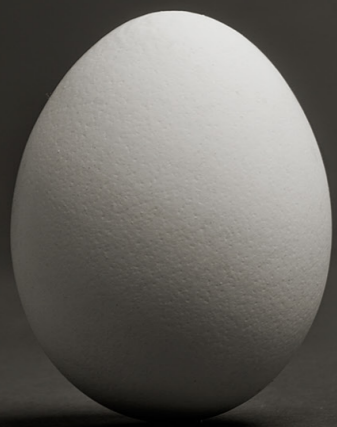


BQ

BIDDING QUARTERLY

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EVOLVING THE PROFESSION



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EXPERTS





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MARTIN SMITH

At the time of writing, 2019 has significant uncertainty surrounding it. Thankfully, our experts are adept at dealing with such ambiguity and have provided a fantastic set of articles in Issue 5 of Bidding Quarterly, full of great ideas and suggestions to evolve our profession in 2019.

As Jon Williams' article rightly points out, it's exhilarating working in a profession that's developing so fast. With so many opportunities to grow individually and develop as teams, it's essential that your plans are already well formed if you are to ensure 2019 achieves its full potential.

Issue 4 of Bidding Quarterly tackled some very personal issues relating to wellbeing. The outpouring of support our experts received has been humbling. It obviously served as a catalyst for many people to challenge their current lack of wellbeing. I'm delighted to say that in BQ5, we have sought expert opinion from Robert Stewart – an experienced business psychologist, psychotherapist and coach with over 10 years' experience in the field of psychology. Robert has provided some practical guidance and suggestions that you can immediately implement within your working day.

I hope you have a fantastic and restful Christmas and a very successful and healthy 2019.

Martin

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So many conversations with my fellow proposal professionals come back to age-old themes. How do we get our organisations to take qualification more seriously? What's the best way to develop a winning strategy? How do we write inspiring content and make it look fabulous? What tactics can help us to lead proposal teams, especially in a world where 'virtual' is now 'business as usual'?

If you don't have a great library of top-notch pre-written content (and the processes, team and tools to manage it), others are a decade ahead of you. If you've not trained everyone involved in proposals, your better-skilled competitors will have the advantage. In a demanding world, companies who haven't sorted the basics need to sort themselves out. Now.

Tactics evolve, of course. Fresh techniques make us more effective and efficient. The language of bidding changes: there's far more emphasis on 'value' now than there was a few years ago, for example. But what's new or trending?

Here's my list of the key areas that already-successful proposal teams wanting to further sharpen their act in 2019 should explore:

- 1** Establishing clear processes to manage bid competitive intelligence – for so long an overlooked discipline in our profession.
- 2** Creating a cadre of highly-trained peer reviewers, delivering real value from the 'final document review' (AKA 'Red Team', if you love jargon).
- 3** Entwining proposal support far more closely in the sales pipeline. (The best teams out there will already have started work on renewal proposals for key contracts due to expire in late 2019, as well as on pre-proposal planning and 'Challenger Sale'-style proposals for all of next year's will-win deals).
- 4** Ensuring a robust capacity plan is in place for proposal support, aligning the effort and skills required to the volume and mix of support needed – so key to protecting life/work balance for bid and proposal staff.
- 5** Moving the training focus from corporate to personal. Classroom training is still the cornerstone for any good programme. But more personalised, creative approaches are ever more important to embed learning. Video-based and online training. Internal awards programmes. Most critically, 1:1 coaching.
- 6** Embracing the change in APMP's Practitioner qualification, as it moves in 2019 from the long-standing questionnaire to a new scenario-based exam. Might this finally trigger some more experienced people to step up from the entry-level Foundation qualification that so many have passed? (And while we're about it, is this the year in which more leaders will actually show leadership, by submitting their Professional impact paper – something surprisingly few have done in the UK?)
- 7** Getting proposals into the boardroom. What you do is critical to your organisation's success. If you're not getting airtime and genuine sponsorship from your C-suite, will this be the year in which you'll finally knock at their door – and then force it open?

It's exhilarating working in a profession that's developing so fast. And I know that it can feel challenging to build the fire department while you're continuing to fight fires. But it's not always enough to do things better. Perhaps 2019 is the year in which you need to do different and better things?





