

eVA Connections

December 2008 Issue 4

Virginia's Total e-Procurement Solution

www.eva.virginia.gov

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Welcome! Welcome to eVA Connections, an e-newsletter published by the Bureau of e-Procurement, Division of Purchases and Supply, Department of General Services. eVA Connections brings together the businesses, state and local government buyers, other public bodies, and various public service officials, who contribute to eVA's success. eVA Connections highlights various eVA tools, users, and experiences, in celebration of the value that e-procurement brings to the Commonwealth.

Portugal International Procurement Conference Sponsors eVA Director As Keynote Speaker

When Bob Sievert was invited to speak at a procurement conference in Lisbon, Portugal, he politely declined, explaining that overseas travel could not be paid for by state government. But the conference planners surprised Sievert by covering all his travel expenses if he would agree to attend and speak at this event focused on international collaboration in e-procurement.

"While we have had several opportunities to share our experiences with eVA, this type of travel has never been on our radar," Sievert explained. "Thanks to the generosity of the conference organizers, everything was paid for. I am truly grateful for this opportunity," he added.

"This conference allowed us to share perspectives and experience using government e-procurement—across continents. We've readily shared our story with other states, and even Canada, when they've approached us for insight into how we've made eVA so successful. But our neighbors across the Atlantic are just as eager as the U.S. to achieve success with government e-procurement," he added.

Sievert spoke on November 12th, at the 3rd International Conference on Strategic Procurement held in Lisbon, Portugal. Approximately

200 people attended the conference, hosted by Leadership-BC, a Portugal based international business consulting company. Attendees included government purchasing professionals from Portugal, Spain, Angola, Cape



Bob Sievert, eVA Director, addresses the 3rd International Conference On Strategic Procurement, held November 12, in Lisbon, Portugal.

Verde and numerous private sector companies. The theme for the conference was *Innovation and Creating Value* in public procurement.

In his presentation, Sievert focused on the innovation that eVA has brought to procurement practices in Virginia. Sievert also shared how Virginia redefined the concept of 'creating value' by propelling a vision that could be shared by all eVA

end users—from the vendors to professional procurement officers to managers at all levels of government.

The Portuguese based web magazine "i-Gov.org" also attended the con-

"Thanks to the generosity of the conference organizers, everything was paid for. Virginia is truly grateful for this opportunity."

Bob Sievert
eVA Director

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Canada's Jon Hansen Showcases eVA Success On Speaking Tour



Canadian eProcurement Expert Calls Virginia An "Oasis" Of "Can Do" Spirit

Canada's Jon Hansen highlights Virginia's success with e-procurement on his professional speaking tour.

Recognized as a leading authority on the evolution of the globalized supply chain practice, Hansen Consulting and Seminar's Jon Hansen has been showcasing eVA's success throughout a multi-city speaking tour during 2008. In addition to Canada and North America, Hansen also made a stop in the United Kingdom.

Based in Gatineau, Canada, Hansen is active in a number of initiatives involving government eprocurement and creates opportunity for peer-to-peer dialogue on his *Procurement Insights* blog at <http://procureinsights.wordpress.com>.

After speaking at more than two dozen conferences in North America and the United Kingdom during 2008, Hansen's last podium stop was the annual Forum, hosted by the Division of Purchases and Supply, DGS.

During a general session, Hansen shared the presentation from his speaking tour, "Yes, Virginia! There is more to e-Procurement than Software." A copy of his presentation, and those of other speakers, are available at this Forum link: <http://dps.dgs.virginia.gov/forum2008/index.htm>.

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Portugal Conference Sponsors eVA Director

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ference and has since published an interview they did with Sievert. The article is posted in Portugese at www.i-Gov.org.

In addition to providing the keynote address, Sievert had the opportunity for face-to-face meetings with several European government organizations. In these meetings, multiple perspectives were shared regarding business processes, implementation and change management.

Sievert explained a couple of important factors driving the European government's interest in e-procurement. "The European Union has legislated a deadline of 2010 to conduct all solicitations electronically with

a value of 130,000 euros or higher, or roughly \$165,000 in U.S. dollars. Interestingly Portugal passed legislation of their own to move up the 2010 deadline to July 2009," he added. "Therefore, the clock is really ticking for Portugal to nail down some solutions," he said.

