

5 ESSENTIAL STEPS TO MAKE YOUR BID STAND OUT

Response to tender



You get one shot at articulating your capabilities and convincing a prospective client that they should choose you over some tough competition.

So you'd better get it right.

But that's getting harder and harder to do - the odds are already against you with over **90%** of RFPs issued having a favourable contender already in mind, and with most bidders achieving having an average RFP win rate of just **5%**. Then there's the oversaturated market, which is fiercely contested as clients fight to transform and remain competitive. And the cost and investment of pitching is going up as margins reduce and procurement processes become more automated, making it harder to build a meaningful dialogue with your client. All this is putting more pressure on the one-shot bid process.

So how do you make your bid stand out in a sea of bland RFP responses, overcome the challenges of an aggressive marketplace and take that one and only chance to win? We've put together this simple 5 step guide to try and help you do just that.

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MAKE IT HUMAN

CHALLENGE

Most RFPs are, of course, highly constrained. This makes it difficult to be personable and easy to confine yourself to the factual 'exam question' answers. So, while there's no room for self-indulgent 'fluff', a bid is still a conversation with your client - and often a one-sided one at that - how do you bring to life what it will **feel** like to work with you and simply convey the **difference** you will make?

SOLUTION

The language you use needs to be direct. It has to reflect your client's own voice to demonstrate it's **about them**, not you. Most of all, it has to be human. The way you interact with the client throughout your bid needs to serve as a constant reminder that you're offering a partnership with people, not just a business. Because while they want to understand your planned solution - they also want to be inspired by the reasons why.

IN PRACTICE

Make it personal at every level. A friendly, empathetic and human video message from your senior stakeholder will help clients see the face behind your brand and demonstrate your commitment. Always go for a personal intro from everyone in the team rather than generic CVs. And get the thoughts of your clients' customers and employees. These are normally the people your client is most concerned with, so it's key to canvass their opinion and frame your responses accordingly, putting you on their side in addressing the people and outcomes that really matter.



MAKE IT SIMPLE

CHALLENGE

When a client gets around to reviewing your bid, they'll likely have a few behind them and a whole lot more ahead of them. Don't give them a chance to discard your response because they couldn't wade through your offer. A clear structure and a simplified message on their own don't necessarily make a winning bid, but, to be considered, you can't afford to lose any of your points to complexity. How do you help your audience navigate your bid most effectively?

SOLUTION

When addressing a time-poor audience, clarity through simplicity is key. It's tempting to cram it full of the whizzy features that you think are going to excite but, ask yourself, is any of that going to help your customer understand the ultimate outcomes you can bring them? Prioritise and use techniques which make articulating and comprehending your message a simple

process. The most clear, simplest method is usually the best one, so consider where you can break up detailed responses with powerful reminders of your win theme messages, or simply pull out quotes that sum up pages of detail into a simple 'how this helps you' paragraph.

IN PRACTICE

We have developed a technique that deep dives into customer scenarios and has proven the perfect way to distill complex solutions into simple outcomes. Taking a walk in the shoes of your client's customers, employees or senior decision makers enables you to communicate your message through their eyes and provide all the context that a personal perspective brings. Our simple customer journey tool that does just that; proving to be one of the most powerful and compelling components of our bid responses in humanising and realising our clients' capabilities across multiple sectors.



MAKE IT SMART

CHALLENGE

It goes without saying you need to answer the 'exam' questions set in the RFP - though some bids fail even at this hurdle - but you also need to be clever and critical in how you answer them. You've got a lot of stakeholders to appeal to and not much freedom, given the strict Q&A format. So how do you make it work for C-suite audiences, procurement and the on-the-ground client team? How do you ensure they each quickly find what they are looking for and secure their buy-in, without diluting your message and creating something too generic?

SOLUTION

You have to distinguish the difference between an answer you're satisfied with and one that will satisfy the client. After all, if it's not answering their challenge, should it really be there? Examine your audience and its various groups and identify what the key decision makers will be looking for. Then you'll be more able to answer

the 'unwritten' questions by knowing what everyone, from the CEO to the procurement manager, will want to see. And once armed with this information, don't be afraid to use it - consider how you can flex your response to directly engage at an individual level.

IN PRACTICE

We surgically profile each key audience member, cataloguing their professional profile and more subtle personal interests to get to know them on a deeper level. Then we role play and 'war-game' with our client. We'll take the role of their customer, using those impartial, outside-in perspectives, which means we can anticipate how each audience will receive the proposition, and we can tailor it accordingly, interrogating and testing our clients' win themes and making sure every aspect is as targeted as possible. Sometimes it's as simple as the words and descriptions we use, often it's a more adaptive, flexible response that sign-posts key messages in different formats to surgically hone in on the key people we know we must engage.