ROB STEWART

**FOCUS
ON THE THINGS
WE CAN CHANGE,
ACCEPT THOSE
WE CANNOT**

From an outsider's perspective, and having read with interest all the articles in BQ Issue 4 - The Hidden Costs of Bidding, the bidding world appears an exciting, tempting and sometimes exhilarating world to inhabit. Jon Williams puts it well, 'we do incredible stuff, proposals are such fun', whilst Nigel Hudson describes the 'pure challenge' and 'high adrenaline'. However, the dark side of the bid process seems a bitter sweet place, including elements of stress, depression and divorce as witnessed by Emma Poole, to the psychotic breakdown Nigel so bravely recalls.

How is it then that some thrive in such an environment, some leave upon the realisation that it simply isn't for them, whilst others push themselves to the limit and beyond, resulting in dire consequences? I have provided some points you might wish to consider when prioritising your own wellbeing.

Choose your focus

As the stress of a bid builds, an unhelpful habit we adopt is looking externally. We begin to develop an internal dialogue along the lines of "if only person x would do y" and "if the customer just...". The trick is to recognise our focus shifting externally and very quickly

A professional perspective on well-being

bringing it back to what we can do in the current situation. This may sound simple, even obvious, yet we so often unconsciously slip into blame and resentment that only impacts us.

Set your boundaries

One piece of clarity you do possess in the bidding world is a very specific deadline, and whilst this looming deadline causes stress, this is due to the time constraint rather than the deadline itself. A deadline provides a practical boundary. Thus, establish your own boundaries. Usually they are interpersonal and include our expectations of others, making clear where our responsibility begins and ends.

"Define your boundaries, consistently instil them in your day to day, promoting an accountable culture of transparency and clarity. It starts with you".

Gain some perspective

As an evolutionary response to danger, we block out unnecessary stimuli that could distract us and focus solely on the goal at hand. In modern times, it means we begin to forget the people around us, the life outside the office, past bids long gone and future bids still to come. As Andy Haigh rightly points out "in 6 months...you won't remember why you were so worried at the time". This won't result in apathy, becoming irresponsible or not holding yourself to account, but it will break your threat focus, free up some cognitive load and allow your mind to refresh its sense of clarity, innovation and application.



TAKE A STEP BACK TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD

The process is as important as the outcome

Recognising day to day achievements and progress, valuing and engaging in the relationships we have, and learning new information and insights results in daily reward and subsequently increases wellbeing. Andy suggested we should learn to chunk. Not only does chunking make a large, seemingly ambiguous bid more palatable, it also provides a daily sense of achievement. If the bid is successful, we recognise our effort and are rewarded further, strengthening our resolve for the next one.

Focus on what effort you commit and the small achievements you make day to day. The outcome will be what it will be.

Learn to be present, learn to do

Procrastination is the enemy of success. In a bidding environment where deadlines are tight, and we are time poor, putting things off can be disastrous for all. Unconsciously when we procrastinate, we usually assume the following:

The task is too hard, it won't be good enough, or I have time later. In reality these assumptions are likely untrue, our brain is merely throwing up barriers in a veiled attempt at saving energy.

Pick the right time and get started. No need to overthink it anymore.

What can we do as a team?

Start with a charter

Some teams will develop a healthy culture organically, don't leave it to chance. Make it explicit and clear, the trust will build.

Promote radical candour and transparency

Speak openly, speak honestly, and develop a culture of transparency. Anything left unsaid is detrimental. Openness results in responsibility and results.

A professional perspective on well-being

Nurture a growth mindset

See mistakes as opportunities to learn, make this explicit to the team and encourage them to keep striving forward.

Be flexible where you can

Establish a transparent and explicit psychological contract with your team, then abide by those rules.



MARTIN SMITH

I firmly believe that the UK bid and proposal profession needs a professional body that is 100% focussed on the UK market. There has been a seismic shift in the UK bid and proposal profession over the last 20 years, yet there has been very little direct investment to advance best practice, fund research or champion causes important to those working in the UK. The UK has benefited to some extent from predominately US-focussed APMP projects and its Certification Programme has certainly provided measurable standards, helping those outside of our profession respect and better understand it. I do however question if many of the initiatives over the past 20 years have genuinely raised standards and furthered best practice or simply confirmed what we already know?

