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Progress Through Regional Cooperation In The Alleghenies

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DLA Director Builds Strong Ties with American Clothing, Textile Industries

Contracting Data & Satisfaction Surveys

The PTAC at Southern Alleghenies is fortunate to work with many different companies in the area, and to assist them with their goals of sales to government entities. Our funding agencies, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and Pennsylvania's Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) have been pleased with contracting data and client satisfaction surveys that have come from the businesses in the area.

Within our new program year, we have a change to our data collection. In a nutshell, our funding agencies would like more up-to-date information on contracting data and client satisfaction on a quarterly basis than on a yearly basis. With regards to contracting data, every client we work with will receive a contracting data survey via email each quarter. The survey is just like the one we used last year, and is an easy way to tally contract activity for the quarter. We had a lot of success with clients reporting

Defense Logistics Agency Director Navy Vice Adm. Mark Harnitchek has talked a lot about opening the lines of communication with American clothing and textile suppliers. Just as often, he's made his way directly to the floor of manufacturing facilities, where workers are busy crafting everything from military uniforms and insignia to boots.

"He has gone out there and talked to CEOs about whatever issues they have, and he's also exhibited a true compassion for the men and women on the production line. He takes a personal interest in speaking with them and trying to learn about their experience with the company itself, as well as learning how they do their jobs," said Roy Dillard, director of supplier operations for DLA Troop Support's clothing and textiles division.

The military's need for clothing and textiles has greatly dropped with the end of the war in Iraq and waning of operations in Afghanistan, Dillard said. But Harnitchek has spent much of his three years as DLA director assuring American manufacturers that they are still essential, especially with so much of the industry now being overseas.

"It is important that we, the Department of Defense, keep the industry viable. Even if we have to pay a little more, it makes sense to maintain an industry base that we need, because who knows where we'll be in 10 years and what the requirements will be," Harnitchek told more than 200 leaders in the textiles industry the annual meeting of the National Council of Textile Organizations early this year.

their contracting data last year, and for that, the PTAC thanks you..

As to the client satisfaction surveys, we will also be sending them out quarterly to select companies each quarter. As a client or company, you will fill out a satisfaction survey only once a year. They will also be done via email.

Our first quarter will end on March 31, 2015. I will be sending the contracting and satisfaction surveys out starting March 1, 2015. Your feedback is important to us, and will be used to improve our services to clients. If you have any questions, please call me at (814) 949-6528 or email me at jgerraughty@sapdc.org.



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You're Probably Using One of These 25 Terrible Passwords

As [hackers know all to well](#), most people are lazy password-creators. And despite several [high-profile data breaches](#), not much changed in 2014.

The year's most common -- and least secure -- passwords looked pretty familiar, according to the security services company [SplashData's annual list](#), based on 3.3 million leaked passwords in North America and Europe.

[As in 2013](#), "123456" and "password" held the top two slots, and number-only passwords in general comprised half of the top ten passwords. Patterns like "qwerty," which is the consecutive six keys at the top

Maintaining a strong industrial base is equally as important as the agency's goal to cut costs, he told members of the American Apparel and Footwear Association in May.

"What I don't want to do is save a nickel today at the expense of a shrinking industrial base, and you guys are very brittle in terms of industrial bases," he said.

The majority of textiles and clothing vendors that contract with DLA are dedicated solely to producing items for the U.S. military, Dillard said.

"So it is a direct impact on them as an employer when they are in a position to not receive a contract. It matters to us because if, heaven forbid, they close their doors, we will not have the agility to get that workforce back together again in the future when we have a demand or surge we need to meet quickly," he added.

Harnitchek's deliberate effort to understand the industry's concerns has made business owners more likely to speak up when there are issues that impact their companies' ability to continue producing goods for the military, Dillard said.

When DLA increased the use of reverse auctions to drive down costs in 2012, for example, clothing and textile manufacturers worried it would further diminish the industry. In reverse auctions, sellers bid online for contracts and can see the lowest offer made, which increases competition and leads to lower prices.

