



The Bid Team
Bidding Solutions

Ten ways to win

Your guide to bidding best practice



Bidding is about qualification, strategy, benefits and unique selling points.

The bid must position your company within your client's evaluators' minds as first choice for all options. Your client must see the full benefit of your solution. An understanding of what is required of a bid is therefore essential. Understanding how to position the benefits of your bid is only one part of the solution.

We understand that bidding can be daunting, as can any activity if you do not possess the right tools for the trade. This guide will not make you a bid manager or writer but it does provide an outline of what needs to be done to win.

- 01 Qualify hard
- 02 Understand your client
- 03 Understand your solution
- 04 Understand your competitors' sales solutions
- 05 Qualify again
- 06 Define a clear bid strategy and bid plan
- 07 Define the win themes
- 08 Structure your response and answers
- 09 Use the right bid writers
- 10 Review, review and review

01

Qualify Hard

There are many opportunities to bid, not all bids win and bidding is expensive

When considering a bid or tender process there are three statements that you should take into account: There are many opportunities to bid; not all bids win and bidding is expensive. If you could only choose the winning bids to spend time and resources on it would have a dramatic effect on your bottom line.

Qualification should therefore be approached from the point of a no-bid default option and the question asked should be “why spend company resource on this opportunity”.

There are a number of quantitative mechanisms for opportunity evaluation, all can be adapted to your own company profile but what is important is that you understand the opportunity, the projected profit profile and the cost of bidding. This is a good indicator to decide if the bid investment will produce sufficient return to merit further work.

02

Understand your client

A winning bid must be written specifically for the audience that will evaluate it

In order to produce a winning bid, it must be targeted and written specifically for the audience that will conduct the bid evaluation. Standard text and boilerplate will not win over the majority of people. In order to target your client an understanding must be developed.

There are many theories and methodologies to do this, such as MANDACT, Miller Heiman, SCOTSMAN. The best way is to find a sales profile technique that works for your company and stick to it. The sales profile should determine the client hierarchy, identify the decision makers for this bid, identify the key drivers (legislation, failure or investment), identify the hidden drivers (personal, political or financial), and model the client tender requirements (technical, operational, financial and political). Once you have a client profile, you can then assess how you deliver a solution that will win the bid.

03

Understand your solution

Planning your response and solution are key elements in ensuring that you bid to win

In many bid writing situations there is a 'rush to write' in the belief that if you are not writing then you are not bidding. Planning your response and solution are key elements in ensuring that you bid to win. Once you have a clear understanding of the client's PQQ, RFI, ITT or RFP, a hard look should be taken as to whether your organisation can deliver against them and how.

Your domain experts should spend some time analysing the tender requirements and coming up with the best solution you can offer, while assessing the fit of the solution.

The designers should ask if the solution fits exactly to what the client has requested or if there is a short fall in your compliance, if so how can you quantify the shortfall. Once you have an assessment of the solution's fit and have an understanding of where it lacks compliance, you can then determine the client benefits of the solution offered and whether it is what they have requested in the EOI, PQQ, RFI, RFP or ITT what they need or what they do not yet know they need.

04

Understand your competitors' sales solutions

In order to win a bid you need to be positive about your competitors sales solution

From the outset of a bid you believe you have the perfect sales solution for the client. In order to win the bid you must prove that belief. To do this you need to undertake an exercise that is painful and goes against the corporate grain. You need to be positive about your competitors and the sales solutions that they offer.

In the same positive 'we are going to win' approach that you produced your own sales solution, you need to 'be the competition' and undertake the same exercise from their point of view. You then have an assessment of their sales solution, their solution fit and where their lack of compliance is. You can now make a qualified assessment of why you are the solution of choice.

05

Qualify again

Your strategy should address all elements of the solution and not ignore the difficult bits, your client will not

The bid writing momentum is now picking up and it is hard to put the brakes on but that is what you must do to justify further investment in the bid. You have a clear understanding of the client, your competition and your solution. Your Bid Manager and Bid Team must therefore conduct a thorough analysis of where you stand.

Qualifying at this stage should be from the client's viewpoint. If one of your competitors has a 100% fit and your sales solution is lacking in a key area then there may be a very good reason for that. That reason could be that they have been able to influence the client pre-tender or simply, they have a better sales solution. It would be best to stop bid writing now and invest in pre-sales for the next opportunity, this is where an experienced Bid Manager can be invaluable.

More likely there will be a close but not perfect fit for all. If you decide to continue the investment, your bid team will need to address the elements that are unique to your sales solution and counter areas where you are potentially weak.

06

Define a clear bid strategy and bid plan

Communication of your sales solution, strategy and approach should be a key component of the bid plan

You and your Bid Manager have decided to continue the investment. You must now plan the bid with scientific precision. The bid deadline is immovable. If you fail to meet this then you fail to deliver. Very few projects work to absolute deadlines.

