

5 Small Businesses that Integrators Know and Love

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An informal survey about the small firms that the top 10 integrators on this year's Federal List regard as promising turned up a wide range of companies. The list includes American Indian-owned firms, woman-owned companies, shoestring operations and larger small businesses with several hundred employees.

Most of them have similar offerings – information technology consulting, services and support – but they've caught the attention of officials at these large integrators.

The companies profiled here are all profitable, according to officials at each. Privately held companies are not required to disclose financial details. Most of the firms achieved their success without the help of venture capital, and they expect to continue to grow, officials said.

Small companies thrive when they can establish themselves as leaders in a niche. For example, executives at Optimal Solutions Integration Inc., based in Irving, Texas, tout their expertise in enterprise resource planning. Meanwhile, Client Network Services Inc. officials are trying to earn the company a reputation as a builder of health care claims databases.

But integrators tend to turn to small businesses that have common attributes. Aside from filling a particular need, a small firm should be able to participate in the bidding process, bring their own government contacts and have an impressive track record, according to integrator officials.

Here are profiles of a few, in alphabetical order. Others are included in the list below.

1. Cairo Corp.: It starts with the huddle

2. Client Network Services Inc.: Always in the hunt

Ask officials at large integrators what they want out of a small-business partner, and most will say that the firm must always be on the prowl for government customers.

That's the characteristic that led officials at EDS to identify Client Network Services Inc. (CNSI) as a notable partner. Officials at the firm, based in Rockville, Md., are constantly trying to improve their qualifications, according to EDS officials.

"They find out what the industry standards are for company certifications and what the government trends are for company certifications, " said Alicia Dudley, program manager for EDS' mentor/prot ?g ? program. "That's an indicator that this is a company that believes in quality and process.

"CNSI, a 10-year-old IT and engineering services firm, has been in the 8(a) program since 1998 and is slated to graduate in 2007. It provides IT support and services to federal agencies, including the Energy, Commerce, Agriculture and Homeland Security departments.

But at least 20 percent of CNSI's work is on the state and local levels. For example, the company is developing a Medicaid claims processing system for Maine. Officials said they hope to pursue more state and local government work.

“Even to get a small percentage of that market will be a big shot in the arm, ” said B. Chatterjee, president of CNSI. The firm was launched a decade ago by Chatterjee and three colleagues who wanted to run an IT business that gave employees control of the company’s growth. Each of CNSI’s 470 workers owns a share of the firm.

The company has been profitable since its inception, hitting \$63 million in revenue last year, and officials expect to reach \$80 million this year.

3. Global Analytic Information Technology Services Inc.: Sizing up for big jobs

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