

BID MANAGEMENT PROCESS

A BETTER WAY





QUESTION

ASK YOURSELF

Are you bidding to win or bidding to lose?

It might seem like a strange question to ask, but if you regularly bid for contracts and don't win every one that you go for then, when you think about it, sometimes you are bidding to lose.

Of course, it's unusual to win every bid but I recall being told by a Bid Director from an international bluechip company that they were winning around 1 out every 4 bids they pitched for. He was confident that this was their industry average and so was quite happy with their performance.

When said like that it sounds alright but when you change it around and say that they **actually lost 75% of every tender they bid** then surely the senior management must question what is going on for them to lose so many.

When you think in this way you have to ask, "how much money have I wasted on the bids I've lost; how will this affect the long term stability of my business?"

This booklet will provide some guidance.

WHO WILL BENEFIT

If you're a Director or senior manager responsible for managing, writing and winning bids you'll already know the pressures on you to succeed.

Your fellow Directors, your staff, your supply chain and, of course your Board are all expecting you to win.

How you motivate and manage your team to provide the information you need can make the difference between winning and losing.

This guide is for those who are serious about doing something different to achieve real world results in your business because it's about changing your mindset, improving your communication and altering your approach to the whole process of winning more work so that you really stand out in your marketplace and increase your success.

If you are losing more business that you are winning then your company is shrinking and not growing as it could...and indeed it should.



I INTRODUCTION

What You Can Expect

In this guide, we'll share with you some of the tools and techniques that have enabled our clients to be more successful in winning new business...and, we know that when you take action and use these tools and techniques they will help you to grow and develop **your** business too.

These same tools and techniques can be applied to any sales or marketing submission whether you're it's a pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ), invitation to tender (ITT), requests for proposals (RFP) or indeed any other type of proposal.

It's never been more important to stand out from your competition, to be more persuasive and influential and these techniques will help you to do exactly that.



The Three Keys

There are **3 Keys** that are essential to ensuring that your bid is outstanding **every time** so you **hugely** increase your chances of winning.

If you get them wrong you could lose that vital early connection with your client and they won't really understand you or feel that you understand them.

If this happens then you'll stand little chance of winning the contract and will effectively have handed it to your rivals.

*So, what are the **3 Keys** that are essential to making your bid outstanding every time and why are they so important?*

We've included a column alongside the narrative so you can add notes that relate directly to your business and can make it even more relevant to your goods or services and the people who will deliver them



KEY ONE

POSITION YOURSELF TO WIN

There's a great temptation to bid for every opportunity relevant to your business but this scattergun approach will quickly deplete valuable resources that might be better used elsewhere in the work winning process.

Worse still, it could damage your reputation with your clients...because, as we all know our clients talk to each other and share their experiences!

To avoid this happening to you it is crucial that you get to know your company really well.

I regularly use the term 'positioning' in business generation and doing a bit of navel gazing is a great help. When you know yourself you can position yourself so your potential or current client knows how you can meet **their** needs and solve **their** problem.

Positioning Yourself to Win is all about understanding:

- ✦ What you do best,
- ✦ How you do it,
- ✦ When you do it, and
- ✦ Where you should be doing it

When you know the true value of your goods or services and how they can help your client to fix **their** problem, you can connect more quickly and in a way that **they** want to see and hear and understand.

When you **position yourself to win** you enhance your credibility in areas where you are stronger than your rivals and downplay areas where you might be weaker.

You show yourself to the best advantage and connect much quicker so you increase your chances of winning more bids. And remember that if you're only just considering this approach then your rivals may already be doing it.

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KEY ONE

POSITION YOURSELF TO WIN

CLIENT

It's important to remember that when you bid it is always about your client and what **they** want rather than what you want to sell.

Many companies get this wrong and risk alienating their client from the outset.



To really understand your client you need to know what they want to achieve. This isn't just the thing they want to create or the goods they want to buy or the service they need to do something.

It's the final goal that will make their life easier, grow their business, make more profit...or anything else that they are striving for.

You also need to know the issues that trouble them and have led them to ask for help from the market.

Employing an external agent to provide a service or product will achieve an important outcome and help them do something they couldn't previously do, and you need to know what that is.

By connecting the journey from **their** problem to **your** solution to **their** goal you will make it easier for them to see the benefits of your offer in meeting **their** objectives.

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KEY ONE

POSITION YOURSELF TO WIN

COMPANY

So now you know what your client wants to achieve how can you help them meet their aspiration?

This requires you to carefully assess your resources, experience, capability and knowledge to understand the full extent of your input...and more importantly how you will apply it to **your client**.



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Their Problem

to

Your Solution

to

Their Goal

You will make it easier for you to see how your offer will meet their objectives and can then tell them in a way that will interest them more.

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KEY ONE

POSITION YOURSELF TO WIN

PEOPLE

I've heard it said so often that, 'people are our best asset' but this only suggest they are a commodity to use and can be thrown away when no longer needed.



Having worked with many companies and had the opportunity to speak with their people at all levels you'd be amazed at how little managers actually know about them.

I ran a workshop with key Directors of the business and started by asking the participants to share three things that their fellow Directors didn't know about them- they were dumbstruck by some of the responses even after 20 years of working together!

I'm sure most of you will have watched Undercover Boss on the television and seen the incredible work and ideas generated by the company's staff.

So, be sure to learn what your people do, what they're trained in and how they bring (often unrecognized) innovation in their day-to-day routine that makes doing their jobs easier or better and helps their clients with what they want.

Throw out those old CVs and map out your team's interests, skills and successes so you can use them to write bid-focused profiles that relate to your client and what your people will do for them.