The bid strategy must be clear and communicated to all. The sales solution while defined at the high level, for your initial assessment, must be further developed. The bid plan must be achievable and the correct resources allocated to it. Review and sign off time needs to be planned and a contingency planned for the inevitable deviations that occur. If possible there needs to be a client communication strategy for the bid, whether this be direct or indirect.

Frequent communication with all stakeholders should be a key component of the bid plan and all should be encouraged to feedback on your sales solution, strategy and approach. You should not be afraid to re-qualify at any point where there is a material change in your understanding of the client, their EOI, PQQ, RFI, RFP or ITT, your competitors or your sales solution.

07

Define the win themes

Your bid win themes need to put the client first, be expressed in terms of client benefits and be justified by quantified statements

The client may use different evaluators for different sections of the bid. If you are going to win the bid these must be communicated to all. Each evaluator should complete their section and know exactly why you have the best sales solution. You need therefore to define the bid win themes in order to win the bid. Many people use 'me too' bid win themes such as "we are the best", "we are the fastest" and/or "we are cost effective".

These are not going to chime with your client and are probably used by your competition. Your bid win themes need to put the client first, be expressed in terms of client benefits and be justified by quantified statements. You need to test each bid win theme against your competition and ensure that the final list really contains only Unique Selling Points (USPs) of your sales solution.

08

Structure your response and answers

Once you have conducted a forensic review of the documentation and questions, you can structure your response

The client has taken the time to produce the EOI, PQQ, RFI, RFP or ITT. They have included documents that they think are relevant. You should take the time to understand the tender documentation, the context of all documents and the differentials between the questions asked.

Once you have conducted a forensic review of the documentation and questions, you can structure your response. You should produce a clear book plan of what goes where, a style guide for the responses, an analysis of each question and a structure and storyboard for each. This structure should indicate to the writers what the key messages are, how to put the client first, what your win themes are and how to detail assumptions and cost drivers.

The best way to get everyone working together is to collocate but where this is not practicable then regular meetings and reviews should encourage everyone to participate and own our solution. There are some excellent tools, many based in the Cloud, to help with sharing documents in realtime.

09

Use the right bid writers

You need to use the correct skills for the job and not ask individuals to step beyond what they are comfortable with

Many bids have technical/financial/commercial/legal components, which should be addressed by domain experts. Domain experts communicate to their peers with precision, but this can make it difficult for us mere mortals. Bids are an investment for the organisation and not a training opportunity for individuals.

The best approach is to have domain experts have the first cut at writing up the solution and answering the questions, then assign skilled bid writers to work with them to develop the solution in terms that can be understood by your client. The bid writers should ensure that all client benefits are highlighted, all win themes are clearly articulated and the bid section is consistent with the overall approach or bid strategy. Graphic designers should be used to look after document format, diagram design and the use of appropriate imagery. We are all designers when it comes to bids but it is best to leave this to somebody who is skilled in this area. Again regular communication with all stakeholders is key and issues that arise should be addressed.

10

Review, review and review

Reviews should be focused on tightly defined areas and moderated to ensure they do not lose focus

Everyone has an opinion on how to win the bid and what should be in or out of the EOI, PQQ, RFI, RFP or ITT. Senior management reviews a few hours before submission can in reality contribute very little to the win. Reviews should therefore be throughout the bid process and be structured such that all stakeholders know what they are signing off and the impact on the bid. Early reviews of client requirements, competitor analysis, your solution and bid strategy means less surprises at the end.

Senior management and external reviews can also help shape the bid and bring expertise to bear where and when it counts. You should therefore have a bid review strategy that starts at bid initiation. You should include all stakeholders and bring in external expertise. An active review cycle means people can contribute to the bid win and help define the approach. Reviews should be seen by the team as a positive contribution and not an internal hurdle that has to be surmounted. The final review should be a pleasure to see and read, a well formatted, well presented, client focused winning bid. Always a pleasure to see.

About The Bid Team

Your chances of winning will be enhanced by adding to your team individuals who are experienced in a number of skills that are not normally required during your normal business operations.

We provide clients with a flexible resource pool and bidding expertise in their sector that can be called upon to compliment existing teams. The resource pool is accessible to first time bidders that need guidance through the process, or to organisations that have a bid function but need to cope with a peak in bidding demand. For further information or to discuss your bidding requirements in detail, please get in touch:

Email: contact@thebidteam.com

Telephone: 0203 475 8550

Our services:

Bid Management

Bid Writing

Bid Consultancy

Bid Recruitment

Bid Training

Bid Review

Bid Graphics

Bid Outsourcing

The Bid Team Ltd.

2 Jeffries House

Jeffries Passage

Guildford GU1 4AP

contact@thebidteam.com

0203 475 8550