MAKE IT VISIONARY

CHALLENGE

RFP's are prescriptive by nature and that's why so many bids end up being, frankly, so dull. Most good responses, of course, will include some nice client images as that's just good basic practice. But you can therefore safely assume they might all look pretty similar when they land on the client's desk. And if you overload it with your brand, surely that's just counter-intuitive you need to make it all about them (see point 1!). It's a fine balance: if you go too far you'll trip over yourself - if you don't go far enough the client will fall asleep. So how **do** you stand out?

SOLUTION

Think further outside the box than you normally would and turn your traditional thinking on its head. To create something unique, you have to quickly work out the scope for creativity within the given constraints then push the boundary as far as possible. Approach the process as though it were an ABM campaign using the creative concepts within the bid itself as a

strategic tool. Powerful, bespoke images and campaign-led messaging can say more about your partnership and present a clear vision of your proposed end-state than some generic stock images or paragraphs of text. Most importantly, allow your brand to become secondary as you upweight the client's. Remember you are selling their vision, not yours.

IN PRACTICE

We tailor-make our bids. We carry out a careful, immersive, 360° review of our client and their customer and establish how best to 'marry' their brands to create a dynamic personal connection and high impact bid-campaign brought to life through powerful visuals and bold, human headlines. We create clever co-branding and set it against a depiction of the end-customer experiencing what they'll get from your collaboration. We look for the unexpected ideas and quirky concepts that demand attention, grounding the creative delivery in forward-looking business outcomes.



MAKE IT DISRUPT

CHALLENGE

There's an unspoken subtext in the bid process where the client wants you to go further. Whether they know it themselves or not, the RFP they provide can't cover every base. It can't account for the complexities of context, it can't guarantee the effect the client wants and it can't always provide the answer to the issue at hand. The responses that win are the ones that fill in those blanks themselves or that lead the client to something they never knew they wanted. But how do you deploy a disruptive strategy while remaining compliant?

SOLUTION

The bids that win are informed by the engagement achieved before the RFP is even issued, or the surprising challenges and ideas they reveal as you work through the stages of the process. Pre-engagement, provocation and conversation is invaluable. Of course you will look to build early relationships with key stakeholders, but you need to work out where you can go further. Show the depth of your investment and 'go beyond' mindset, by helping them shape their RFP from the outset. This is the partnership behaviour that sets you apart from competitors and creates new opportunities for you and your client. The key is to be as prepared as possible so when it comes time to actually creating your response you're armed with everything you need to give the process a strategic eye and you are already ahead of the game in demonstrating the kind of positive disruption and innovation the client can expect when working with you. If a change to the original brief is needed, then be bold in addressing it. Flip the script your clients are used to and disrupt the traditional process - ask them the questions which will unlock the potential of the project.

A WINNING STRATEGY IN PRACTICE

When the world's second largest caterer came to us for help winning an Olympic contract for London 2012, their message was simple: 'we have to win'. If they weren't at the Games, their reputation and credibility would've been badly damaged. So we went far beyond the brief to ensure they would be present. We developed a conceptual theme that was global and contemporary and brought it to life across an entire customer experience, emphasising every touch point, despite being over 2 years away from the event at the time. The global yet contemporary theme made for a winning bid, and secured widespread acclaim for our client.



When a high-profile Spanish Telco wanted to improve their LATAM operations, our client - one of the world's leading providers to the end-to-end mobile industry - saw the opportunity to go much further. We helped them develop a game-changing pre-RFP vision that would broaden their customer's perspective and help them unleash greater potential for innovation by opting for a global service, while giving them much needed transparency, increased quality and consistency across their estate. The customer listened and updated their RFP. We then helped our client create a strategic winning-bid response, that not only showed how they would address the needs of each territory, but also brought to life the expansive, long-term value they would add to their client's overall business.



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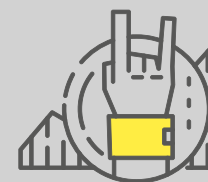
How? By developing strategies that disrupt; creating brands, campaigns and experiences that cut through; enabling you with the conversations, tools and experiences to drive sales; and arming you with the winning bid formula.

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WE DEVELOP YOUR WIN THEMES ALIGNED TO YOUR CUSTOMER CHALLENGES AND THEIR OWN VISION MESSAGES.



WE CUT THROUGH COMPLEXITY TO PAINT A VIVID PICTURE OF THE END STATE.



WE SEE IT AS A GENUINE PARTNERSHIP WITH A PRIMARY FOCUS ON HELPING YOU WIN.