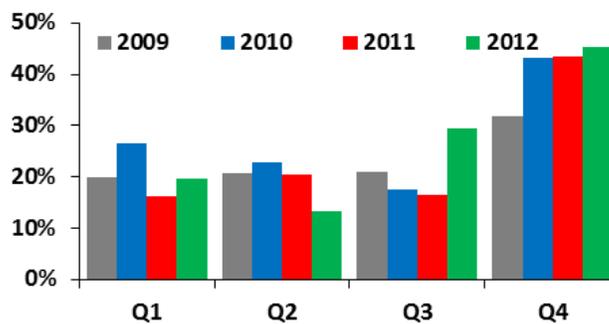
Get a Good Jump

There is an old track adage that you cannot win a race in the first quarter mile, but you can lose it. The same is true during Selling Season. Chasing down leads is time-consuming, so do that now, before your target agencies’ buying windows close. Similarly, prepare your collateral and proposal artifacts well in advance, so that you are ready when the customer gives you an opening. Those that do not get an early start often come across as too aggressive as they struggle to catch up, which can result in wasted effort, bruised customer relationships, and too little kick down the home stretch.

Run Your Race

The best contenders know others’ strengths, weaknesses, and tendencies, but also commit to running their own race. Closers have the discipline to not chase early speed, those that like the rail try to ride the competition out wide, and speed demons try to set a blistering pace in hopes of ending the race early. To be successful during this period, you have to do the same. You have to know who the players are within your target agencies, how much end-of year budget there is, which vehicles are easiest for them to use, and how best to position your offerings. You also have to know the likely contenders, how they will run their races, and how to adjust your tactics accordingly. This cannot be solved through proposal process or the right level of customer access, it has to be forged through committed capture and compelling content creation.

Contract Award Activity By Federal Fiscal Quarter



Source: Company data and Wells Fargo Securities, LLC