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KEY ONE

POSITION YOURSELF TO WIN

MARKET

Knowing your position in your market and how you are perceived in it is crucial if you want to **position yourself to win**.



This is because you will often be judged on what people think you can do and the expectations they have of a company like yours. Knowing your position will help you to play to your strengths and understand where you might need to play down or divert attention from any real or perceived weaknesses.

Identify the markets you already serve and assess your strengths and weaknesses in them. Remember to be honest and objective about your abilities and past experience because we often think differently about ourselves than others perceive us to be.

Depending on your character and strength of company you might be over selling or under selling yourself. If possible, ask others to give you an honest appraisal and don't be fooled by clichés often repeated by your internal teams about how good you are - you need to get this right because if you are out of line with what the market thinks of you, it will cause serious problems in your bid.

Check out your competitors and look at what they are doing- are they better than you, are you better than them and what can you learn from how they do things to help your clients?

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KEY TWO

END TO END CONTROL

PREPARE, PLAN, PRODUCE

Bidding can be very, very stressful when handled badly... when time is short at the end it's easy to cut corners and not check things thoroughly. But there are things you can do that will make a real difference to your team and the results you'll get.

Preparation is fundamental to winning more work...we first heard it in school when preparing for exams and it is even more important now that we run businesses and have families to support.



We can all find lots of reasons not to prepare as well as we should, however, the best business growth strategies rely on a disciplined and carefully planned approach to be successful.

It's easy to cut corners when it comes to preparation but winging it is rarely the best way and preparation should be an integral part of your sales and bidding strategy.

Getting to thoroughly know your company, your people and your market is important and now you need to carefully control your bid so it hits the mark.

Don't delay when the bid documents land because this wastes valuable time and sends the wrong message to your team- after all, if you can't be bothered to start working on it why should they?

Carefully read all the instructions and make sure you give advance warning to your team of the impending work and their inputs.

Next assemble your predetermined bid team, research the bid and plan your winning strategy.

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KEY TWO

END TO END CONTROL

PREPARE, PLAN, PRODUCE

Produce your Bid Management Plan and assign tasks against the program.

Remember, the submission date won't change and you won't score anything if you're late so keep checking that you're on track!

It's crucial that you have a strategy .

Most people think this is all about 'win themes' but it most certainly isn't because it won't matter what you have to say, how well you say it or how great it looks if it doesn't meet your client's needs.

When you've developed your strategy put it into your Bid Roadmap alongside all your ideas, the most important and relevant information from your research and links between questions.

This is the guide that all your contributors will use to write the content - and they'll thank you for it because it will save them lots of time and stop them having to guess at what you want.

Leave sufficient time to desktop publish your submission, complete final checks and gain approvals from senior management, and do final tweaks before printing and delivery or uploading electronically.

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KEY THREE

PRICE TO WIN

THE BIGGEST MYTH

One of the biggest myths I regularly hear from companies that have been unsuccessful with a bid is that it was lost on price alone and that the potential client wasn't interested in the quality of their goods or services.

Having spoken with many procurement professionals I know this is not the case. Procurement teams want to get the best value for money that they can within their budgets whilst making life easier for themselves and their internal delivery teams and with the minimum of risk.

So, you need to develop a **Price-to-Win** strategy that uses good market intelligence to significantly increase your chances of winning the contract at the right value (cost v benefit)...for you and your client.

PRICE TO WIN STRATEGY

Price to Win strategies can vary from fairly simple intelligence gathering to more complex market analysis and both enable you to demonstrate the benefit of using your goods or services in the best way by linking price to performance/value. There are three main factors that influence your pricing strategy:

- ✧ Your clients aspirations
- ✧ Your competitors approach, and
- ✧ Your approach

Make sure your pricing model is consistent with the requirements of the bid and carefully consider the weighting of the questions as this demonstrates the emphasis that your client has placed on any particular issue.

A more important issue may have cost implications and they might expect higher costs associated with something of more importance or conversely lower costs. Your background research into the bid will help you know how to respond best.

If you fail to gather this financial information and don't understand your strengths and weaknesses within your market you will be bidding blind and risk losing the contract.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

NEIL SOUTHWELL

I'm Neil Southwell and I'm a professional and successful Strategic Bid Specialist and Business Generator. I've help my clients produce targeted bids that are carefully researched and well positioned and have secured over £6 billion worth of new contracts.

With a career that has spanned over 25 years I have been exposed to most market sectors, many different professionals and many different kinds of companies from international blue chip companies to SMEs. I've owned several businesses and worked at director level with national and international companies and have developed a detailed understanding of what works in marketing, selling and business generation.

I have owned several businesses and worked as Regional Director with global property group DTZ and niche project managers PCM. Being responsible for winning new business, I have developed a detailed understanding of what works in marketing, selling and business generation. In 2005, having sold my business interests I joined an international consultancy that was managing bids for its clients and started to consider what was really required to win a bid. I have since developed my own processes that now form the bedrock of the strategic approach used by Vision.

"This combination of wide ranging experience, learned and developed strategies and market intelligence has enabled my clients to achieve greater stability in their businesses."

This learning is now embodied into Vision, which has developed a speciality in helping our clients bid for major works programmes. We regularly work with in house bid teams to develop clear and decisive and winning bid strategies. We help individual companies and consortia to ensure that all messages remain clear and address the client's issues, objectives and aspirations.

Vision's approach enables you to greatly improve your written communication so you generate more business and increase your credibility with your clients and your competitors making you a real force to be reckoned with.

Our objective is simple:

To help you win more work so you can grow your business for greater stability over the long term

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