Previous attempts to create a fully independent UK professional body were derailed when APMP rightly pointed out that Certifications would become invalidated if individuals didn't retain membership. At that time, it drove sufficient fear in to the APMP UK Board to press ahead with the US-led model. Some ten years on from those break-away conversations, I still see an APMP UK Chapter that has been fundamentally starved of funds from its inception.

Thankfully, looking ahead to 2019, the UK Chapter is set to benefit from some significant funding changes. These changes, whilst very positive, will bring with them a number of challenges to the current operating model and financial governance. For those at this year's APMP UK Conference, you may have heard Rick Harris announce a new Community Interest Company (CIC). This new company will ensure all APMP membership

revenue generated in the UK gets invested in the UK (approximately 20% of all the money previously generated from membership stayed in the UK).

The CIC is headed up by Rick Harris and a small Board he has directly appointed. In the immediate future, they will be determining exactly what UK projects secure investment. With over 1,800 UK members, this should generate over £200,000 in the first year alone. With approximately £400,000 already in the UK account, you can start to get excited about what APMP UK could finally start to



achieve. By the end of 2019 it could have nearly £1 million to invest. Fundamentally, this should be a springboard for change in the UK. The stranglehold over finances that has held back the UK profession for so many years finally appears to be at an end.

Such large sums of money demand accountability, a need for solid governance and absolute transparency. Surprisingly, the UK membership wasn't polled on who should lead the CIC. Whilst Rick Harris has made progress in making APMP's election processes more democratic, transparent and fair, I really hope he advertises such key roles in the future.

Proud to be APMP UK? I'd really like to be.

With these new funds, APMP UK can truly progress all the projects that have been delayed or mothballed due to UK Board members having day jobs as well as serving on the UK Board. Such projects as championing issues around the gender pay gap, launching a credible apprenticeship scheme, working with higher education and universities to drive meaningful industry specific research and conducting wellbeing and behavioural studies. Even the basics such as publishing timely Annual Reports with full financial information should now be easily achievable.

In 2019, the APMP UK Board has a unique opportunity. Members must be able to hold it accountable for delivering progress. Our profession is now too large and too important to be governed by a set of volunteers, no matter how genuine their intentions. We need a much more professional governing body. As a minimum it needs an annual general meeting, a clear mandate from those in positions of authority - especially the CIC and Executive APMP UK Directors - and a mechanism for members to vote on key investments and appointments.

I see the 'proudtobeAPMP' hashtag being used a lot on social media - I'd really like to be in 2019. Whilst there is certainly scope for an alternative professional body to APMP in the UK, I have faith that real progress will be made in 2019 and beyond. The UK profession has the opportunity to be the leading global authority on bid and proposal best practice and we must not let anything hold us back.



Being a bid professional can be demoralising. It can feel like the sales team gets all the credit and the bid team's contribution is overlooked or barely acknowledged. If we are going to evolve our profession, we need to raise our status and get real recognition of the contribution we bring.

When we have asked the bid professionals we work with about status and recognition, we come up with a fairly consistent set of issues. We hear that bid teams are:

- **Given no or only late visibility of pending ITTs**
- **Not provided with any real insight of client issues and goals at the initiation of the bid process (and sometimes not at all)**
- **Not provided with a clear win strategy to work with and often have to work it out themselves**
- **Required to run with poorly qualified opportunities which result in poor win rates (the bid team's fault!)**
- **Denied bringing together the full team for an effective bid kick-off because of "competing priorities"**
- **Treated as enemies when they suggest qualifying out of a bid.**

As a result, bids are sent out which are much less effective than they could be. Win rates suffer and some of the blame rubs off on us.

We don't have a magic wand to solve these problems. However, we have one idea which we think will help, and which will increase the understanding of the value bid professionals can bring.

Breaking Down the Barriers

Our solution is to seek to work more closely with the sales team and, in particular, offer a service to facilitate the early opportunity planning activity. Once identified, any important opportunity needs a brainstorming session to work out how best to capture it. If we facilitate this session, the sales team can focus on participating and not having to manage the session. This will lead to a better plan. Additionally, it will lead to more effective and more consistent sales planning across the organisation.

