



# CONTACTING THE TPOC DURING Q&A

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# Is There a Typical TPOC? – No!

- **Experienced Engineer & Seasoned TPOC**
  - Manages multiple SBIR Phase I, II, & III efforts
  - Excellent technical background
  - Well versed in SBIR processes
  - Either knows the answer or how to get it
- **Experienced Engineer & First time TPOC**
  - Excellent technical background but lacks SBIR process knowledge
  - May be reluctant to answer questions beyond yes or no
- **Junior Engineer & First time TPOC**
  - Relies on senior staff for technical & SBIR support
  - In general, very eager to assist & learn the process





# TPOC View of Q&A Period

- An excellent opportunity for the TPOC to:
  - Express the intent of the topic
  - Provide an understanding of the topic's requirements
  - Stimulate ideas through a technical interchange
  - Encourage proposal submittal for first timers
- The TPOC cannot provide direction
- The TPOC must be consistent with his answers
- Some TPOC's will view Q&A as an additional task that he has no time for
  - Topic has been handed off to him
  - It may be his supervisors pet project that he has no interest in
  - Afraid to say the wrong thing





# Importance of Topic Homework

- Fully understanding the topic provides an indication of your ability to execute the research effort
  - Do you know the problem and the need?
  - Are you aware of the specific application?
    - For example, it does you no good to discuss solving a problem for a sea based application when the topic clearly states air vehicles
- You may have only one opportunity to ask questions
  - Do it right the first time
- Researching the Topic background will enable a positive technical interchange
- Must be performed prior to the phone call to insure efficient interaction with the TPOC





# Legitimate Questions

- Clarification of any item within the topic description
- Questions related to the overall SBIR process
- What specific application and platform would my innovation transition to?
- Who is the OEM for this application?
  - Who can I contact at the OEM?
- Will the OEM's be invited to participate at briefings?
- Would NDA's be appropriate?
- How will you determine the feasibility of a particular approach during Phase I?
- Will the effort have ITAR restrictions?





# Questions to Avoid

- Why are you even doing this research? Don't you know we already have a solution?
- Which companies have contacted you? What are their approaches?
- Can I send you a draft of my proposal for you to critique?
- What approach should I use to solve the problem?
- Who should I have on my team?





# To Ensure Responsiveness

- Contact the TPOC as early as possible
  - Please do not wait until the last day
- Feel free to contact the alternate if the TPOC is unavailable
- If the TPOC does not respond within a reasonable time contact the SBIR office





# Simple Lessons To Remember

- If you want to be contacted on your cell phone please turn it off at night
  - You don't want to be remembered as the one that fumbled with the phone as he was awakened
- Formulate your questions before the call
  - The TPOC only wants to hear from you once
- Read the solicitation and provide what it requests
- Take notice of the time lines and funding limits
- Read the Topic and understand the requirements
- The TPOC will remember you and what you said!!!!

