

Transporter

Civil Rights Office Newsletter

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Bridging the Digital Divide

Technology is rapidly altering the way we conduct business, so much so that it's virtually impossible to keep up. We are inundated on a daily basis with new buzzwords, equipment, and technology-based policies and procedures. The reality is, the electronic age is here. To be successful we must all learn to adapt to it, even in government contracting.

With both federal and state governments shifting toward doing more with less, creating a more electronically interactive business environment is a natural progression. This transition has been seen over the past few years with the passage of the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Action (FASA) of 1994 and the Paperwork Reduction Act. As a result, small businesses without access to technology are being left behind at a rapid pace. Often referred to as the digital divide, the gap between technology *haves* and *have nots* is significant. Typically, that division occurs along educational, financial, and racial boundaries, making it one of America's leading economic and civil rights issues of the future, according to the Small Business Administration.

Although alternatives are still available for businesses that choose to rely on traditional ways of locating information, the unfortunate reality is that traditional methods are inefficient and costly. And although technology pervades almost every

aspect of the business culture, three main areas can be identified for considerable impact: locating procurement opportunities, communicating, and getting paid.

Locating Opportunities

To be competitive, businesses must be able to locate potential business opportunities. In government contracting Internet access is essential. For federal agencies, the single point of entry for contracting opportunities in excess of \$25,000 is the Web page fedbizopps.gov. State procurement opportunities can be located by linking to On-Line Public Notices from the main State of Alaska Web page at www.state.ak.us. More specifically, ADOT&PF can be located through a link at

www.dot.state.ak.us (see page 4 for more details). Currently, ADOT&PF only advertises its projects online.

Communicating

Not so long ago, business was conducted in one of three ways: face-to-face, over the phone, or by mail. Now, many more choices are available, and with greater frequency, electronic means — e-mail and fax — are chosen. A business that does not have access to these technologies has more challenges to overcome and will ultimately spend more time and money conducting routine transactions than a business with full technical capabilities.

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DBE BUSINESS PROFILE

Name: Acme Fence Co., Inc.

Established: 1977

Location: Anchorage

Number of Employees: 7
full-time and 30 seasonal

Services Provided: Supply and install fencing, guardrail, metal beams, and standard highway signs



Roxanna Horschel receives the Small Business Contractor of the Year from the U.S. Department of State.

Acme Fence has been a certified DBE with ADOT&PF since 1980. When starting, Acme Fence operated with one flatbed truck and tackled many of the same struggles other small businesses face. Through tenacity and hard work, however, Acme Fence has grown into a company with more than 30 trucks, including four specialized machines to install highway guardrails.

Roxanna Horschel, sole owner since the 1990s, has been with Acme Fence since May 1979. During her tenure with the firm, Roxanna has overcome unique challenges often faced by women-owned businesses in the construction industry. The biggest challenge has been to educate people that she really does own and operate the business. Because her firm is now a recognized competitor, today Roxanna can concentrate on building an even more successful business. She feels the best advice she can offer to other businesses is "Keep your focus." Pay attention to what's important, and ignore the rest, Roxanna stresses.

In 1995, Roxanna won the prestigious Associated General Contractors Hard Hat award for Contractor of the Year. Roxanna became only the second woman chosen for this honor. Additionally, Acme Fence was nominated by the Small Business Administration for Regional Small Business Prime Contractor of the Year in 1999.

Acme has been recognized nationally as well; the U.S. Department of State awarded Acme Fence the Small Business Contractor of the Year in 1999. Acme Fence earned this award through stellar performance on installing a \$100,000 high-security fence around the construction site of the new U.S. Embassy in Moscow. Working on this project required close coordination with the State Department, according to Roxanna. Despite the uniqueness of the project and the adverse conditions, the Acme Fence team consistently performed above and beyond the requirements of the contract, quickly responding to changing conditions.

After receiving this award, Governor Tony Knowles stated in a press release, "Acme personifies the can-do attitude of so many Alaskans. No matter how big or how small, or wherever the project might be, you can bet Alaskans will be able to handle it." Knowles went on to say that he is proud of the spirit that is recognized in Acme Fence.

