

Best Purchasing Practices

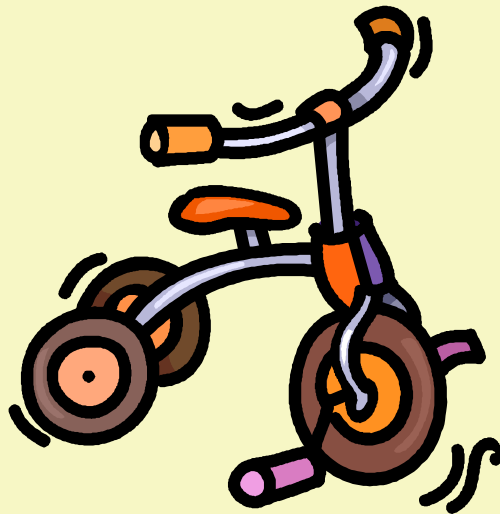
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film at 11 ***the tricycle*** *that made the news*

Several years ago, parents went to the news media complaining that the kindergarten tricycles bought by the district's purchasing office were overpriced. They thought they had found the equivalent of the Defense Department's \$100 hammer. They could buy a trike cheaper at Toys R Us.

But they were comparing apples with oranges. A good purchasing office has standards and specifications, or it depends on a solid cooperative contract. Sure, in this case, the purchasing office bought a more expensive tricycle. But it was safer. No sharp edges. It had wheels that would last though recess after recess. And it was under contract -- competitively bid. Total cost of ownership was lower.

The lesson? Best practices demand that we communicate with users, not only about the prices of items under contract, but about the description and specifications as well. There are good reasons for standards and specifications. When we share competitively bid contracts and specifications with end users, we build trust. And the only news we make is about good education.