



# **Tough Love:** Top Things Small Businesses Should Avoid

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2021



## #10 Asking for Special Treatment

We advocate for all small businesses, not just one specifically. In order to prevent a perception of preference, we can't lobby for you, refer you, find you a mentor or protégé, or get you subcontracts.

### **Instead, What You Should Do:**

- ❖ Ask about resources.
- ❖ Ask about our prime contracts and contact information.
- ❖ Network – with both large and small companies.
- ❖ Join associations – both professional and personal.



## #9 Asking for Sole Source Contract

**Direct Awards **are** allowed in the 8(a) program**

**Sole source awards **are** allowed for SDVOSB, WOSB, HUBZone**

### **Instead, What You Should Do:**

- ❖ Research an unsolved problem DISA is having and come up with an innovative solution. Then present your solution to the Program Office.
- ❖ Compete and win a contract. Then knock our socks off with your performance. After you've demonstrated success, remind us you are 8(a).



## #8 Complaining (We CAN Commiserate About COVID!)

**Some things are out of our control (ie: the FAR, GSA, Politics, Life). While life isn't fair, contracting should be and if it wasn't, there may be options/alternatives/course of action that we can point you to. We are an advocate for small business if the rules weren't followed.**

### **Instead, What You Should Do:**

- ❖ Present facts with solutions for what you want/need.
- ❖ Research the rules/regulations associated with your issue.
- ❖ Act professional even in your disappointment.



## #7 Sending a Brand-New Employee to Develop Your Business

**One chance for your company to make a first impression.  
To sell, you must know AND love your product or service. Inside out,  
upside down and backwards!!**

### **Instead, What You Should Do:**

- ❖ Send a seasoned employee / owner with the new employee to train them, teach them, mentor them.
- ❖ Instill in them an excitement about your product/service so it shows through when they meet with prospects.



## #6 Be Late, Unorganized or Not Know What You Want/Need

**You may have wasted your only shot to get in front of the right person.  
It's disrespectful of the other person's time.**

### **Instead, What You Should Do:**

- ❖ Confirm appointment and logistics.
- ❖ Be early.
- ❖ Know what you want to ask/know/show.
- ❖ If you have read-aheads, send them ahead of time.
- ❖ Know your “ask.”
- ❖ Practice your pitch.



## #5 Misspell The POC's Name – it's in the email

**It shows a lack of attention to detail or that you don't care.**

**It lacks professionalism.**

**It rubs people the wrong way.**

### **Instead, What You Should Do:**

- ❖ Correctly spell the POC's name.
- ❖ Know the gender if using "Mr. or Mrs." Don't use if you don't know.
- ❖ Google your contact.



## #4 Insult, Argue or Yell at Us

**The OSBP is staffed with knowledgeable professionals. Information provided is the most up to date available at the time. We give the straight scoop, even if it isn't what you want to hear.**

### **Instead, What You Should Do:**

- ❖ Act professional at all times, even if things aren't going your way.
- ❖ Understand roles and responsibilities of our office.
- ❖ Believe we know our job.
- ❖ Treat us with the same respect that you expect in return.





## #3 Asking Us to do Your Job

**We do assist small businesses with issues and questions.  
We will research 1 or 2 projected requirements (not 10!).**

### **Instead, What You Should Do:**

- ❖ Your homework, your research, get your hands dirty.
- ❖ Check our extensive website first.
- ❖ If you attended DISA 101 and we provided the information, read it.
- ❖ Hire Someone....



## #2 Using Incorrect Spelling, Grammar, or Punctuation

Remember, first impressions last forever.

An unreadable email doesn't impress anyone, attention to detail does.

If you can't write three sentences that are grammatically correct, can you execute a complex coding requirement?

### Instead, What You Should Do:

- ❖ Thank your English teacher if you know proper grammar.
- ❖ ALWAYS use spellcheck and grammar check.
- ❖ Remember, this is not texting and emoticons are not professional.



## #1 Dropping Names

**It doesn't matter that you KNEW the last DISA Director.  
It doesn't matter that you WERE the last DISA Director.  
Source Selection Boards will never know that information, so it won't  
help you get a contract.**

### **Instead, What You Should Do:**

- ❖ Introduce yourself and the company you work for.
- ❖ Tell us what you do, have done, want to do. Be excited about your job!
- ❖ Wear a name tag or company uniform.



## Speed Round

1. Include the company you work for in your email and signature block
2. Don't use Gmail as your email address – use your company email
3. Be upfront with who you are, who you work for and what you want
4. If you work from your kitchen, put a background up – looks unprofessional even though we are all working from home
5. Don't "sell" someone else's products/services/experience
6. "Pass-through" is a dirty word.
7. If you don't know if someone is a man or a woman – Google them to appropriately address them in an email – not that we care, but...shows you did your homework
8. Don't exaggerate: If you are a new or a really small company, you probably aren't "the industry's premier provider of innovative technology, operational training and development." And if you are, be able to back it up.



## More ideas

- **Your company cannot do ‘everything’ well. Find your niche and put all your energy there until you are ready to expand your business.**
- **Responding to Sources Sought notices. Ours are very streamlined. They specifically ask 4-7 questions about your capabilities and experience. If you do not answer those 4-7 questions directly (and honestly) you will be deemed not capable of meeting the requirement. IF you are going to partner with someone to meet all the requirements, discuss that in your answer.**
- **Have an elevator speech prepared. They are only 30 seconds long and should not start out with “I’m an 8a company and you can direct award to me....”**



## Contact Information

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