

Case Study 7 – I Know What the Government Wants

From the first Case Study, you'll remember your PTAC client Joe Blowhard. He's the guy who wanted to get a GSA Schedule contract on his own terms. In that case, you advised Joe against trying to edit the government's standard contract terms and conditions. He ignored your advice, and failed to win a GSA Schedule contract. Now, after two years, he's back.

Joe comes to see you. Here's what he says to you: "I never did get that GSA Schedule number. You didn't give me very good advice about that, so I dropped that plan. Anyway, I have a new idea to win a government contract, so I decided to give you a second chance to help me."

Not wanting to be argumentative, you swallow hard and ask Joe what his new idea is.

Joe tells you that he's found out something that almost no one else knows: That the GSA manages a lot of federal buildings. He says he got this information from a neighbor who works at GSA as a Contracting Officer. His neighbor also provided an "insider's tip" that GSA is planning to remodel the old courthouse downtown. Joe gave his neighbor a couple of football tickets to an upcoming NFL game, and his neighbor gave Joe a copy of GSA's specifications for the renovation work.

Joe refers to the copy of the specifications that he brought with him and points to the section showing that GSA plans to change the lighting in the courthouse to LED lamps that are networked and have wireless controllers. Joe asserts: "All those plans are going to cost the government a lot of money and produce false savings." He goes on to explain that before the local Kmart closed, he bought the store's entire incandescent lighting section and also bought all the store's lighting fixtures. Joe informs you he made the purchases for pennies on the dollar, and he now has all the bulbs and fixtures in his warehouse. "If you can help me convince GSA to change their specs," he tells you, "I can save the government more money than they'll ever save with all that so-called green lighting."

You tell Joe he's wrong about a number of things. You explain that if he had asked, you could have told him that GSA is the biggest landlord on earth and that they manage almost all federal buildings, including their design, construction, and remodeling. You pick up the copy of the specs that Joe brought with him and point out that it was downloaded from FedBizOpps where GSA posted the solicitation for the courthouse renovation two weeks ago. You also explain that it's the federal government's official policy to adopt sustainable design in all new buildings and renovations to reduce negative impact on the environment and the health and comfort of building occupants, thereby improving building performance. This includes environmentally preferable products like LED lighting. You conclude your response to Joe by saying that his strategy is destined for failure.

Joe angrily replies, "You always stick up for government rules and use it as an excuse for not helping me! I'm going to complain about you and your PTAC to my Congressman!"

[Answer the question on the next page.]

What do you as a PTAC Counselor do next?