Innovation, persistence, and performance based on quality have been consistent characteristics and are the reasons why Acme Fence is considered a DBE contractor of excellence.

Contributed by Katherine Anderson

New Growth Opportunity for DBEs

Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport held their final Public Outreach meeting August 14 to educate and provide assistance to potential concessionaires about operating their businesses at the airport. This event enabled small business owners and entrepreneurs to meet with Master Concessionaires from throughout the United States. The small business entities promoted their wares and products to the larger companies and discussed the possibility of forming joint ventures with the larger companies.

With the renovation of the airport nearing completion for Concourse C, a new window of opportunity exists for certified DBE businesses. ADOT&PF Civil Rights Office personnel attended the meeting and met with many potential DBE applicants. Information and applications were provided to businesses interested in airport concessions. Some of the products and wares from these entrepreneurs and small businesses may be placed in the completed concourse. What a great way to promote Alaska!

*Contributed by John Huff
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The One, Two, Three of Sales

Some business owners may think that selling doesn't apply to them because their business relies on word-of-mouth or low bid. The reality is, however, if you're in business, then you're in sales. In fact, the Small Business Administration's Online Women's Business Center (onlinewbc.gov) estimates that successful business owners spend 40% of their time marketing or selling their businesses. At a basic level, sales can be broken into three steps.

Introduction or initial contact is probably the most intimidating step in the sales process. Why? Because no one likes rejection. But, you can increase your chances for success by doing your homework first. Ensure the people you are contacting are good matches for your product or service, and determine the benefit before making the initial contact. If cold calling or cold visiting are intimidating, try meeting customers in a non-threatening atmosphere such as professional meetings, workshops, or conferences. Generally, anywhere you are in public, there is potential for a sale. Be friendly, courteous, and most of all, smile.

Step two is the pitch – what you know best, what your business does. For some, the pitch can be as simple as, “Hi, I’m Bob and I sell bolts.” The approach depends on your comfort level. If you are sincere and comfortable with what you are presenting, your introduction will go a long way to relax others and open them up to the possibilities. Focus on your clients and listen to what they want. Address the benefits of your product or service. If necessary, provide references or anything else that will make your clients feel good about using your business.

The inevitable no, actually launches step three. It doesn't matter who you are, at some point, someone is going to say “no.” Rejection leaves you with two choices – walking away or overcoming the objection. It's up to you to decide which direction to take. If the opportunity for sale is important, try to learn the reason for negative response. Are the choices limited? Is the price unreasonable? Or, does the client simply not use what you are offering? Whatever the issue, consider whether you can overcome it. Maybe you could offer additional items or services, or a price break for volume purchases. Perhaps there's a unique application for what you are selling that the other person hasn't recognized. If you feel you have addressed the issue and the answer is still no, then come to terms with the reality that this sale is probably not going to happen today. Don't waste the person's time. Accept it with dignity and professionalism, say “thank you,” ask if you can contact the person in the future. Most of all, do not take the rejection personally.

If the answer is yes, close the deal. Outline what the agreement is, don't leave your customer guessing about the next step. If a contract or additional information is requested, then follow through with whatever you have promised, even if it is simply to call on the customer later.

Of course, this summary depicts selling at a basic level. Much more is involved. If you want to learn more, attend workshops or conferences and read books that address these issues. Join organizations and network, not only for potential customers, but also to find out how others have become successful. Selling is vital for the success of your business, if you're not comfortable with it, then hire someone who is.

