

From: BusinessUSA <business@subscriptions.usa.gov>
To: Kester, Tonykester@aging.sc.gov
Date: 7/13/2015 5:06:57 AM
Subject: BusinessUSA: Have You Met Your Match?

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07/13/2015

Playing with Matches

Your mother surely told you not to play with matches when you were a kid. With all due respect to mom, we think matches are a fantastic idea, at least when it comes to business.

Business matchmaking is the facilitated introduction of two companies, a buyer and a seller, based on mutual needs and interests. It's kind of like romantic matchmaking, but without the chocolates or googly-eyes, and a lot easier than finding customers and partners completely on your own.

Here are a few great matchmaking programs and events, along with suggestions on how to get the most out of them.

Make Your Matchmaking Events a Success

The goal of attending a matchmaking show or event is to forge new business relationships with potential buyers, distributors or sellers. To help make that happen, the Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (APTAC) has put together a list of tips on how to make your first—or next—government matchmaking event a success:

1. Think about the kinds of opportunities you want to pursue. Be ready to explain how you can meet potential buyers' or sellers' needs.
2. When you're at the show, pay attention to how your competitors sell themselves. Make note of the marketing stances that seem to resonate with attendees, as well as those that fall flat.
3. Arrive armed with plenty of marketing materials. Bring business cards, brochures, fact sheets and a detailed capabilities statement. Tailor at least one of the handouts specifically to the event.

Get [APTAC's full list of suggestions here](#).

Matchmaking for Small Businesses

There's also the American Supplier Initiative, a series of Small Business Administration (SBA)-sponsored events that connect larger companies, corporations and government agencies with smaller suppliers.

Not sure who you want to meet with? The SBA will provide a list of possible matches based on the information, interests and profile you provide as part of the registration process.

This popular series is entering its final months. [Learn more about the series and register](#) for one of remaining dates.

Matchmaking for Exporters: The U.S. Commercial Service

Matchmaking can help with exporting, too! Whether you're looking to start exporting or enter additional markets, the U. S. Commercial Service can assist you. Services include helping identify potential partners and obtaining company reports; one-on-one meetings with pre-screened buyers, sales representatives and businesses; and customized market briefings and advice.

Enlist the U.S. Commercial Service's help today.

Look in Your Own Backyard

Chances are that there are matchmaking events going on right in your neighborhood. Check out local and state-level organizations and agencies to see what they might have planned. Chambers of commerce are great places to start.

One example is the matchmaking event being held by the Greater Washington (D.C.) Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on July 23rd. [Learn more and register for this event](#) that seeks to connect buyers and suppliers based on industry type and business category.

Find other events by searching [BusinessUSA's events database](#).

Go It Alone

There are huge advantages to matchmaking. But sometimes you've got to do like the famous Fleetwood Mac song says and go your own way.

Log on to BusinessUSA and use our [Find Opportunities tool](#) to find open procurement bids with the U.S. federal government. The contracting search tool includes the latest data from a range of government contracting sources.

In Other News: Managing for Long-Term Success

Be sure to check out a free seminar on ensuring long-term business success that takes place in Washington, D.C. on July 15.

Managing for Long-Term Success will cover the major structural weaknesses found in most entrepreneurial businesses. Participants will then learn how to create strategies that will help their businesses survive, prosper and grow. The event is being sponsored by the U.S. Treasury Department, and will feature renowned author and business expert Dr. Leonard Greenhalgh. [Click here for event and registration details.](#)

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