

**BOOK REVIEW**

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*World Class Contracting: How Winning Companies Build Successful Partnerships in the e-Business Age.* By Gregory A. Garrett (Chicago, IL: CCH Incorporated, A Wolters Kluwer Company, 2003, ISBN Number: 0-8080-0977- X, Softbound, 336 pages, US\$56.00).

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Best practices in contracting methods are the subject of this book. While approaching the subject from a commercial perspective, the commonalities between private and public sector contracting techniques and objectives are emphasized. The book starts by describing ways that contracting organizations can build trust and communication in the procurement cycle. The initial emphasis is on procurement planning and identifying the needs of the buying organization followed by an analysis of the contract formation process and the importance of defining terms and conditions. An overview of the acquisition process is provided to provide the setting for the in-depth description of best practices in contracting.

A continuing theme is the need for teamwork between project management and contract specialist officials; an entire chapter is devoted to this subject. Later, techniques of coordinating progress reports between technical departments, project managers and contracts management departments are described in terms of web based global systems.

The historical use of international contracts and their inherent weaknesses serve as a guide to recommended best practices. The



appendix contains relevant official documents such as the Convention for the International Sale of Goods (CISG) in hard copy as well as the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC). Where these rules apply and where they do not is also described. Included are a description of the particular aspects of state law and how their applicability affects interstate and international business relationships.

A quite thorough review of the contract acquisition cycle is provided, with emphasis on the selection, review and evaluation aspects. Various parts of the proposal are described in terms of technical aspects, price components, and company reputation or past performance. The participation of the different groups of reviewers corresponding to each component of the proposal is discussed.

Wherever possible, Garrett recommends best practices in documenting negotiations, responding to customer needs, and managing the contracting relationship to produce peak performance. He emphasizes efficiency and effectiveness through contract management to provide the customer with maximum value.

The use of extensive graphs, charts and sample forms serves to delineate the nature of the contracting process. The identification of inputs, outputs and components of various processes of the acquisition cycle alert the reader to consider many aspects involved with the steps in contracting. For a beginning level contracting specialist, the book comprehensively outlines the procurement process. For an experienced contracts manager, the forms provided in the appendix are a guide for improving contract preparation, negotiation, and documentation.

The book focuses on practical aspects of contract management for project management personnel. Equal emphasis is given to project and contract management, while downplaying the often-present rivalries between them. The overview of the contracting process serves as a useful reference book for upper level management who wish to understand and appreciate the steps involved in contracting. It is hoped that leadership will review this book to learn the importance of their support of contracts, acquisition and procurement agreements, as well as an appreciation of the contracts management process.

The multiple forms, the perspectives contained therein and suggested inputs provide useful material for the working professional as well as the

academic reviewer. In addition, the author describes the international arena and provides a platform for the novice in international contracts.

Granted that the author's perspective is from the seller's point of view to provide greater understanding of the procurement cycle and to gain more access to markets. Once a company has its foot in the door through contract award, it must achieve objectives and attain a high level of service and quality through integrating with the contract managers and project managers of the customer organization. A selling company can further its efficiency by integrating and benchmarking its own processes to achieve world-class stature in organization and quality. By professional training of its workforce, the company sets standards to be obtained and increases efficiencies. These efficiencies are achieved through knowledge of current best practices and emphasis on process improvements through continual reexamination and "communication, communication, communication!"

Even if the author's objective is to advise companies on how to best receive and manage contracts, there are many lessons to be learned by government agencies that also must seek to maximize customer services in an efficient and effective manner. By highlighting and seeking to describe in detail the stages of the acquisition process and inputs at various levels, the author contributes to sharing best practices in the field of contract management. Through analyzing the inputs at each stage, and how objectives are attained with the various outputs of the processes, a skeleton groundwork is established to grow the professional performance of the acquisition workforce.

This book is useful for procurement organizations that seek to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in obtaining goods and services for its organization, as well as for the sellers of those goods and services. Through improved processes and identification of the steps and necessary components, greater good can be accomplished. However, those readers who seek more in-depth knowledge of certain aspects of procurement such as performance-based contracting and specification writing, cannot find it in this book. Similarly, preparation of scope of work is not covered.

The book overall provides a condensed guide to best practices in contracting that covers in reasonable detail the art of negotiation tactics, the indispensable need for a contracting team as well as the components of the procurement process in the standard format. Novel approaches

such as oral proposals are mentioned, but on-line auctions are not described. Nor is the concept of cooperative purchasing. Qualified bidder lists are mentioned but not described in detail for readers who to fully understand the nature of multiple award schedule contracting.

Most contract types are briefly described, but the details of setting up an incentive contract or cost-plus award fee contract are not described. Neither are the reasons for employing one contract type over another, and why one should be favored in a given situation over another.

It appears that the author seeks to describe how to manage the long-term strategic supplier alliance relationship between business and customer. This is understandable since the author represents a large communications technology supplier. But the author also represents an educational and training group called ESI, and thus seeks to generalize business contracting best practices to the genre of contracting best practices. The book presents a framework on which to build the review of the contracting process and create a framework for process improvement, greater efficiency and effectiveness. For other variations on the traditional request for proposals, contract award and administration, other sources are needed.

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