*Contributed by Katherine Anderson
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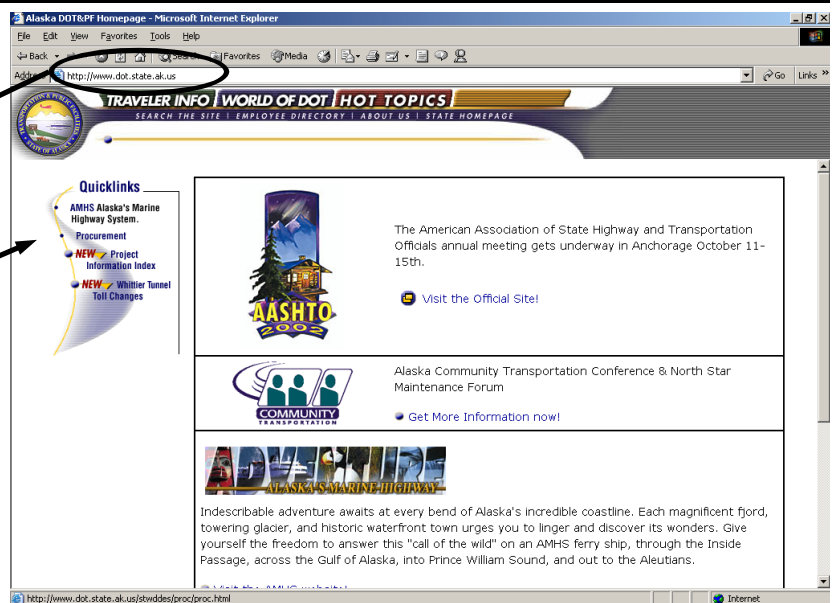


Projects On the Horizon

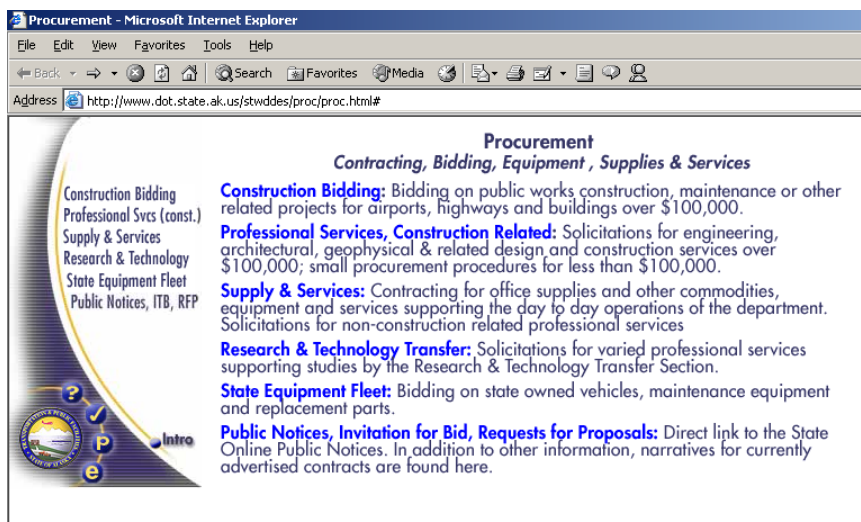
To locate upcoming projects, log onto the main ADOT&PF web page at:

<http://www.dot.state.ak.us>

Then select the **procurement** link from left navigation options.



The procurement page will come up.



To bookmark your page selection, click on the checkmark (✓) in the lower left hand corner of the page around the State of Alaska seal.

If you have questions about locating this information, or would like to receive a hard copy of the Tentative Advertising Project Schedule, please call Katherine at 907-269-0854.

You can select the first category, **Construction Bidding**, and the construction page will come up. Once the construction page is displayed, four main selection areas are offered:

- ◆ **Tentative Advertising Project Schedule:** Provides projects expected to be advertised over the next 12 months.
- ◆ **Bid Calendar and Planholder Lists:** Provides currently advertised projects that are bidding in the near future and a list of planholders.
- ◆ **Contract Listing & Bid Results:** Provides bid tabulations from recently opened projects.
- ◆ **Status of Award List:** Provides a list of recent contract awards.

Or, you can select **Professional Services, Construction Related** for Professional Service Agreements (PSAs) for consultant services.