Sievert explained another high profile initiative in the EU. "The European version of our SWaM vendor is the "small and medium enterprise," or SME," he explained. "There is significant push by the EU to give more government contracting opportunities to SMEs. Having a central electronic gateway to business opportunities and a uniform approach to EU contracting would not only make

participation easier and more open for small businesses, but would give the EU a standardized way to track and measure awards to SMEs.

Regardless of what organization, country or continent they were from, conference attendees reported many universal issues. From user comfort with technology to change resistance, all sides agreed they face the same challenges implementing e-procurement programs. "You have the technology learning curve, cultural attitudes, language barriers, among other challenges," Sievert explains. "Regardless of where you're from," he added. "There is also the monumental burden of moving very large,

decentralized organizations, as an aggregate group," he adds. "These and other challenges rang familiar to all of us, and illustrated the value and necessity of international collaboration," he explained.

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"You have the technology learning curve, cultural attitudes, language barriers, among other challenges." Regardless of where you're from."

Bob Sievert
eVA Director

"I am so grateful to the conference sponsor for their interest in eVA. It was really an amazing experience to meet procurement professionals from six time zones away—to share challenges and visions," Sievert said.

More details on the conference are available at : <http://www.conferencia-compras.com>.

Over the course of five days, Sievert conducted several, in-depth face-to-face meetings with the following organizations:

PORTUGAL
National Agency for
Public Procurement

PORTUGAL
National
Railway Network - REFER

PORTUGAL
National Health Ministry

PORTUGAL
National Education Ministry

ANGOLA
National Procurement
Ministry

CAPE VERDE
National Procurement
Ministry

Hansen Showcases eVA Success At 2008 DPS Forum

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Hansen also provided two training sessions--“The Purchasing Professional” and “Business Intelligence Is Intelligent Business.” He also networked with buyers and suppliers at the hallmark Forum event, the supplier Expo.

Hansen was truly inspired by what he described as a “can do” spirit he saw in all eVA users.

“Whether I’m talking with buyers or suppliers,” Hansen explained, “the one thing I hear is that Virginia was determined to make eVA work,” he continued. “I feel like I have stumbled upon an oasis of creative thought and collaboration—which has really been the key to eVA’s success,” he added.

Hansen also talked about Virginia’s approach to eVA implementation.

“Typically, organizations put the technology first, and assume that the business processes will follow,” says Hansen. “But, process drives results and success—not technology,” he added. “eVA focused on their core user processes—first—and this really paved the way for success,” he added.

“This is a different approach than embracing the technology first—then trying to flex users around the way the technology does the purchasing. “I really credit the people of Virginia for putting their end users before the technology,” Hansen explained.

Hansen also gave numerous examples of failed attempts with public and private sector e-procurement initiatives and noted industry statistics on high failure rates for these projects, contrasted by eVA’s success in almost every instance.

Hansen added that when organizations focus on the technology alone as the solution—that they

miss an opportunity to successfully get their e-procurement projects off the ground. “It’s all about the people—not the technology,” he adds.

The second critical element of eVA’s success according to Hansen, is the prevailing philosophy of collaboration. “There was definitely a “do this for the team” approach, rather than a “do what we ask” approach,” Hansen explains. “Too often, organizations think from the top down, with a specific result in mind, and focus too much on compliance,” says Hansen. “This paved the way for an equally receptive “collaborative” mindset in both buyers and vendors,” he added. “As a result,

the users and suppliers have been equally determined to make eVA work,” he explained.

“We really do care about our users,” explains Bob Sievert, eVA Director. “It’s all about people being able to do their jobs and giving them the best system we can to do it while also making government procurement more accessible and efficient,” he adds. “We definitely wouldn’t have made this work without a people-focused approach.”

“I think there must be something in the water, here,” Hansen remarked to conference attendees. “You guys have really proven that the secret to e-procurement success is---people,” he added. “Not technology, not compliance, *but people*,” he reiterated.



Jon Hansen observed what he described as an “oasis” of “can do” spirit in Virginia.

“Process drives results and success—not technology. eVA focused on their core user processes—first—and this really paved the way for success.”

