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Understanding Complexities at GPO Invoicing Will Ensure Timely Payment

The key to success is teaming with government print management experts.

by Deborah Snider, Senior Vice President, e-LYNXX Corporation

Few things are more frustrating than researching prospective work, competing for that work, winning the bidding, training staff to do the work, prepping and maintaining equipment to run the job, paying attention to every detail and doing what it takes to get the job done and delivered on time... and then, getting tripped up by incorrectly submitting the invoice.

That can happen if you are working with the U. S. Government Printing Office (GPO) and do not understand GPO invoicing policies and procedures. The GPO requires precision and timeliness or the invoice that you sent will end up back on your desk and unpaid. The process is very exacting.

For instance, proof of delivery can be a major stumbling block. All shipments made for the GPO must be traceable, meaning that the GPO requires documentation for the delivery of completed work. Sounds simple enough, but as the saying goes the devil is in the details. You have to know that if you send GPO work via the U. S. Postal Service, special forms must be completed that serve as your proof of delivery. Also, if you are sending via FedEx, UPS or any other small package carrier proof of delivery always is required. If a job requires shipments to different destinations, each shipment must be traceable. Documentation is all important, and this is very different from invoicing for commercial accounts.

Another area that you need to pay close attention to is the quantity that you print and document. The GPO only pays for what it orders. It will not pay for over runs.

At the heart of some invoicing problems with the GPO is the finance department at some print suppliers. Internal finance departments have certain ways of invoicing, but if those ways are not how the GPO wants it done then there will be no GPO payment. It can become a dilemma caused by corporate bureaucracy vs. government bureaucracy. Governmental policies and procedures will trump corporate policies and procedures because the GPO is the client.

A case in point is a GPO order that was placed for a supply of standard envelopes and, in the same order, a supply of business reply envelopes. Two similar but different envelopes were specified in one order. Because the print supplier's finance department saw the two types of envelopes as two separate orders, the GPO was sent two bills. This is called split billing when two bills are sent for one order, and the GPO will reject a split bill.

Internal finance also may not understand how invoices are to be submitted to the GPO. We once had a client who wanted to fax a 300 page invoice to the GPO. We reviewed their documentation and were able to reduce the invoice to 34 pages, fax it to the GPO and get a timely payment for our client. No problems. Had 300 pages been sent to the GPO, there would have been an unnecessary delay due to lots of problems.

Speaking of faxing, that is how the GPO wants invoices submitted. Not by e-mail or snail mail but by faxing. The GPO maybe the only organization on the planet using faxing, but that is the way it is.

Many print suppliers, actually most, offer the GPO a discount between 1/10 of 1% and 5% so they will get paid within 21 days after submission of the invoice. The GPO begins counting from the time it receives a correct invoice, not from when the supplier's invoice is dated. The invoice must be correct if payment is to be received within 21 days. If the invoice is not correct, GPO will wait perhaps 30 days, then perhaps return the invoice for corrected paperwork, and start counting again for the discount term when correct paper work arrives. Sometimes, GPO just does nothing when the paper work is wrong.

Working successfully requires GPO experience. That is where government print management experts can make the difference for you. In addition to invoice preparation and collection, government print management experts can assist you with specification interpretation, proposal preparation, bidding process management, assistance through the production process and change order negotiation. We also will provide full representational services, accurate information, market intelligence, past price histories, and access to all available GPO solicitations. The most effective GPO print suppliers have two things in common – (1) they use a print management firm to ensure their success and (2) they maximize usage of production capacity. Here's how:

First, they receive from the government print management firm all available GPO and other government solicitations that meet their individualized production requirements and capabilities. This allows each to bid on work which conveniently fills otherwise unused production time, thereby adding revenues and increasing profitability. This is key because production utilization for print suppliers, using a government print management firm, increases from an average of 70 percent to full utilization of 90 percent to 95 percent. While some jobs are bid low in price due to severe competition, many other job opportunities – when managed by the print management firm in partnership with the supplier -- command higher than commercial prices because of the job's uniqueness, quick timing requirements or limited availability.

With a steady flow of government work, suppliers improve profits. Before GPO work, a print supplier can average 2.5% profitability on 70% production utilization. Add GPO work through services of an expert government print management firm to manage the relationship and the bottom line grows to about 14%.

Working with the GPO can certainly boost your profits. Those who are successful understand what the GPO wants, how they want it and when they want it from winning the order, to delivering the finished product to invoicing correctly and getting paid in 21 days.

About Deborah Snider

Deborah Snider is senior vice president of Government Print Management, a division of e-LYNXX Corporation - the leading print management firm in North America. Mrs. Snider is a graduate of Central Penn Business College and has headed Government Print Management and its predecessor since 1984. Government Print Management represents the majority of successful printers that work with GPO. The firm is commission based and specializes in helping printers to smooth their way to GPO related profitability. Government Print Management is exclusively endorsed by Printing Industries of America (PIA). She can be reached at 888-876-5432, through the web site at www.GovernmentPrintManagement.com or at Deborah.Snider@GovernmentPrintManagement.com.



About e-LYNXX Corporation

e-LYNXX Corporation, the North American procurement authority, is exclusively endorsed by *Printing Industries of America (PIA)* and *Educational and Institutional Cooperative Purchasing (E&I)* and recognized as a top 100 procurement firm by *Supply & Demand Chain Executive*. Founded in 1975, e-LYNXX has three divisions. ● American Print Management provides enterprise print procurement solutions and patented competitive methods to reduce costs for direct mail, marketing materials, packaging and other procured print. Results include enhanced quality and service levels, efficiencies, process control, transparency and procured print cost reduction of 25% to 50%. ● Patented Procurement Method grants patent licenses for supply chain optimization. Results include substantial reduction in existing costs of competitively procured goods and services. ● Government Print Management offers U.S. GPO bid services, access and assistance. Results include filled downtime, operational stability, improved cash flows and increased profitability. www.e-LYNXX.com – 888-876-5432

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