

Creation of the Total Vendor Management Website
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Abstract

The Department of Procurement Services at the University of Virginia is responsible for communicating all contract vendor information to its University employees, strategic Higher Education partners, and other potential future business associates. There is a wide array of information that consists of contractual documents, supplier diversity status, quality ratings, sustainability status, and more. All of this information was previously available from multiple resources and was gathered and emailed by a Procurement Services buyer when requested. With the creation of Procurement Service's Total Vendor Management website any user can now quickly and easily obtain the information they specifically require without the need to piece together information from multiple resources and/or wait for a buyer's email. This has resulted in increased efficiencies and overall contract vendor website user satisfaction for both Procurement Services and all users of the website.

Introduction of the Organization

The University of Virginia is distinctive among institutions of higher education. Founded by Thomas Jefferson in 1819, the University sustains the ideal of developing, through education, leaders who are well prepared to help shape the future of the nation. The University remains public, supported by the Commonwealth of Virginia, while also nourished by the strong support of its alumni. It is also selective; the students who come to the University have been chosen because they show exceptional promise. With nearly 13,000 undergraduate and 6,000 graduate students, the University provides a personalized and well rounded education for all students.

The University offers 48 bachelor's degrees in 46 fields, 94 master's degrees in 64 fields, six educational specialist degrees, two first-professional degrees (law and medicine), and 55 doctoral degrees in 54 fields.

Procurement Services for the University of Virginia has written and is responsible for managing over 300 active vendor Agreements. There are approximately 10,000 University shoppers who purchase goods and services at the University. In the fiscal year 2009 the University purchased over 418 million dollars worth of goods and services.

Statement of the Initiative

The Department of Procurement Services at the University of Virginia is responsible for communicating all contract vendor information to its University employees, strategic Higher Education partners, and other potential future business associates. The information is a wide array of contractual documents, supplier diversity status, quality feedback, sustainability status, and more. Customers needing contract vendor information get frustrated by searching numerous web locations in order to obtain the desired information. This frustration frequently resulted in multiple calls or emails to Procurement Services for the information. Procurement Services wanted to provide all the information in one location while reducing the number of time consuming calls and emails. Additionally, there was no quality metric associated with any contract vendor information. Customers frequently ask Procurement Services which vendor to purchase from. Procurement Services has vetted and approved every contract vendor and many times is unable to fairly answer the question. Therefore, we wanted to add a contract vendor rating tool to the website for customers to easily determine which vendor provides the best service to their peers. Lastly, Procurement Services did not have an efficient and simple way to communicate new information about specific vendors to its multiple customers. For these reasons we undertook a makeover of our contract vendor website and began development of a Total Vendor Management website.

Design

The design began by assembling a cross-functional team of Purchasing, Information Technology professionals, and University end users. The team created and conducted a survey of all users of the website, which included University users, strategic higher education partners, and other future potential business partners (entities accessing one of Procurement Services Publically Accessible Contracts). Based upon the results of the survey, the team discovered that the information most needed by customers was:

- The Small, Women, or Minority vendor (SWAM) status according to the Virginia Department of Minority Business Enterprise;
- Virginia Green status: a State of Virginia certification for lodging, conference centers, restaurants, and paper vendors designating their support of the State's sustainability initiative;
- Direct access to all contractual documents and amendments;
- Identification of contracts that are Publically Accessible Contracts (PAC) accessible by other public bodies;
- Supplier quality information for all contract vendors;
- Identification of vendors with catalogs in the UVa Marketplace (the University's electronic catalog purchasing system);
- Identification of vendors extending additional rate reductions and/or better pricing due to the economic recession.

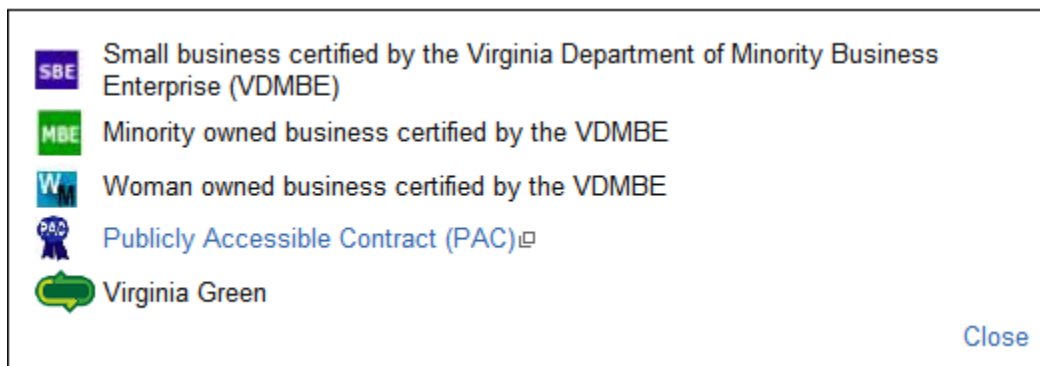
The team then researched the internet for ideas as to how to best communicate the list of items provided by our survey in the most organized and concise manner possible. It was determined that icons would concisely convey each status to the using customer and that a search feature for

each status would allow customers to easily navigate to the desired contract vendor's information. The team further reviewed several internet shopping sites to see how vendors and products were rated, and this quality tool needed to be created from scratch. The resulting goals of creating this Total Vendor Management Website were:

- Provide a one stop shop for all customers' contract vendor information, resulting in time efficiencies and a better overall user experience;
- Reduce the amount of emails and phone calls Procurement Services receives and sends in relation to contract vendor information;
- Increase the visibility and use of Minority and Woman-owned contract vendors;
- Make it easier for University departments to identify contract vendors that could help them stay in compliance with the State of Virginia's sustainability initiatives (Virginia Green);
- Allow for University buyers to make smarter, more informed purchasing decisions by using the Vendor Quality information.