UPCOMING EVENTS & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

**Associated General Contractors of
Alaska 2002 Statewide Conference**
October 31 – November 2
Call 561-5354

PTAC – Anchorage

- ✓ Meet the Prime – Neeser Const.
October 23
- ✓ 10 Steps to Successful
Government Contracting
December 13

*Call Rika Johnson at 274-7232 for
additional workshops and information.*

PTAC – Fairbanks

- ✓ DBE Certification Workshop
October 17, 10 am to noon
- ✓ 10 Steps to Successful
Government Contracting, DBE
Program Overview, Oct. 21
- ✓ 10 Steps to Successful
Government Contracting, Meet
the Agency – USCG, HUBZone,
and DBE Certification
Workshop
Kodiak, October 30

*Call Mary Wheeler at 456-7232 for
additional workshops and information.*

October to December 2002

Anchorage SBDC Seminars

- ✓ Developing a Business Plan
October 11, 19, and 23-24
November 8 and 20-21
- ✓ Women's Business Networking
Breakfast
October 30 and November 27
- ✓ Employer Payroll Taxes
Tuesday, October 8
Tuesday, November 12
- ✓ Basic Business Bookkeeping
Tuesday, October 22
Tuesday, November 26
- ✓ Financing Your Small Business
Tuesday, October 15

Friday, November 1
✓ Marketing Your Business
Tuesday, October 29
*For times and locations, please call
SBDC at 274-7232.*

October to December 2002

Juneau SBDC Seminars

- ✓ Writing a Business Plan – Your
Blueprint for Success
Wednesday, October 9
- ✓ Understanding Financial
Statements
Wednesday, October 16
- ✓ Marketing on a Shoestring
Wednesday, November 6
- ✓ Creating a Powerful Marketing
Plan
Wednesday, November 20
- ✓ Beginning QuickBooks Pro
Tues. & Thurs., Nov. 5 & 7
- ✓ Intermediate QuickBooks Pro
Tues. & Thurs., Nov. 12 & 14
- ✓ Advanced QuickBooks Pro
Tues. & Thurs., Nov. 19 & 21

*For times and locations, please call
Juneau SBDC at 463-3789.*

October to December 2002

Fairbanks SBDC Seminars

- ✓ Marketing Your Small Business
Tuesday, October 8
- ✓ Select a Legal Business Form
Thursday, October 10
- ✓ Simple Financial Statements
Tuesday, October 15
- ✓ Starting a Bed & Breakfast
Saturday, October 19
- ✓ Cash Flow Management
Thursday, October 24
- ✓ Marketing Your Small Business
on the Internet
Thursday, November 7
- ✓ Starting a Small Business
Friday, November 15

- ✓ How to Write a Business Plan
Thursday, November 21
- ✓ Designing a Brochure
Tuesday, December 3
- ✓ Tax Issues for Small Businesses
Thursday, December 5

*For times and locations, please call
UAF SBDC at 456-7232.*

October to December 2002

Ketchikan SBDC Seminars

- ✓ Business Record Keeping
Wednesday, October 16
- ✓ Insuring Your Small Business
Wednesday, October 30
- ✓ QuickBooks Pro
Saturday, November 2
- ✓ Financing Your Small Business
Wednesday, November 20
- ✓ Developing Outstanding
Customer Service
Saturday, December 7

*For times and locations, please call
Ketchikan SBDC at 225-1388.*

October to December 2002

Kenai SBDC Seminars

- ✓ LLC Programs and Their Uses
Wednesday, October 23
- ✓ Illuminating Your Cash Flow
Statements
Thursday, October 24

*For times and locations, please call
Kenai Peninsula SBDC at 262-7497.*

October to December 2002

Rural SBDC Outreach

- ✓ Bethel, October 14-18
- ✓ Dillingham, October 21-25
- ✓ Kodiak, November 4-8
- ✓ Valdez, November 18-22
- ✓ Kotzebue, December 16-20

*Travel schedule is subject to change.
For more information, please call
SBDC at 373-7232.*

Digital Divide

Continued from Page 1

Getting Paid

Almost every government agency offers the option for vendors to receive payment electronically, and some agencies even require it. Although the guidelines and procedures may vary greatly from agency to agency, the philosophy is the same. The agency processes payments to the vendor, and the vendor receives funds in its bank account electronically. This approach saves time and money for both the government and vendor. The electronic transaction is often referred to as EDI, or Electronic Data Interchange. (The next *Transporter* issue will focus on the EDI process for the State of Alaska.) For a small business, the resulting increase in cash flow efficiency can greatly contribute to the survival of that company.