"Over vendor base was very vocal about the use of reverse auctions and how it reduced their margins significantly," Dillard said. "They were leery of competing in an environment where they were asked to cut their margins so close that they could actually go into the red with a contract from us."

Harnitchek directed DLA Troop Support and DLA Acquisition to determine whether reserve auctions were a healthy way to do business with the clothing and textile industry, and in December 2013, he announced that reverse actions would no longer be used by the clothing and textiles directorate.

DLA Troop Support also now provides product forecasts to suppliers and has appointed an ombudsman to field questions and ideas on how DLA and industry can better partner.

Harnitchek has also recognized how much harder it's become for manufacturers who produce military clothing and textiles to follow the Berry Amendment, which allows DoD to buy only U.S. made products. It has become increasingly difficult to find raw components such as buttons and thread that aren't from foreign sources, Dillard said.

of the keyboard, remained in the top five.

There were a few new additions in the top 25 most-used passwords: Superheroes such as "batman" and "superman" were popular; "dragon" and "mustang," showed a love of wild beasts, and "baseball" and "football" of sports. Meanwhile, the simpler, more upbeat days of 2013's "princess," "sunshine," and "iloveyou" were over. (The continued popularity of "shadow" and "trustno1" indicated some aspirations to subterfuge--thwarted, perhaps, by those passwords' ubiquity.)

Rank	2013	2014
1	123456	123456
2	password	password
3	12345678	12345
4	qwerty	12345678
5	abc123	qwerty
6	123456789	1234567890
7	11111	1234
8	1234567	baseball
9	iloveyou	dragon
10	adobe123	football
11	123123	1234567
12	admin	monkey
13	1234567890	letmein
14	letmein	abc123
15	photoshop	111111
16	1234	mustang
17	monkey	access
18	shadow	shadow
19	sunshine	master
20	12345	Michael
21	password1	superman
22	princess	696969
23	azerty	123123
24	trustno1	batman
25	000000	trustno1

Appearances aside, people actually seem to have taken greater precautions with online protection, [said Mark Burnett](#), an online security expert who worked with SplashData. 2014 saw the "low percentage of people using the most common passwords" he explained.

Besides avoiding the common passwords, here are some tips to creating a safer password: Stick to longer, mixed-character passwords (eight or more

Dillard said the agency's relationship with suppliers has dramatically changed and many suppliers agree. During Harnitchek's final Captains of Industry meeting with clothing and textile manufacturers in September, Hardy Poole, a representative from the National Council of Textile Organizations, thanked the director for strongly supporting the clothing and textile industries.

"Thank you for your openness, for hosting four of these Captains of industry meeting, [and] for coming out and looking at our industry and seeing what we do and how we do it," he said.

Article posted courtesy of Beth Reece

FedBizOpps Searches: Be Through (Or Be Out of Luck)

If one type of FedBizOpps search does not turn up a solicitation, try a different search--or run the risk of missing the solicitation.

That is the message to contractors from a recent GAO bid protest decision, in which an offeror was unable to discover a VA opportunity by searching the "Place of Performance" field on FedBizOpps. As it turned out, the solicitation would have popped up if the offeror had tried other types of FedBizOpps searches, and the GAO held that it was the offeror's responsibility to more thoroughly attempt to locate the solicitation.

In [The Creative Mobility Group, LLC, B-410380.2 \(Dec. 19, 2014\)](#), the VA issued a request for quotations for home medical equipment services for patients of Veterans Integrated Service Network 11 medical facilities in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois. The VA posted the opportunity on the [FedBizOpps website](#).

The FedBizOpps posting included certain relevant information regarding the procurement, including the applicable NAICS code, the VISN to be served, and searchable terms such as "home medical equipment." However, because the work was to be performed at patients' residences, the VA elected not to include place of performance as a searchable term.

