

TOP 10

10 Steps to Becoming A Supplier Diversity Advocate

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If we take a look at advocacy and the fact that true support, intercession, leverage, and consideration will rest on the shoulders of those who stand in the gap for others, we will understand that this is the real value of supplier diversity professionals. In 10 Steps to Becoming A supplier diversity advocate, we will take a look at the approach supplier diversity professionals should take to impact the diverse suppliers they serve. Follow these steps and you will be well on your way to being a successful advocate too!

STEP 1: BECOME A SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT!

IN CONSTRUCTION:

- Design Build vs. Design Bid Build
- Construction manager at risk & other delivery methods
- Guaranteed Maximum Price
- Use and purpose of Bid tabulation sheet
- Attend Bid openings

IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES:

- Information Technology • iCloud • VOIP
- Software and Platforms used i.e., Banner, Sciqwest, CRM, ERP etc.

IN PROCUREMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES:

- RFP, RFQ, RFI • Sole Source, Consortium, E&I etc.
- MRO's • Read RFP's—ask questions



STEP 3: IDENTIFY INTERNAL ADVOCATES

- Usually in areas of largest spend
- Watch for buying signals while collaborating
- Help them meet their goals—ask how you can help with vendors
- By continuing to deliver outstanding diverse suppliers in significant categories
- Build trust
- Be responsive to their feedback and act on requests or suggestions

FIND OUT WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO THEM

STEP 2: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH END USERS BY

- Inviting them to events such as Matchmakers
- Ask to accompany Lunches and Galas with you
- Bring back product samples from suppliers
- Email to Leadership about your interaction
- Include in photo opportunities with suppliers
- Write articles highlighting their involvement
- Help solve their problems
- Be concerned with what concerns them
- Support projects other than your own i.e., vendor presentations
- Stay abreast of industry trends within their covered categories



STEP 4: WORK CLOSELY WITH BUYERS

- By keeping your ear to the ground
- Always looking for what is coming up next
- Attend RFP meetings throughout the process
- Serve on committees
- Pick your battles—be open minded and ask questions
- Create a new approach to matching suppliers
- Look for areas where suppliers are scarce
- Ask to include 2nd Tier goals

STEP 5: IDENTIFY GAPS AND NEEDS

- Through forecasting
- Identify who's not performing well—introduce new suppliers
- Go-to" supplier is retiring? Facilitate matchmaking
- Stay abreast of new technologies—bring in supplier with skills
- End users have needs—uncover them by asking

STEP 7: SHARE VIABLE COMPANIES WITH END USERS

- Capabilities Statements that include:
- Relevant past projects or experiences
- Capacity in terms of bonding and insurances
- Key clients served (at least top 10)
- Certifications from 3rd party entities and their certificates
- A company summary which should include their competitive advantage
- Key personnel and decision makers
- Full contact information with emails, phone and website
- Their core products and or services offered Non-Minorities too!



STEP 9: STAY BY THEIR SIDE

- Accompany them to their first introductory meeting
- Stay informed of their interaction
- Make suggestions and interject during meetings
- Listen for buying signals—take notes
- Work with them on follow-up strategies
- Follow-up with buyer to close the loop and provide more insight

At the end of the day whether we are successful advocates in supporting our suppliers in getting a contract or not, let us not tire of this work, yet, let us be reminded of this famous quote from **Mahatma Gandhi**, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." Advocacy is fresh and new every day!

Veronica Cook-Euell is the Supplier Diversity, Program Manager for Kent State University. Cook-Euell is a recent award recipient of the Asian American Commerce Group Award in 2016, the Women of Power Award from the Akron Urban League 2015, the Ohio Minority Supplier Development Council "Advocate of the Year Award" 2014 and nominated for the same award in November 2015, also the Minority Business Advocacy Award from Black Pages Ohio in 2012 recognizing her work in building business-to-business relationships throughout Ohio, and her commitment to supporting growth in emerging and small businesses.

STEP 6: PREPARE SUPPLIERS BEFORE INTRODUCTION

- Usually in areas of largest spend
- Watch for buying signals while collaborating
- Help them meet their goals—ask how you can help with vendors
- By continuing to deliver outstanding diverse suppliers in significant categories
- Build trust
- Be responsive to their feedback and act on requests or suggestions

STEP 8: MAXIMIZE THE APPEAL OF ADVOCACY

- Highlight contributions of your champions
- Reward great collaboration
- Compliment when things go exceptionally well
- Give credit where credit is due i.e., for \$\$ spent with Minorities
- Encourage involvement



STEP 10: SHOW UP!

- Provide soft vetting on behalf of suppliers
- Support buyer by providing access to need information
- Be available when a mediator is needed
- Be customer service minded!

