



City of Chelsea
Purchasing Department
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To Whom It May Concern:

When we at the City of Chelsea Department of Public Works were first approached by Penske regarding our fleet maintenance contract, we were nearing the end of a contract year with another vendor. We had an option to renew with that vendor, but our relationship had been less than satisfactory, and the sales team from Penske put on quite a show. Additionally, the previous invitation for bids had only produced the one (incumbent) bidder, so we decided that we really had nothing to lose by going out to bid again with a little competition. It was really quite close to the end of the contract year, so we extended the active contract by one month in order to give everyone a bit of leeway. It wasn't enough.

After much delay on our part getting the specifications together, and then our finally being ready to advertise a week into our one month of grace, the local weekly newspaper didn't print the ad timely and we had to delay the bid yet another week. Then we had to delay again because of a late addendum. By the time we opened the bids, we were just two weeks from the end of the contract. I was slightly nervous about that, but I half-expected the incumbent to be the low bidder by virtue of having no startup costs. Penske, though, by revamping the way the clerical work is done as well as offering a more favorable parts markup, won the bid. Now, with just two weeks for a transition, I was more than slightly nervous.

The incumbent vendor did not give up quietly; we received numerous questions, concerns, and complaints, and finally the vendor filed a bid protest with the Inspector General's Office, all inconsequential but time-consuming. By the time I actually had a signed contract in my hands to deliver to Penske, I also had only two days before I needed them to be in the garage working full-steam on our fleet maintenance.

One of the questions we had asked the sales people from Penske way back in the early stages was whether they had the ability to get in and set up shop quickly if they were to win the bid. They were adamantly confident that there would be no problem they couldn't handle. Nice to hear, but I smiled and thought, "Well, they're young yet." I should have had more faith.

Every one step forward was like a touchdown to them, and every two steps back were no more than a minor irritant. The previous vendor refused to sell them any equipment or parts inventory, and made it very difficult for them to get into the facility to make any plans. Two of the mechanics opted to leave for the private sector to avoid future bidding wars and Penske had to bring in personnel. Not once, though, with all the delays and problems, did they ever complain or whine about the shortage of time; they stayed buoyant and confident in the face of ridiculous odds. In two weeks they had themselves poised to pop in at 6:00 AM on day one of their contract and be ready to work on vehicles by 7:00 AM, with little or no help from us.

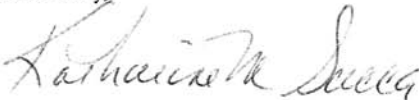
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We didn't have to remind them of anything, or point out anything, or make any suggestions; they were two steps ahead of us, asking the right questions (and haunting us until we came up with the answers), making their plans and contingency plans, gathering tools, equipment and personnel, talking to all the concerned parties, making friends with the city employees, and just generally moving in and taking over.

Since then, which was almost a month ago, the pattern has pretty much continued. Our vehicle listing is an embarrassment of misinformation; the previous vendor took all our preventive maintenance records and thus far has not cooperated in returning them; our department contacts are shameful about complying with scheduled maintenance; we have over a dozen surplus vehicles sitting around taking up valuable space; the DPW guys are, well, DPW guys. Still, the Penske team just keeps humming along, updating our vehicle list, scheduling the PMs, chasing the contacts, fixing the trucks, cleaning up after the vehicle and equipment abuse, making regular reports, and still adamantly confident that there's no problem they can't handle. They're young yet, and that's a good thing.

Please feel free to call me with any specific questions or concerns; I'd be more than happy to help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Katharine M. Sacca".

Katharine M. Sacca
Chief Procurement Officer
City of Chelsea