The Creative Mobility Group, LLC was the incumbent contract providing services to beneficiaries in Michigan. CMG's incumbent contract was set to expire on September 30, 2014.

CMG apparently had been anticipating the issuance of a follow-on solicitation, and had been searching for the solicitation on FedBizOpps using the place of performance field. Because the VA had not populated the field, CMG did not discover the solicitation.

On September 9, CMG contacted the contracting officer to inquire about the follow-on solicitation. The contracting officer informed CMG that the solicitation had already been issued and that the deadline for the submission of quotes had passed.

characters in both capital and lower case letters); stay away from easily guessable personal clues such as pets' names; [avoid dictionary words](#) and instead [purposefully misspell words](#).

Article posted courtesy of Jeanne Kim

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CMG filed a protest with the GAO. CMG argues that it was unreasonable for the VA to exclude any place of performance from the FedBizOpps posting. CMG asserted that, at a minimum, the VA should have selected Illinois, Indiana, Michigan or Ohio as the place of performance.

In response to the protest, the VA explained its rationale for omitting a place of performance on the FedBizOpps listing. Further, the VA argued that the published solicitation was easily retrievable using any of several other relevant terms in various other search categories on the FedBizOpps.

The GAO noted that "[t]he Competition in Contracting Act of 1984 generally requires contracting agencies to obtain full and open competition through use of competitive procedures." In order to ensure full and open competition, "a contracting agency must use reasonable methods to publicize its procurement needs and to timely disseminate solicitation documents to those entitled to receive them." However, "for a protest against an agency's solicitation dissemination to be sustained, a prospective contractor must demonstrate that it availed itself of every reasonable opportunity to obtain the solicitation documents."

The GAO pointed out that the FedBizOpps website cautions users about the limitations of searches when the place of performance field is used. The website contains the following notice:

Please note, there may be opportunities FBO did not recognize by this search. The results returned are based on agency input. If for any reason the submitting agency did not enter the Place of Performance location information, the system will not return that opportunity in the results.

In CMG's case, it "failed to heed this warning," and relied exclusively on the place of performance field. The GAO concluded the solicitation "was easily obtainable from FBO using a variety of applicable search terms that reasonably should have been known to" CMG. For example, CMG would have discovered the solicitation by a search using the home health care NAICS code or a search for VISN 11. Thus, the VA's omission of data from the place of performance field "did not deprive [CMG] of the ability to reasonably find the solicitation." The GAO denied CMG's protest.

The GAO decision in *The Creative Mobility Group, LLC* is a cautionary tale for prospective offerors. As the case demonstrates, thorough FedBizOpps searches may be required to discover a solicitation. Anything less may not meet the offeror's obligation to exhaust all reasonable efforts to obtain the solicitation.

Article posted courtesy of Amanda Wilwert

About Us

The PTAC at SAP&DC is an economic development entity that bridges the gap between supplier and buyer in the government marketplace. The PTAC stands ready to support businesses in the Alleghenies region in their

pursuit to secure contracts with local, state and/or federal government agencies nationwide by:

- Identifying niche government markets and specific contract opportunities
- Assisting with bid and proposal preparation
- Preparing the required vendor registrations
- Navigating your company through the requirements and procedures of government contracting
- Enhancing competition by obtaining applicable socio-economic certifications
- Providing guidance to ensure successful post-award contract performance

Due to the generous support of our Commonwealth and Federal funding partners, services provided by the PTAC are free of charge.

Whether you are an experienced contractor or new to the government marketplace, the PTAC will provide one-on-one counseling utilizing the following program resources to increase your share of contact awards.

PTAC Resources

- Electronic Bid Matching for products and services
- Military/Commercial specifications and standards
- Past procurement information and pricing histories
- State and Federal regulations guidance
- Professional training and outreach events
- Quality assurance and packaging guidance

Contact us today at [The PTAC at SAP&DC](#) to get started!



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