Jon Hansen
Hansen Consulting and Seminars

About Jon Hansen

Jon W. Hansen has been generating substantial savings for companies since he entered the high technology sector in 1983. Featured on CBC’s Venture program for his innovative Procurement Programs, Jon has held several senior executive positions including that of President of a publicly traded company. His well rounded experience and expertise has garnered critical acclaim both domestically as well as internationally, including his being honored as an Ottawa finalist for the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2004 and 2005.

Recognized as a leading North American Authority on improving supply chain management, Jon is often retained by organizations such as the Purchasing Management Association of Canada (PMAC), and the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP) to provide seminars and

courses based on his highly popular Conference Series.

Jon is also author of the *Procurement Insights* blog (<http://procureinsights.wordpress.com/>) which reaches 300,000 syndicated subscribers each month worldwide, and is currently available in several languages including Chinese, Russian and Spanish. The Blogged Rating Service has ranked *Procurement Insights* as the top supply chain/procurement blog in North America.

Access more information about Jon at his *Linked In* Profile: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/jwhansen>.



VDBA Promotes Economic Development Through Business Sales Growth Seminars

Since 2004, the Virginia Department of Business Assistance (VDBA) has partnered with the Department of General Services (DGS) and the Department of Minority Business Enterprise (DMBE) to aggressively promote the Small, Woman and Minority-Owned (SWaM) program.

Now, in 2008, with eVA registrations, SWaM certifications and small business participation in state contracting at an all-time high, VDBA is moving beyond its successful "Selling to the Commonwealth" program to



More than 40 entrepreneurs attended VDBA's "Business Sales Growth" seminar, held Oct. 22 in Lebanon, Virginia.

The new VDBA approach is "tiered." The gateway program is now "Entrepreneur Express: Moving Your Business Forward." The second level program is a newly-designed "Business Sales Growth" seminar. The third and final tier is a one-on-one counseling session(s) between the business and an experienced VDBA Business Services Manager.

While VDBA is de-emphasizing its "Selling to the Commonwealth" introduction to eVA and SWaM, it will continue to assist clients coming to the agency seeking early stage assistance with registration and certification. Assistance will be provided to phone and email requests, or to referrals from Virginia Small Business Development Centers.

The "Advanced Selling to the Commonwealth" workshops, previously entirely focused on Virginia's public sector markets and the Commonwealth's supplier diversity initiative, will be integrated into the new "Busi-

ness Sales Growth" seminar.

"This is a market-driven approach for us," explained Wayne Waldrop, VDBA's Business Information Services Director. "Businesses today want to look at every possible opportunity to expand their sales and do it profitably. By expanding the scope of our programs, we increase the potential for Virginia companies to

find a new or improved market niche."

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Wayne Waldrop
Business Information
Services Director, VDBA

nesses not dependent on one market sector will be stronger vendors for the Commonwealth of Virginia. "A company serving diverse markets will not see huge fluctuations in sales and will not have to 'ramp up' every time they get a new contract."

The model driving the new "Business Sales Growth" seminar is the process VDBA encouraged businesses to use with eVA. "We taught busi-

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Wayne Waldrop, VDBA, talks to business owners about the importance of having a diverse customer base.

provide even more value to Virginia businesses. Instead of focusing only on eVA to increase sales, VDBA will now also show the way for businesses to expand their marketing efforts in other markets.

VDBA Promotes Economic Development

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nesses to use eVA reports to determine who was buying what and how much they were paying,” explained Tammy Farmer, a VDBA Business Services Manager who is transitioning from Selling to the Commonwealth to “**Business Sales Growth.**” “The techniques for selling to the Federal government and the private sector are the same—it’s just the information sources are different.”

“Entrepreneur Express: Moving Your Business Forward”

are half-day workshops held around the state. This program targets the start-up and early-stage business. It exposes them to

“Forbes.com has rated Virginia the number one state for doing business three years in a row,” said Lynda Sharp Anderson, VDBA’s Director. “VDBA and our Business Information Services team are doing their part to keep us on top by maintaining a welcoming, positive and nurturing entrepreneurial climate.”

Lynda Sharp Anderson
Director, VDBA

the resources available to help them get started or grow. Those unfamiliar with eVA and SWaM certification are introduced to it. Over 4500 Virginians have attended Entrepreneur Express events.



