

GSA-FSS Heads Online

Improved Efficiency and Effectiveness With Online Vendor Application and GSA Schedule Modification Processes



a business volume in excess of \$25 billion, FSS offers more services and products than any commercial enterprise in the world.

THE PROBLEM

As the federal government's central procurement agency, GSA is committed to innovation for improving government effectiveness and efficiency and providing the best value for agencies and taxpayers. The Agency has over 13,000 businesses on its schedule that need to make modifications to the products and services they offer. As companies launch new products and services, or when they modify existing offerings, they need to make modifications to their GSA Schedule listings to reflect these additions and changes. Some of the larger businesses on the schedule submit modification requests almost daily, resulting in significant volumes of paper processing, data re-keying, and paper storage. The sheer volume of requests creates processing delays of several days, or up to several weeks during peak periods. These delays impact GSA, the supplier and ultimately the buyer – the agencies. Issues develop when a modification is in progress, as the item being modified is not available for purchase. During the modification

The General Services Administration is the largest contracting organization in the world. Under GSA Schedules – master contracts that define delivery and quantity pricing – the Agency establishes long-term, government-wide contracts with commercial firms to provide access to over four million commercial services and products. It also plays a key role in developing and implementing government-wide policies. GSA's 13,000 associates provide services and solutions for the office operations of more than one million federal workers located in more than 8,000 government-owned and leased buildings in 2,000 U.S. communities.

FSS is one of the three Service Organizations of the GSA. With five primary business lines, FSS serves the federal community as a trusted source for business, administrative, and mission solutions, providing a source for virtually every commercial product or service an agency might need. Along with GSA's other Service Organizations, Public Buildings, and Federal Technology, FSS helps federal agencies better serve the public by offering, at best value, superior workplaces, expert solutions, acquisition services and management policies. With

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process, the previous item is removed from the system, and in some cases, it can take up to six weeks to complete the paperwork to make the modified item available.

In addition, GSA is challenged with processing nearly 1,000 new vendor proposals for schedule contracts on

To ensure successful implementation and to promote use by GSA schedule users, the Agency also needed to bring forward a solution that was extremely easy-to-use. By opting for a zero-download solution, the Agency was able to minimize hardware and software compatibility issues and eliminate installation challenges.

electronic screens guide businesses through the offer and submission process, authenticating user identities and keeping proprietary information confidential. As part of the eOffer solution, the Agency also created and deployed its eMod platform - a way for vendors to modify their schedule contracts online.

"DURING PEAK TIMES, PROCESSING A NEW APPLICATION CAN TAKE UP TO 140 DAYS" - GSA FSS

an annual basis. During peak times, processing a new application can take up to 140 days. These two paper-laden processes created tons of paper that needs to be managed, processed and stored.

The chosen solution also had to meet the requirements of the Federal E-SIGN law, and support the distribution of fully executed, verifiable contracts to each party involved in the transaction.

eOffer is based on open source software, web services, and digital signature technology. With Linux at its foundation, the system uses Java2 Enterprise Edition Apache Web Server freeware, and Tomcat application server software with a back-end database from Sybase Inc. At the front end, the portal uses Java Server Pages to connect through web services to applications running on the mainframe.

THE CHALLENGE

A key challenge for GSA came in defining the environment for their new system. The Agency knew that they needed to bring the process online; however, over the past 20 years, GSA had invested over a million person-hours into the development of a mainframe system. Whatever solution GSA implemented had to interface with this legacy system, leverage the GSA Advantage Portal, and support their existing SF-30 form for schedule modifications.

THE SOLUTION

The agency worked with Unisys Corp and Silanis to develop the new eOffer platform - for new contract offers and GSA schedule modifications.

The eOffer Website enables companies that want to become GSA-approved businesses - listed on GSA's Schedule 70 - to respond electronically to the Schedule 70 solicitation for information technology services and products. One of the first paperless contract award options in the federal government, eOffer's user-friendly,

Contractors' complete applications and modifications over the web and electronic approvals are captured through the web-browser using process signature technology. At the foundation of this process is Silanis' ApproveIt Web Server, a zero-client web solution that enables users to apply a legally enforceable electronic signature to documents over the web. To the user, the experience is similar to clicking an "I Agree" button, but the agency benefits from the capture of electronic evidence during the approval



We Make Paperless Happen

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process. An electronic signature is embedded into each document and a final, signed and verifiable copy is distributed to both parties after the documents are submitted to GSA.

THE BENEFITS


During the contract processes for becoming a FSS contractor and modifying the GSA schedule, there are a number of document versions created, with continuous edits. This can create the

application and transaction. This will dramatically reduce the amount of paper processed by the Agency, and will reduce turn-around times for modification requests. The Agency will now be able to store the final contracts electronically, reducing the need for physical storage space. Prior to moving to the eOffer platform, GSA's paper-files occupied a full floor of the Agency's Washington headquarters.

"PRIOR TO MOVING TO THE EOFFER PLATFORM, GSA'S PAPER-FILES OCCUPIED A FULL FLOOR OF THE AGENCY'S WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS." - GSA FSS

need for several mail packages, faxes, and overnight delivery packs to facilitate the back-and-forth negotiation. eOffer saves time and money by eliminating the need for mailing, faxing, and overnight delivery of documents as all documents amendments and modifications are handled electronically through the portal.

As well, since all documents are now created, modified, and approved electronically, there is significantly less paperwork generated for each new

GSA's eOffer Platform demonstrates the Agency's capabilities as a leading federal acquisition center and resource for acquisition excellence. It also allows the Agency to deliver on its promise of efficient and effective government that provides the best value for agencies and taxpayers. 

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL 1-888-SILANIS OR
VISIT WWW.SILANIS.COM**

KEY BENEFITS

GSA's eOffer Platform demonstrates the Agency's capabilities as a leading federal acquisition center and resource for acquisition excellence. Additional benefits include:

Dramatic reduction in the amount of paper processed.

Reduction of processing time for new applications - from up to 140 days during peak times, down to mere hours.

Elimination of mail, fax, and overnight delivery fees during the contracting process.

Reduced need for paper storage space.

Improved turn-around times for modification requests.



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