How to Grow your Business using the SBIR Program

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About Propel LLC

• Providing textile driven product innovation for the military and fire service industries

• Highly experienced textile engineering and design team
  – Founded in 2006
  – 10+ years of R&D to commercialization

• On-going work
  – Stitchless Technology
  – Electronically Enabled (Smart) Textiles
  – Fire Resistant Combat Textiles
  – Particulate Protection

• Unique rapid prototyping capability for stitchless garments and 3D Knitting

• DOD SBIR History  4 x Phase I  2 x Phase II  1 x Phase III
Propel’s First SBIR - 2012

- Key Innovations
  - Stitchless Technology Design and Engineering “Toolbox” to Replace Needle and Thread
  - No stitch holes
  - Significant weight and bulk reductions

LEGACY 34 oz

PROTOTYPE 24 oz

30% WEIGHT REDUCTION

Phase III awarded during Phase I – Prototype Nominated by NAVSEA for Secretary of Navy Innovation Award 2017
Phase II Success BUT.....

• Navy decided not to exercise Phase II Option
  – Almost a financial disaster for Propel
• What did Propel learn?
  – TPOC enthusiasm does not mean further funding
  – You (the SBIR company) are in charge of your destiny
  – It is up to you to “sell” forward your technology
  – Find parallel opportunities - ”Sell the Success” to others
  – Take every opportunity to “sell” that you can – e.g. Navy STP Program; one-on-one meetings
  – Start “selling” the moment you get the Phase I
  – Messaging is important
• What did Propel do?
  – Hired a Business Development person
  – Went to other services with the same need
    • Currently anticipating 2 follow on “reach back” Phase IIs that will be 4x the missed Navy Phase II Option
What Else?

• **Read the Contract**
  – Every SBIR Contract is Different
  – Don’t assume the contract is correct
  – Get good advice – a good lawyer now is worth a lot of money later; a retired DoD Contracting expert is worth their weight in gold

• **Every SBIR program is run differently across the DOD**
  – Try to find this out in advance as can impact your proposal

• **Learn to do Teaming Agreements and Subcontracts properly**
  – Can be outsourced but understand why you need these
  – If a sub behaves badly take action

• **Educate yourself about Phase III contracting**
  – Phase III rules are antithetical to Contracting Officers so know what to say and do
  – Phase III Handbooks (Navy; Air Force) are your friend
  – Be visual - Do a Technology Tree

• **Lastly - Is that SBIR Topic a good business fit or just really interesting?**