Tammy Farmer, Business Services Manager, VDBA, shows business owners how to access small business resources around the Commonwealth.

advanced techniques and more sophisticated resources. The first “**Business Sales Growth**” seminar was held October 21, 2008, in Lebanon with 40 attendees.

“**Business Sales-Growth**” seminars are also half-day sessions, but these workshops are designed for businesses that are established and are looking to expand their sales, market share, and profitability. Workshop facilitators lead attendees to more

One-on-one counseling sessions are held locally, usually after an Entrepreneur Express or Sales Growth workshop. A VDBA Business Services Manager reserves a room for a full day and meets with companies individually for one hour each, focusing on the business’s unique situation. These companies may also work with other resource providers they met at VDBA workshops.

“Forbes.com has rated Virginia the number one state for doing business three years in a row,” said Lynda Sharp Anderson, VDBA’s Director. “VDBA and our Business Information Services team are doing their part to keep us on top by maintaining a welcoming, positive and nurturing entrepreneurial climate.”

Learn more about the Virginia Department of Business Assistance by visiting their website and events calendar. For immediate business help, use the “Live Help” icon on the website or contact the Virginia Business Information Center, toll-free 1-866-248-8814 or vbic@vdba.virginia.gov.

Meet The VDBA Business Services Managers

The new VDBA approach to business development has been organized geographically by Director Wayne Waldrop.

Kathy Dolan is assigned to the Tidewater area.

Tammy Farmer covers Southern Virginia.

Dave Fuller covers Central Virginia and the Northern Neck.

Sandy Ratliff, working out of VDBA’s Abingdon Office, has responsibility for Southwest Virginia.

“Selling to the Commonwealth” services are provided by Serwa Lee. She takes assignments throughout the Commonwealth.

An Interview With The eVA Catalog Manager

An eVA catalog is an important e-commerce tool that increases vendor visibility. eVA Connections talked with eVA Catalog Manager, Vicki Beasley to learn more about the role catalogs play in the eVA marketplace.

Free Advertising

eVA Connections: What is an eVA catalog?

Vicki: An eVA catalog is a great opportunity for our vendors to put themselves in the front lines of the eVA purchasing system.

Buyers can use catalogs to find and purchase the goods and services they need. Vendors could be missing an opportunity to reach potential customers if they don't have one and it's free advertising!

eVA Connections: Are you saying there is no charge to eVA vendors to have a catalog?

Vicki: Exactly! It's free! Vendors should take advantage of this tool because it increases their visibility to the purchasing community on the eVA system.

Greater Visibility

eVA Connections: What do you mean by visibility?

Vicki: When eVA buyers conduct online shopping searches, they use keywords to find out which vendors provide the items and services they need. Your catalog can market directly to potential customers. It can also provide a link to your website that buyers can use to research more information about your products.

eVA Connections: So, for example, let's say we're looking for a vendor that sells work boots. How would we find available sources for our purchase?

Vicki: Using "boot" in our search would result in "hits," or "matches" of the vendor catalogs that include the keyword "boot."



We would then examine the "matches" for more details to determine a possible purchase.

Showcase Products And Services

eVA Connections: Aren't catalogs just for products or hard goods, not services?

Vicki: Absolutely not. That's been a big misconception—that service providers don't need catalogs. On the contrary, we have many "services" catalogs that are published only for informative purposes as a way to advertise themselves to eVA buyers.

eVA Connections: Can you explain how a "services" catalog would work?

Vicki: Suppose you have a janitorial services company. In your eVA catalog you would provide a description that would include "janitorial services" along with other information.

You might also add several related service lines with varying descriptions for other services you may provide such as "commercial office cleaning," "window cleaning," "steam cleaning," and "pressure washing."

These would illustrate more clearly what type of "janitorial services" you provide. The same keyword search concept would apply.

Pricing Not Required

eVA Connections: Do catalogs have to contain pricing?

Vicki: No. Pricing is not required. For example, instead of a price for a particular item or service, the vendor's description could

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say "ACME Janitorial Services; Call Joanne at 555-5555 for estimates." This puts pertinent information right at the buyer's fingertips.

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An Interview With eVA Catalog Manager

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eVA Connections: How does the vendor create an eVA catalog?