Statistics on the digital divide are staggering. For example, regardless of income levels, people in urban areas are more than twice as likely to have Internet access than those earning the same income in rural areas. Caucasians are more likely to have access to the Internet from home than African Americans or Hispanics are to have access from any location, including work. With respect to individuals, about one-third of the U.S. population uses the Internet at home, but only 16.1% of Hispanics and 18.9% of African Americans use the Internet at home.

Other Access Alternatives

Businesses without access to the Internet can obtain contracting opportunities electronically from a public access computer, or hard copies from a third party such as The Plans Room, or a non-profit

agency such as the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC). The result, however, will be accessing and receiving information more slowly than most competitors in your industry. This delay could result in decreased or missed opportunities. Businesses without access to technology have limited methods for communicating with clients and will likely spend more time and money carrying out routine business activities than their competitors who are "connected."

The Good News

The good news is that although the digital divide appears to be significant, strides have been made during the past few years to reduce the gap. There are resources available for businesses with little

or no access or experience using technology. The SBA, Small Business Development Centers, PTACs, ADOT&PF Support Services, and other organizations are dedicated to helping small businesses, particularly DBEs, compete in the new economy.

Sources: Statistics and information for this article were gathered from the following: Small Business Administration Web site: <http://www.sba.gov/classroom/digitaldivide.html>; and the US Department of Commerce "Falling through the Net: Toward Digital Inclusion," a report on American's access to technology tools dated October 2000. This report can be accessed at <http://search.ntia.doc.gov/pdf/ftn00.pdf>.

*Contributed by Katherine Anderson
(katherine_anderson@dot.state.ak.us)*

New PSA Unit Supervisor for Central Region

As many of you may already know, Sharon Smith was promoted to Chief of Contracts for the Central Region several months ago. It took some time to fill the PSA Unit Supervisor role, but James (Jim) Amundsen accepted the position starting September 16, 2002.

Jim is a registered Civil Engineer and has work experience that includes vertical and horizontal construction for both roads and airports. Jim has worked as a Consultant Coordinator in the Central Region for the past year and is familiar with the PSA processes and procedures. Before joining ADOT&PF, Jim put in 5 years as the Assistant County Engineer in Klickitat County, Washington, where he was responsible for the design and construction of the road construction program. He also has experience as a City Engineer, worked in R&D for an FRP manufacturer, ran his own small engineering consulting firm, and spent 8 years serving as a Combat Engineer Officer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Germany, Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. He is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

Jim is motivated, hardworking, and sincere in his work. He will be working with Emily Nelson, Misty Ott, Michele Hope, and Carl Russell. Should you have the opportunity, please welcome and congratulate Jim on his recent move.

