

PURCHASING POWER

A publication of DAS Procurement Services

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Buying Smart

Purchasing consortium to save millions for Connecticut schools

In a move that will save urban districts millions of dollars annually, Hartford, New Haven, Waterbury, Stamford, Bridgeport, New Britain, and Danbury have formed the largest school supply purchasing consortium in the state.

The Big Cities Consortium (BCC) will enable member districts to seek greater discounts by pooling their resources and seeking larger block purchases. Additionally, the larger purchasing volume will raise the bargaining influence of each district through the consortium's overall purchasing power.

"This partnership will work for every city and town. The discount can go as high as they want it to go," said DAS Deputy Commissioner Alan Mazzola at a press conference on May 8.

Under the umbrella of DAS, this private sector concept will be put into motion. The BCC will partner with DAS to buy off existing state contracts as well as negotiate common contracts that would then be bid through DAS. DAS Commissioner Barbara Waters says she is "thrilled" by the consortium's potential to seek out savings with greater efficiencies.

"By leveraging the tremendous buying power of the state, DAS can help schools get the best possible prices for goods and services," Waters said. "We believe that this program will become a national



model and propel Connecticut to the forefront of state and local government procurement."

Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools Anthony Amato said, "this is a big thing for Hartford. We're not going to stop at the consortium. We want teachers to order online from their desks for more efficient and less expensive purchasing. This is what business can do for the kids in Connecticut."

The state's e-commerce vendor, Digital Commerce Corporation, is working with the school supplies vendor to automate the requisitioning and ordering of supplies and improve the productivity to participating agencies. ■

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PENNY WISE

Purchasing packs a punch with enhancements across the board

While reviewing possible subjects for this issue of *Purchasing Power* I was struck by the diversity and wide range of the possible topics. Obviously, you can see the topics that we elected to tell you about, but we couldn't fit everything in the space available. I would like to comment on some of the material that we left out, although I am sure you will hear about some of these activities in a future *Purchasing Power*.

On the contracting front, we recently awarded a new temporary services contract that runs for two years. The previous contract had a significant Set-Aside component and the new version retains and increases that demonstration of our commitment to Connecticut small businesses. In addition, we have explicitly opened the contract to political sub divisions meaning that municipalities, school systems and qualified not-for-profits may now use this contract to help meet their needs for temporary services.

Finally, working with the Connecticut Community Provider's Association we have included two firms that specialize in providing temporary services through people with disabilities. Please consider these options when you utilize this contract to fill your need for temporary help. It's a great opportunity to demonstrate your support for these worthy causes and obtain temporaries at the same time.

In the technology arena we recently enhanced our web site capabilities by improving our "Other Government Bid Notices" system. This function, primarily used by Connecticut municipalities to post their bid notices, now utilizes our e-mail registration system to automatically notify suppliers when local governments post bids on our web site. This provides a larger audience of potential bidders to the sub divisions while increasing the value of bid registra-

tion to our suppliers. To the best of our knowledge this is a national first for Connecticut – no other state has such a capability. While that is cool we are really more excited about the win/win nature of this feature – better publicity for towns and school bids and increased opportunity for our suppliers.

Our Purchasing Card (aka the Pcard) volume continues to grow and is now exceeding \$500,000 per month. Initial roll-out to agencies has been completed and we are working with our partners in the Office of The Comptroller to increase the number of cards in use in some of the more recently added departments.

OrderLink, our Internet based e-commerce system, recently reached the \$1,000,000 milestone with over 1700 orders processed since production began in November 1999. Usage is accelerating and we now have over 400 users on the system, one of the few production e-commerce systems running in government at this time.

I don't mean to brag about being first, all the states are doing good things and there is a lot for Connecticut to copy, or "steal shamelessly" as they say in quality circles. Being first is not important. Rather, what is important is to find creative ways to deliver value to our customers and at the same time to help our suppliers.

We look at every bid and contract as a potential opportunity for improvement and increased "value added".

We can use your ideas – you use our products and you know both what is good about our products and what is bad (or should we say has some room for improvement).

We would love to hear from you – send us your thoughts. ■

*Jim
Passier*

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DAS Procurement Services*

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\$UCCESS \$TORY

Setting the Tone for state government

by Rob Guillemin

Remanufactured toner cartridges make favorable impressions

On June 26, 1999, Governor Rowland signed Public Act 99-213, "An Act Concerning State Use of Recyclable and Remanufactured Goods." The law makes it mandatory for state agencies to use remanufactured toner cartridges in their procurement process. But even without legislative requirements, plenty of sensible reasons exist to buy remanufactured toner cartridges, such as high performance, low cost, and environmental advantages.

Refilled vs. Remanufactured cartridges

Initial efforts to recycle empty toner cartridges relied on an inferior "drill and fill" technique in which recyclers drilled a hole into a cartridge and filled it with toner without examining interior components. Given the lack of quality control, it wasn't long before refilled cartridges became synonymous with paper jams, leaking toner powder, and low quality images.