Vicki: They can find catalog creation information at www.eva.virginia.gov under the VENDOR tab. The eVA catalog team is also available to help.

eVA Connections: Is an eVA catalog difficult to create?

Vicki: No, though the catalog spreadsheet can be intimidating at first, once they get their first line item completed, the rest usually falls

into place. And don't forget—the vendor is never alone in the process; help is always a phone call or email away! We've never lost a 'customer' yet!

Punch-Out Catalogs

eVA Connections: What about vendors that already have an e-commerce website?

Vicki: Vendors who have or are interested in having what we refer to as a "shopping cart enabled" website—that is, a website where shoppers can view, select and purchase using a virtual "shopping cart," should consider implementing a "punch-out" catalog in the eVA purchasing system.

A punch-out catalog is a live web based catalog that the vendor hosts which is linked into eVA. It provides a virtual 'store front' to eVA buyers. It allows the buyers to hop over and browse the vendor's site, shop and make se-

lections, then loop back into eVA to complete the order process.

eVA Connections: How does a vendor decide if a punch-out catalog is best for their needs?

Vicki: There is information online to help them and it's definitely a concept most vendors should explore.



Once considered out of reach to some vendors, ever evolving technology has made it a viable option worth investigating.

The punch-out set up can be beneficial if vendors have or are interested in hav-

ing any other automated systems tied to their existing e-commerce site—accounting or inventory systems for example—that need to capture sales information. The vendor does not have to do "double entry" in the related system.

Vendors with large and/or frequently changing inventory and pricing can benefit from a punch-out catalog.

Some vendors that started with spreadsheet catalogs and found success have moved forward and implemented punch-out catalogs.

eVA Connections: What is involved in developing a punch-out catalog?

Vicki: Punch-out catalogs require the vendor to have in-house technology expertise or a consultant that is knowledgeable in cXML programming.

eVA Connections: So, it sounds like having an eVA catalog is really a critical key to vendor visibility.

Vicki: Absolutely! It would be harder to come up with a reason why you wouldn't have a catalog! It's free advertising: you can provide a virtual storefront to the purchasing community giving you visibility to the almost 13,000 eVA users. It tells them who you are and what you can provide for them. This could mean additional business.

eVA Connections: Thank you for this very informative discussion. Can vendors contact you for help or questions about eVA electronic catalogs?

Vicki: Yes. Vendors may contact me at eVAcatalogsmanager@dgs.virginia.gov.



eVA Buyers: Boost Your Knowledge

Quick Quote

eVA's paperless alternative to fax-back and telephone quotes. Learn how to get quotes quickly and efficiently in this half-day "hands-on" course. No more faxing or calling. Learn to create electronic quote requests, obtain automated vendor lists, receive and evaluate electronic bids, and make awards.

Shop Now

The eVA tool that lets you shop online. In this half-day "hands-on" course, learn how to create electronic requisitions, process electronic orders, get online purchase approvals and a practice a variety of electronic "shopping" exercises.

eVA Welcomes New Localities!

Town of Onancock

Town of Mineral, EMS

Nottoway County Public Schools

SIGN UP! Want to join eVA as a buyer for local government or other public body? Go to www.eva.virginia.gov, and click the "Sign Up" tab in the center of the home page.

Richmond Training

Next
Richmond Class
January 22

From www.eva.virginia.gov, click "eVA Training" on the left hand navigation bar. Look for "Sign Up For A Buyer Training Class." Use our easy online registration for these popular half-day training classes, offered once a month, free of charge. Classes are held at DGS headquarters.



Regional Training

Need buyer training in your neighborhood? Let the eVA professionals come to you. eVA will partner with any state or local government to coordinate a regional buyer training class. Start with a few buyers from your own shop, add a computer lab with internet access, and eVA will recruit other eVA users in the region to fill the class. It's a great way to learn and network with your colleagues in the field. For information contact shane.caudill@dgs.virginia.gov or 804-786-3855.

Online Training

eVA Buyer Training On Demand. From www.eva.virginia.gov, click "eVA Training." You'll find "virtual" demonstrations of eVA's buyer tools and get instant help with common user issues.

eVA Connections is published by the e-Procurement Bureau of the Division of Purchases and Supply, Department of General Services. Please submit feedback and story ideas to deborah.hudson@dgs.virginia.gov.

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