

PURCHASING POWER

A publication of DAS Procurement Services

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Bigger Better Stronger E-Comm Connecticut Opens for Business! Faster



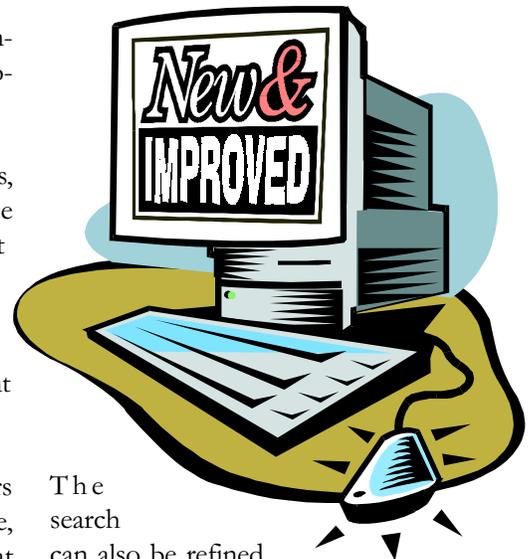
onnecticut's new and improved e-commerce system is up and running! Officially launched October 15, the system underwent a substantial facelift since its pilot stage.

"It's been totally revamped," said John Pacholski of DAS Procurement Services, explaining that after a test run, DAS went back to the vendor (Digital Commerce Corporation) with suggestions and feedback from those who looked at the first system.

"We had comments from agencies that the first OrderLink system wasn't user-friendly enough and did not have a good search engine," said Procurement Services' Joann McAllister.

Programmers from Digital Commerce came to Connecticut to meet with users to discuss potential pitfalls and possibilities. "On their ride home, it was like, *Eureka!*" exclaimed McAllister. The programmers had a revelation, and on that four-hour drive, they conceived the new system. Six weeks later, "E-Comm Connecticut" was born.

Response to the revamped system has been overwhelmingly positive. The two biggest improvements are a new search mechanism and "shopping cart" configuration. Before, users had to know the contract they were seeking. Pacholski said that's been changed. "Now, we've made a 180-degree turn. If you want day calendars, you type the item name and all contracts will be listed. The user can choose the vendor, so if you want to use a local or small business, it's right there. It can also be helpful for agencies and groups looking to meet Set-Aside goals."



The search can also be refined if too many contracts appear. Moreover, the new system has multiple browsers so when a user moves back and forth within the system to check a price or refine a search, all previous information will remain intact.

This shopping cart-based system has already proven effective. From body armor to spark

See Users, page 4

In This Issue

Son of OrderLink?
A special report as Connecticut's new e-commerce officially opens shop

1

Penny Wise
Procurement musings from DAS' Jim Passier

2

Success Story
Going green with DAS' new environmentally friendly purchasing options

3



PENNY WISE

To the Future! (and Beyond)

DAS Procurement looks forward - to new technology and a greener tomorrow

Looking through the articles for this issue of *Purchasing Power*, I was struck by the diversity of the issues facing purchasing people today.

Here we are dealing with major technological issues like the Y2K demon and at the same time working to absorb new uses of the Internet such as e-commerce. In addition, there is a growing sense of the urgency surrounding use of recycled products to help protect our environment. We talked about Y2K in our last issue, while this newsletter concerns e-commerce and our Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) Program.

With regard to e-commerce, we are now rolling out our revamped system, CT Center. The graphical user interface, or "goosey" as the techies call it, has been completely redesigned around the way people actually order products on a computer system.

A lot of work went into getting the system just right. Now the day has come: DAS is processing electronic orders.

Our e-comm supplier, Digital Commerce Corporation, went through an intense period of examining every step, action, function, and even each keystroke required to place orders on an Internet-based system. We combined and simplified whenever we could and created what we believe to be an intuitive, simple-to-use facility.

Now we are running training classes for users while simultaneously working with several key agencies to put the finishing touches on the redesign. Results have been very encouraging and we are processing orders. In fact, we have one town that has begun placing

orders without any instruction whatsoever. We are sure there will be many more.

As I said previously, we are also concentrating on promoting the use of recycled products. You will also find an article on that subject in this issue. The EPP program in Connecticut is a year-long effort to identify and promote use of environmentally friendly products. The EPP project will include a review of existing environmental statutes and consider proposing legislation that will provide an overall framework to guide future EPP activity.