In contrast, remanufacturers rebuild cartridges to match original equipment (OEM) specifications. To remanufacture a toner cartridge, remanufacturers completely disassemble empty cartridges, clean and lubricate components, replace worn or damaged parts with new parts, and replenish toner. To improve the cartridge's performance, some remanufacturers also install long-life drums that outlast single-use drums by two to five times

Cartridge Performance

To compete with OEM cartridges, remanufacturers make a point of emphasizing quality control and customer satisfaction. Standard remanufacturing practices include a quality control program consisting of dozens of checks as cartridges are cleaned and refurbished. Most importantly, all remanufactured cartridges are tested on applicable printers to ensure that their printing yield, image clarity, density of coverage and runability characteristics are equal to or better than the OEM product. Cartridges are also lot tested before shipment and receive full-life testing by independent laboratories to compare and match OEM standards.

Cost Savings

Remanufactured cartridges offer significant cost savings. On the state office supplies contract (#945-A-05-1401-C), Corporate Express teamed up with Flo-Tech to provide cartridges at cost savings of 15-40% compared to list priced OEM brands. On the remanufactured toner cartridge contract (#990-P-05-0329-C), Laser Pro Remanufacturers offers savings of 25-65% compared to OEM list prices. Laser Pro's enhanced savings stem from its use of a "closed loop" recycling system. This system allows cartridges to circulate from customer to vendor between two and five times (depending on the type of cartridge), resulting in lower remanufacturing costs and additional savings for the customer. These items are available on the OrderLink system.

...institutional purchasers examined their lingering fears about remanufactured products and found that remanufactured cartridges offer the performance, value, and environmental benefits that simply can't be duplicated.

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Environmental Benefits

Remanufactured toner cartridges protect natural resources by diverting used products from the waste stream and returning them to productive use. Approximately 32 million toner and ink jet cartridges are sold each year. A toner cartridge contains about 2 ½ pounds of plastic, and an average of 3 quarts of oil are burned to produce a new cartridge. By reusing cartridges, remanufacturers prevent approximately 38,000 tons of trash and save over 22 million gallons of oil each year. Remanufacturers also ensure that spent cartridges receive proper disposal by recycling plastic parts and using licensed handlers to dispose of waste toner (considered a nuisance dust by EPA).

Growing Popularity

In the past few years, the states of California, Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont as well as Connecticut's Departments of Public Safety, Consumer Protection, and Environmental Protection have begun to purchase remanufactured cartridges in large quantities.

These institutional purchasers examined their lingering fears about remanufactured products and found that remanufactured cartridges offer the performance, value, and environmental benefits that simply can't be duplicated. ■



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Enter E-Partners

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For the past few years, DAS has been putting its leading-edge capabilities to work for Connecticut in unprecedented new ways, forging unique relationships with the agencies, towns, schools, businesspeople, nonprofits, and taxpayers of our state.

Little by little, on a project by project basis, each DAS business center has (until now) independently set out to apply the collective experience and expertise the agency has cultivated to help a growing number of customers do their jobs faster, better, and more efficiently.

The result? The agency's list of satisfied customers has grown exponentially. In fact, this outreach has become so effective that the time had clearly come to focus the project more keenly.

Enter "e-partners," a program launched in an attempt to corral the independent efforts of the various business centers and cross market those services to existing customers.

"Our customer service effort has gotten to the point that we were doing so many things for so many agencies and towns that we needed a dedicated group to provide that customer service," said DAS Commissioner Barbara Waters.

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“The types of products and services we can offer our clients is so diverse, it had clearly become time to tap into the potential synergy there,” Waters added.

What is e-partners?

The letter “e” denotes the immediacy with which DAS can now provide its services, thanks to last year’s electronic online expansion. The word “partners” is there to remind participants that for all the technology at work to better serve DAS’ clients, nothing will ever replace the human touch of a genuine, person-to-person relationship.

Vince McMahan and Lydia Rosario, both of DAS Procurement Services, were selected to represent the agency on the road, bringing news of the agency’s services right into the town halls and board of education meeting rooms around Connecticut.

...agencies, towns, and schools will have unprecedented access to a wide array of fairly priced, quality goods.

“I’m excited about the program,” said McMahan.

“The Electronic Commerce component will revolutionize the way Connecticut does business, small businesses will have the opportunity to present their contract merchandise to an expanded customer base, and agencies, towns, and schools will have unprec-

edented access to a wide array of fairly priced, quality goods,” he explained.

A typical e-partnership might work like this: A certain Connecticut town may know of DAS through the State and Federal Property Distribution Center – perhaps they acquired a pickup truck through the program. Already a satisfied customer, they may not be aware, however, that the same agency that connected them with the surplus vehicle can also get them:

- a great deal on thousands of office products
- recoup costs expended toward nursing, counseling, or physical, speech, and occupational therapy at its schools
- help them understand the fine points of important ADA laws and,
- provide master insurance to safeguard the assets of local housing authorities.

Rosario and McMahan would assess the customer’s needs and show them the full range of ways DAS could potentially save them time and money.

“DAS has so many services to offer towns, municipalities, and schools. We bring information about what DAS can do directly to the people so one day, we can hopefully help them. The response has been overwhelming,” said Rosario. ■

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