

fostering relations



how GSA and VA are working together to streamline the acquisition process

by Ron Comtois

The important and ongoing partnership between the General Services Administration and the Department of Veterans Affairs has been tested to new limits recently with initiatives focused on creating an interactive customer service platform on both *GSAAdvantage!*[®] and e-Buy.

Training for this new functionality was recently provided by GSA and Unisys to the VA's National Acquisition Center, Federal Supply Schedule Contracting Staff. The training focused on GSA's e-commerce tools *GSAAdvantage!*[®] and e-Buy with an emphasis on the Schedule Input Program (SIP). The SIP is a tool that assists vendors in creating their unique electronic catalog of items available through both *GSAAdvantage!*[®] and the e-Buy system.

During the 2004 Federal Healthcare Acquisition Conference held in New Orleans, a cooperative VA and GSA team delivered a presentation on both *GSAAdvantage!*[®] and e-Buy programs highlighting how effective the acquisition tools are in the VA and DoD procurement activities, and in Hospitals for general and medical acquisitions.

Additionally, the briefing session highlighted statistics showing that procurement activities buying from Federal Supply Schedules demonstrated a drastic rise in e-tool usage resulting in efficient procurement and logistics management and subsequent cost savings.

An upcoming initiative that GSA and VA are working on is the new *VA-Advantage!*, an interactive web-portal for the VA and its associate agencies, to search, source, research, and make purchases from Schedule contracts for dental equipment, medical equipment and supplies, pharmaceutical, and services contracting using e-Buy.

These efforts bring the two agencies together with a common goal – to increase customer service, enhance the contracting officer's knowledge base, and to streamline the acquisition process to make purchasing as efficient and as cost effective as possible.

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