It appears the EPP activity and e-commerce systems are very different concepts. But both are similar in that they focus on change: changing the types of products we buy through EPP methods and changing how we buy them through e-commerce.

You may have noticed that the EPP article mentions development of a website, which, being related to the concept of e-commerce, hmmm...maybe these things aren't so different after all. ■

Jim Passier

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\$UCCESS \$TORY

Natural Selection

DAS Plants the Seeds for Green Products and Services



In an effort to increase the use of environmentally preferable products and services (EPPs), DAS and the Department of Environmental Protection have teamed up to create an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program. The creation of this program follows a growing purchasing trend that promotes products that conserve energy, protect natural resources, avoid toxic ingredients, prevent pollution, and safeguard health and safety. While EPPs feature environmental benefits, the success of the program is based on the ability of these products to remain cost competitive and perform as well as or better than traditional products.

Robert Guillemin, environmental purchasing coordinator, administers the EPP Program from DAS Procurement Services. Over the next year, the program will promote EPPs by researching the environmental attributes of products and services, adding environmental language to contracts, and educating purchasers about the benefits of EPPs. The EPP Program follows an implementation strategy that falls into three categories.

The first part is to gain a firm understanding of the statutes and policies that relate to environmentally preferable purchasing. "One statute requires state agencies to establish a 10-percent price preference for alternative fuel vehicles and goods made with recycled materials," Guilleman says. "Other statutes ask state agencies to eliminate the use of disposable and single-use products and set minimum recycled content standards for printing and writing paper." A review of these laws will help clarify legislative priorities and provide guidance for the EPP program.

The second part is to highlight environmentally preferable products currently purchased by the state agencies and identify potential EPPs. Some familiar "green" products currently listed on contract include recycled content copier paper, paper products (e.g., paper towels and tissue),

office supplies (e.g., envelopes, folders, binders, Post-It notes, and writing pads) and remanufactured toner cartridges. Lesser known EPPs on contract include re-refined motor oil, recycled antifreeze, retread tires, and recycled content carpet tiles.

Initially, the EPP Program will focus on the so-called "low hanging fruit," a variety of recycled products that enjoy widespread popularity. As the program matures, a broader range of products and services will be examined. These EPPs will most likely include janitorial and automotive cleaning products, paints, and building materials. To ensure that these products meet or exceed minimum performance standards, the EPP Program plans to partner with agencies to conduct pilot projects lasting between two and seven months.

The third part of the yearlong strategy involves a variety of training and outreach efforts designed to educate purchasers about the benefits and availability of EPPs. These efforts include EPP training programs, product fact sheets, purchasing guides, and the development of an EPP website. The Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program will also establish an awards program and a system for tracking annual EPP purchases.



"A growing number of government entities have already established EPP programs and initiatives," Guilleman reports. "Connecticut's EPP Program adds to this nationwide trend by promoting safer products and services that improve the state's environmental and economic performance."

To learn more about the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program or participate in an EPP pilot project, contact Robert Guillemin at 860-713-5181, rob.guillemin@po.state.ct.us. **S**

4 Users call E-Comm Connecticut "awesome"!

Continued from page 1

plugs, items can be selected from over 40 contracts on E-Comm Connecticut. A description, price, and graphic (if applicable) of the product are accessible. After securing all desired items in the virtual shopping cart, the user can double-check the merchandise listed and place the order. Depending on how involved the approval process is, orders may be placed and processed the same day. Prices are also updated immediately, so any changes will be reflected in the order.

E-Comm CONNECTICUT

"Right now, we're looking into linking directly to the page in the vendor's catalog that lists the item," said Pacholski. On the current system, some vendors have hotlinks to their site.

"We're trying to develop a one-stop shop. The number of products available will grow exponentially, so we will be able to offer a much broader array of products that will meet the needs of many government entities," Pacholski explained.

"Once you know how to search, the system is a piece of cake," McAllister noted. DAS Procurement has already begun to offer training to users of all levels to ensure that they are getting the most out of the system. "We have a great partnership with the developers of the product and the users, so we can put suggestions into practice easily," she added.

Kinks will continuously be worked out and enhancements will be made. "Although we have had many breakthroughs, we want the system to be the best it can be for all users, so we welcome any suggestions," Pacholski said.

To learn more about E-Comm Connecticut or to sign up, please visit Procurement Services' website at www.das.state.ct.us/busopp.htm. **S**

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