



## **Don't Waste Your Precious Proposal Resources**

Learning to prepare outstanding, first-rate proposals is a task that is difficult at best and often impossible. Many contractors fail to ever master the assignment. Corporate management must be fully committed to the task and must also devote substantial time and resources to developing and keeping a good writing team. In order to start the process, we recommend doing the following:

1. Sell the opportunity first and then write a proposal. Don't write proposals for projects that you haven't sold.
2. In order to put your best foot forward, present customer-centric proposals based on solutions you have proposed to the federal end user.
3. Make sales and proposal writing an integrated and structured business process. Start the process early and have the proposal started when the actual Request for Proposal (RFP) is published.
4. Propose what the customer wants first and then sell them what they need.

Federal proposal evaluators look for simplicity and reader-friendly proposals; they want just the facts supported with evidence. Forget the sales fluff. In order to prepare a thorough, well-organized proposal, your staff must start with an outline. The outline provides the structure needed for your staff to prepare a clear and concise proposal.

Your most precious proposal resource is your technical staff. Their morale and attitude is critical to contract performance and the production of high-quality proposals. Don't waste this resource by losing proposals. Sales people want to bid on every opportunity. Executives new to the federal market want to bid more often than they should. Experienced proposal managers know that it is prudent to only bid on those opportunities that have been pre-sold by the sales staff.

The decision on whether to bid on a project is critical to success. Poor decisions will drain your company of its expensive, precious proposal resources and you will end up in a downward, losing spiral. Losing proposals produce staff burnout. You can ask your staff to miss their child's soccer game only so many times. Furthermore, countless billable hours are lost - never to be regained - when you devote your staff resources to proposals that have no chance of success.

General Guidelines for Making the Bid/No Bid Decision Are as Follows:

Do not bid if:

- Customer relationships are nonexistent or weak.
- There is an incumbent and you do not know if the customer wants them back or not.
- You know the customer prefers another company.

- You do not have a solution to the customer's problem (note - not the one in the RFP, but the real problem which you have smoked out during sales calls).
- You have any doubts about your chances of success.

Lean toward a no bid if:

- Your customer relationships are solid but (i) you know the government is talking with others, and (ii) you are not sure what they think of your company or the competition
- You do not know who wrote the RFP and who is on the evaluation committee.

Strong indicators that you shouldn't bid:

- You are unsure of or fear a competitor.
- You think the sales staff may not be as tight with the customer as they say.
- You have any doubts about your chances of success.

Bid if:

- Your customer relationships are strong.
- You know the customer's hot buttons and you have the solution they want.
- There is an incumbent contractor, you know the end user does not want them back, and you have a relationship with the customer.
- You can significantly lessen their fears (by reducing the end user's risk).

If you have any questions about this article or would like more information on this topic please contact us at (888) 661 – 4094, Ext.2. Or call the author of this article, Richard White, directly at (301) 908 – 0546, or at [rwhite@fedmarket.com](mailto:rwhite@fedmarket.com).