Implementation













The Information Technology (IT) team had the brunt of the work for implementation. Design and sizing of icons was the first task. Once completed, the icons were added to our Total Vendor Management Website. Adding icons to the contract vendor information was automated by IT's second task of synching up the Total Vendor Management Website with the corresponding fields in our existing contract database. This eliminated the need for separate updates and continual maintenance of the icons. These steps addressed the icons associated with SWAM status, Virginia Green, UVa Marketplace, and Publically Accessible Contracts. It provided the concise detail that customers needed to identify contracts by a specific status. Finally, a key (pictured below) was added describing each icon in more detail.



To improve the ability to find a desired contract an expanded search feature was added. This allows customers to search on vendor name, contract type or commodity, and status icons. A link was created on each specific vendor's contract summary so Contracts and Amendments could be directly attached. Making the Total Vendor Management Website easy to search and providing all the details needed by buyers reduced the number of calls and email traffic associated with contract information.

Lastly, the vendor rating tool was created. This tool allows University employees to sign into our system and assign a star level (one star is poor and five is excellent) rating on five different categories: Customer Service, Price, Quality, On-time delivery, and Invoicing. A cumulative average overall quality rating is shown on each contract vendor. The team limited the vendor rating functionality to only University employees. This ensures that the system is not abused by outside entities or employees. Unlike typical rating systems, the University for legal concerns did not want an employee’s comments to be posted and viewed. Comments are sent directly to Procurement Services about a specific vendor and are never posted on the website. Procurement Services uses positive or negative comments for contract administration purposes. The rating system does require a comment if a vendor is rated two stars or less in any category. This signals the Contract Administrator to respond immediately to the issue. Below is a screen shot with the contracts listed by vendor showing the quality rating associated with each.

Lab Equip/Supplies/Services - Laboratory Apparatus & Supplies

Vendor				Oracle ID	Contract Nbr	Buyer
	Colonial Scientific ★★★★★			35156	DPS-PF-38678	Frank Fountain fff3x@virginia.edu 434-982-3092
	Fisher Scientific, LLC ★★★★★			3806	UCP-008-00	
	Quality Biological, Inc. ★★★★★			6970	UVA-WC-1106-004	
	Thomas Scientific ★★★★★			3398	DPS-PF-38678	
	VWR International ★★★★★			13558	CNR-01163	

Once the website was completed, it was rolled out to a pilot group consisting of a wide range of

University users who used the system and provided feedback to the team. All feedback was positive. Users found the site easy to use and were amazed by the amount of information concisely communicated. The Total Vendor Management website was rolled out for full implementation one week later. To promote the new and improved contracts page, email blasts are sent out regularly to all University employees reminding them to use the vendor rating functionality. Emails are also sent to all contract vendors reminding them to ask University employees to rate their performance. The project from start to finish took less than four months to implement.

Benefits

The benefits of the Total Vendor Management Website are numerous. The benefits are more qualitative in nature than quantitative. While time savings from the elimination of generating and responding to emails and phone calls could have been calculated for this project, it was not. Rather, the focus of this project was more on creating a contract vendor information website that allows users to more easily navigate and locate the information needed from one location in the most concise manner possible. This was accomplished. The simple and yet most important benefit that can be touted as a result of this project is the Total Vendor Management Website's ease of use and friendly interface. With the over-abundance of information today the Total Vendor Management Website allows buyers to quickly sort through it all to make a buying decision and refocus on core competency. The other numerous qualitative benefits are:

- Procurement can concentrate its efforts on its main responsibilities rather than website navigation;
- Procurement can use feedback from the vendor rating system to keep an accurate pulse on supplier performance and engage vendors on matters which were previously unavailable;
- Strategic Higher Education partners can now get all Contract and Amendment information they need directly themselves. The same applies to any entity looking to access one of Procurement's Publically Accessible Contracts;
- Greater Minority and Woman-owned vendor visibility;
- The "greening" of the University's supply base. The Virginia Green logo has brought a lot of positive attention to vendors who practice sustainable business processes.

University shoppers are encouraged, and in some cases required per University policy, to purchase from Virginia Green certified vendors.

Retrospect

In retrospect enabling this tool should have been done sooner. All the information was available from different resources in multiple locations. Bringing the resources together and using icons to describe a particular status or feature made it a much easier website to navigate for both novice and experienced users. To better value the improvements made we should have developed some quantitative goals and measured the savings and benefits of the system. It has clearly benefited the entire organization. The rating system alone aids customers with their daily buying decisions and provides Procurement Services with performance data that can be used to negotiate better contracts.