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GLITR-LTU Event Talks Selling To Government

By Matt Roush

It's possible even for small companies to do business with the government while avoiding the worst kinds of red tape, according to speakers at the Last Thursdays Unwired at Lawrence Technological University breakfast, sponsored by Lawrence Tech, GLITR and WWJ Newsradio 950.

John Morrison, director of business development for government sales at Sterling Heights-based Rave Computer Association Inc., said the company has found success building rack-mount computer systems for the government, chiefly the military. Rave computers are at work today everywhere from U.S. Navy ships' radar arrays to surveillance aircraft to Humvees to field command posts.

Morrison said the first step for any company interested in selling to the federal government is to register with the government's Central Contractor Registration system at ccr.gov. As for finding selling opportunities, Morrison said there's the Federal Business Opportunities Web site, fbo.gov.

He said the government makes three kinds of purchases -- micropurchases of \$1 to \$2,500, where the government literally calls you with an order and pays by credit card; small purchases of \$2,500 to \$25,000, on a streamlined procedure; and large purchases of \$25,000, which go by a formal procurement process. Morrison said Rave has marketed itself to the government through defense trade associations such as the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association.

There are also Procurement Technical Assistance Centers to help small business win government contracts, and many individual federal agencies have a Small Business Liaison officer.

Also speaking was Miller Canfield attorney Richard Choi, who told attendees that "the federal government is an enormous opportunity for you" -- they buy \$500 billion in merchandise a year, and many programs set aside amounts for purchase by small business.

He also warned companies seeking business in defense industries of inadvertently violating ITAR, the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (see www.pmdtdc.state.gov/itar_index.htm).

Choi is also hosting an event June 19 at Automation Alley in Troy featuring a nuts and bolts discussion of how to get the government on a business client list. See [this link](#).

The meeting wrapped up with a presentation on selling to local government from Ara Topouzian, economic development manager of the city of Novi. He said Novi uses a Web-based procurement system, which opens opportunities to a wide variety of companies. He said companies interested in doing business with Novi can get more information at govbids.com, as well as the Michigan Intergovernmental Trade Network at mitn.info.

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