We should look to propose an agenda for the meeting to include:

- 1 Client assessment (issues, goals, hot buttons, drivers).**
- 2 Our value to the client and our discriminators if we can identify them.**
- 3 Competitive assessment.**
- 4 SWOT for the opportunity.**
- 5 Our value proposition.**
- 6 Our win strategy and how we can influence the ITT.**
- 7 Action plan.**



If we can help with the sales and opportunity planning process we will, automatically, understand more about the client and the win strategy. We will get early sight of potential bids. Additionally, we can influence the agenda to ensure that from an early stage the sales team is collecting the information we will need. We can encourage them to the harder questions such as our standing in the account. From this beginning, it should evolve into much better integration of the bid team into the sales planning processes.

Overall, we all win. What's not to like?

A WISH LIST

The ten things I would like to happen in our profession and working environment in 2019:

- 1** Closer integration of professional procurement and buying associations with the bid and proposal profession, with cross recognition, training and events.
- 2** A requirement that Bid Managers must have APMP Foundation accreditation.
- 3** Senior management recognising the value and significance of the bid team's contribution to the business overall.
- 4** A bidding and proposal writing apprenticeship scheme in place.
- 5** Closer integration of the sales and bid team with the bid teams routinely sharing sales commissions.
- 6** Bid Managers automatically following through as Transition Managers on large bids.
- 7** APMP introduction of an additional Public Sector orientated, professional qualification. This should deal with bidding to Public Sector organisations in specific geographies, including effective challenges to procurement documents, process outcomes and decisions.
- 8** Sales Leads writing the draft executive summary for every bid before it is allocated to a bid team.
- 9** Standard (preferably free) collaboration tools for all bid teams.
- 10** Software which could compress 10 pages of answer text into one page without losing any significant meaning or relevance to the question addressed.

IS THIS EVOLUTION OR REVOLUTION WHICH I AM SUGGESTING?



CHLOE DILLON

In the Spotlight

Chloe Dillon is a Work Winning professional specialising in bids and proposals, with 15 years' experience working in Consulting, Legal and Construction firms in the UK and Middle East.

Chloe currently leads a team at PwC in London, focussing on Government & Health Industry Consulting bids. Chloe is also an active advocate for flexible working and gender diversity at senior positions in the Work Winning industry.

With such a track record of success, we couldn't resist putting her 'in the spotlight' to find out more...

GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT IN BUSINESS?

Getting to a stage in my career where other people seek me out for advice. I am always humbled by this and it gives me a sense of purpose when I know I can help others. And of course, being asked to do this interview!

GREATEST DEFEAT IN BUSINESS?

I can't give you specifics, but it was probably the best pursuit from start to finish that I have ever been part of. One of those where the whole team is 100% engaged, invested and aligned to the same purpose. We had time, we had the relationships and we had the knowledge. All the stars were aligned. Nothing more could have been done, but we lost to an underhand competitor. It's those ones that make you reconsider your whole profession.

GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT PERSONALLY?

I couldn't speak till I was six and went to a special school with one-to-one help. When I started to speak and went to mainstream school I was pretty much dismissed at the bottom of everything academically and given up on. When I meet people from primary or early secondary school years and tell them what I do and see the astonishment on their faces, it makes me realise I'm living my greatest achievement every day.

BIGGEST PET PEEVE?

Lateness. Without a doubt. I actually don't understand it.

GUILTY PLEASURE?

Driving really fast.

DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN 3 WORDS.

Outgoing, chatty and honest.

IF YOU COULD TRADE LIVES WITH ANYONE FOR A DAY WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Does it need to be a human?! My dog. He is so happy all the time, gets to eat, sleep and run around the garden to his heart's content all day every day. Sounds pretty perfect to me.

WORST THING ANYONE HAS EVER SAID TO YOU?

Wow there are so many! You become fairly resilient in this profession. Sometimes actions speak louder than words, I have been dismissed from a room by a wave of a hand. That was pretty bad.

BEST THING ANYONE EVER SAID TO YOU?

"During the last 20+years of my career, I have never been this happy in a role and that's because of you".

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR 18 YEAR OLD SELF?

