

## Privateer IT

Doing business with the government isn't easy. In fact, it's challenging on multiple levels, especially for small businesses. Jerry Bennett, CEO of Privateer IT, learned that when his bids for government contracts received no response whatsoever. Fortunately for Jerry, he found the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), the government contracting service at the Florida SBDC at UCF in Brevard County, Florida.



Privateer IT is an information technology systems integrator founded in 2014 that has recently begun to support the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) as a sub-contractor. Privateer IT works with prime contractors like Booz Allen, Northrop Grumman, and Harris Corp. Privateer IT is a virtual business with employees across the country, led by Jerry Bennett who is based in Melbourne, FL.

As a federal sub-contractor, Privateer IT jumped through many hoops, including obtaining the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZone) certification and U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) verification as a Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB). The SBA's HUBZone program helps small businesses in urban and rural communities gain preferential access to federal procurement opportunities.

The PTAC Program is a specialized service under the FSBDC Network that assists established Florida businesses with government contracting and procurement support services at no cost, including assistance with marketing, proposal preparation, and contract administration. PTAC also provides assistance with various small business program applications as well as the Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business verification process and the SBA's Women-Owned Small Business program.

After the SBA referred Jerry to PTAC, he began working with Patricia Simpson, the government contracting specialist with PTAC in Brevard County. Together, they did an in depth analysis of Privateer IT's current contract bidding process and filings and went to work to improve them, everything from the list of "to do's" when approaching a prime contractor to building a strong capabilities statement and on to ensuring that the many filing requirements, important items like Privateer IT's SBA profile, were up to date.

Jerry was more than pleased. "I'm a consultant by trade. I pay people for what's in their head," he remarked. "The assistance I got was so good I would have paid for this service. I got straight answers when I needed them, guidance when I needed it, and expertise I just didn't have. When I started, I knew I had holes in the skill sets necessary for success and the FSBDC's PTAC program helped me fill those holes."

All of Jerry's work and Patricia Simpson's assistance has resulted in remarkable growth. When Jerry came to PTAC in 2014, he had no sales to the government. That all changed. In the second quarter of 2015, Privateer IT won its first contract of \$2,500, followed by a second for \$20,000 in the third quarter, \$1.2 million in the fourth quarter, and \$3 million in the first quarter of 2016. And Jerry says that's only the beginning.

When asked his thoughts on his experience with PTAC, Jerry said, "I would highly recommend PTAC and especially Patricia. For all those thinking about working with PTAC, I say stop considering. Pull the trigger. They will save you money. They will save you time. They will save you from gray hairs."

## Providing the tools, strategies, and expertise to help Florida's business community thrive.

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The Florida SBDC at UCF is a member of the Florida SBDC Network, a statewide service network funded in part through cooperative agreements with the U.S. SBA, Defense Logistics Agency, State of Florida, and other private and public partners; hosted by the University of West Florida; and nationally accredited by the Association of SBDCs.

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### MEET JERRY BENNETT

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