Notes & News About Certification



Newly Certified Firms

June 1, 2002, through September 10, 2002

- **Alaska Marketing – Anchorage, AK**
Certified: Advertising; graphics; public involvement.
- **Beluga Construction – Anchorage, AK**
Certified: Construction administration; cost estimating; environmental; carpentry; clearing/grubbing; concrete; demolition of structures; earthwork; erosion control; fencing; flooring; glass/glazing; hazmat removal/remediation; interior finishing (insulation, paint, wallpaper, tile, sheetrock/drywall installation, and tape/texture); landscaping; metal building erection; underground-petroleum/oil/lubricant; supplier of buildings/ATCO units and light-duty vehicles.
- **Bering Sea Eccotech, Inc. – Anchorage, AK**
Certified: Erosion control; underground sewer/water line installation; hazmat investigation/testing/removal/remediation; marine docks; guardrail; fencing; environmental; earthwork; structure demolition; concrete; clearing/grubbing; aggregate crushing; metal building erection.
- **Broken for His Glory Computer Graphic Design – Anchorage, AK**
Certified: Miscellaneous general merchandise; miscellaneous apparel & accessory store; miscellaneous retail store (not elsewhere classified).
- **Jim Air – Anchorage, AK**
Certified: Transportation-aircraft.
- **NANA Pacific, LLC – Anchorage, AK**
Certified: Hazmat investigation/removal/remediation; construction administration; environmental; engineering/economic analysis; drafting and reprographic services; cost estimating; underground-petroleum/oil/lubricant.
- **Pioneer Resources, Inc. – Wasilla, AK**
Certified: Surveying.
- **Premier Alaska, Inc. – Wasilla, AK**
Certified: Earthwork; underground-petroleum/oil/lubricant; landscaping; metal building erection; underground-sewer/water line installation; hazmat removal/remediation; erosion control; surveying-
unlicensed construction; concrete; carpentry; campground/roadside/trail appurtenances; demolition of structures; demolition of structures.
- **Shaan-Seet, Inc. – Craig, AK**
Certified: Erosion control; transportation-truck; hydroseeding; guardrail; earthwork; demolition of structures; clearing/grubbing; heavy equipment rental; underground-sewer/water line installation.
- **Smoothie Express – Anchorage, AK**
Certified: Eating and places (concessionaire).
- **Sweetsir Construction – Galena, AK**
Certified: Clearing/grubbing; underground-sewer/water line installation; landscaping; fencing; erosion control; earthwork; aggregates supplier.
- **TEC Pro – Anchorage, AK**
Certified: Electrical supplier.
- **Tew's Excavation – Anchorage, AK**
Certified: Earthwork; clearing/grubbing; demolition of structures.
- **World Paving & Asphalt Maint. – Wasilla, AK**
Certified: Clearing/grubbing; asphalt paving-
roadways.

Recertified Firms

- A.K. Enterprises – Homer, AK
- Alaska Finishes – Fairbanks, AK
- Bratslavsky Consulting Engineers – Anchorage, AK
- C.O.F, Inc. – Fairbanks, AK
- Carpenter Contracting – Delta Junction, AK
- Chill Out! Parts & Equip. Supply Ltd – Chugiak, AK
- Cruz Construction, Inc. – Palmer, AK
- Echelon Engineering, Inc. – Seattle, WA
- Judy Friedman Architect – Bainbridge Island, WA
- Kelley Hegarty & Associates, LLC – Fairbanks, AK
- Marshall's Electric – Anchorage, AK
- McClintock Land Associates, Inc. – Eagle River, AK
- Midnight Sun Services – Anchorage, AK
- Nuna Contractors – Anchorage, AK
- S&S Welding, Inc. – Anchorage, AK
- Terra Surveys, LLC – Palmer, AK
- Theriault Industries, Inc. – Bothell, AK
- Trailboss Enterprises, Inc. – Anchorage, AK

**Alaska Department of Transportation
and Public Facilities
Civil Rights Office**

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Web site: www.dot.state.ak.us

Frequently Asked Questions—DBE Certification

Q: *How should a recipient [State of Alaska] respond to a request, under a state Freedom of Information or Open Records Law, for confidential business information submitted by a DBE? (Posted 4/12/99; Edited 12/7/01)*

A: Particularly in the certification process, firms provide recipients with much financial and other information that applicants may wish to safeguard from disclosure.

49 CFR 26.109((a)(2) directs recipients, as a general matter, to “safeguard from disclosure to unauthorized persons information that may reasonably be considered to be confidential business information, consistent with Federal, state, and local law.”

49 CFR 26.67(a)(2)(ii) provides that, with respect to personal financial information submitted in response to the personal net worth statement requirement of 26.67, Part 26 specifically intends to pre-empt disclosure under state law. Recipients may not release these records to a third party (other than DOT in some

circumstances) without the consent of the submitter.

The policy of the ADOT&PF Civil Rights Office is that information related to the personal net worth statement is kept separate from the DBE firm’s certification file. This information is not released to any party, except the U.S. DOT in response to a challenge or appeal.

The remainder of a DBE firm’s certification file is considered a public record, except information that is determined to be proprietary in nature (marketing strategies, unique ways of doing business, business related technology, etc.). Our office requests that a DBE owner provide written consent prior to release proprietary information.

Source: *The complete answers to this question and others are provided in a set of Questions and Answers on the Web site of the U.S. DOT, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, at <http://osdbuweb.dot.gov/business/dbe/dbeqna31.html>.*

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