Worry less about what people think of you, be kind and it will show through.

WHO DO YOU MOST ADMIRE? (NO CHEESE, NO FAMILY)

I don't have a specific person. I look up to powerful female leaders. Women who stick their heads above the cloud and are passionate about what they believe in, even if it makes them unpopular. I always tend to really like people that others find super difficult and annoying.



CHLOE DILLON

In the Spotlight

WHAT PROFESSION WOULD YOU LIKE TO ATTEMPT OTHER THAN YOURS?

Professional golfer, loads of money and being outside all the time.

WHAT PROFESSION WOULD YOU LEAST LIKE TO ATTEMPT OTHER THAN YOURS?

Working on an IT helpdesk. People only ring you when they are angry, stressed and have a problem. No one ever speaks to someone in IT when they are in a good mood.

WHAT QUESTIONS ARE YOU ASKING YOURSELF LATELY?

How can we digitalise and reinvent the Pursuit process? What technology can we use and how do we sell this to our clients? How do I reward my team further?

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WOULD LIKE TO DO BETTER?

Relax and switch off. I find this incredibly hard, but I am also aware that when I do manage to do it, I have a much better perspective on things afterwards.

WHAT TYPES OF HOBBIES DO YOU ENJOY OUTSIDE OF WORK?

Anything outside, activity related. I used to be a keen golfer but a family put an end to that. I have just started doing my local Parkrun with my 11-year-old son which I am loving.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHERS?

"We aren't doctors, if it doesn't happen, no one is going to die". I have told this to countless people over the years and often have to remind myself as well. This links to my point about keeping things in perspective.



PETER MCPARTLAND

Reviews are a fundamental part of the bid response process and at the heart of them is the delivery of feedback. I've been increasingly intrigued by how approaches to feedback in these review stages can be evolved so that it has the most positive impact.

The reality is, providing feedback and receiving feedback require particular skills and a specific mindset, which many people underestimate the importance of.

Feedback at response development reviews, as an internal way to provide helpful information or share perspective, is vital to drive continuous improvement. Despite this, for an activity that is so important to successful bidding, there appears to be little attention paid by our profession to strengthening our leadership skills in this area.

Review stages represent a key stage with potential to demotivate if thought is not applied to who is involved, the objective and how it is delivered.

Review feedback can potentially be immensely constructive for those involved and is crucial in building trust, boosting confidence, applying focus and fostering learning. It is wise to remember however, that the way in which this is delivered can have more impact than the feedback itself.

Yes, we can ensure people are clear about what is expected through the development of agreed writing plans. But it is important to support the reviewers and safeguard writers by keeping reviews structured, focused and filtered.

Inviting people to review and provide feedback is a simple activity that comes with little resistance. Inevitably, our involvement as bid leaders is often focused on ensuring timeframes are met and post review action plans are agreed. Too often, we take for granted that both the reviewer and the writer, or presenter, are adept at ensuring this serves as a positive platform. Things to consider include:

- Have we assessed the relationship of those involved prior to inviting the reviewer?
- Is the reviewer clear about the motive for providing feedback, the outcomes it is intended to achieve and the circumstances the bid team face following the review?
- Are the reviewer and writer clear about why they have both been chosen?
- Have a number of people been asked to review and feedback on the same piece of work?
- Have we thought about when and how the feedback is to be provided?

The ideal we are working towards is for writer and reviewer to buy-in to a common goal. For example, would encouraging a one-to-one session before the review build mutual respect between both and help refine expectations. Would it be prudent to ask one reviewer to coordinate thoughts from different reviewers so as to avoid mixed messages?

Providing support to both parties on how to deliver and receive feedback is often overlooked. For example, encourage the reviewer to share:

Evolving our approach to feedback and reviews

RETAIN - What did they see as positive that they were hoping to see?

REMOVE - What did they see that they felt was unnecessary?

RECOMMEND - What didn't they see that were hoping to see?

RESIST - What didn't they see and don't want to see?

Receiving feedback on our work, with dignity, comes naturally to very few people. Providing support to prepare recipients for the review will help control defensiveness and aid the reviewer to deliver what is often an awkward responsibility.

This is important, because being able to take on board what essentially are interpretations and suggestions, requires an accepting mind, concentration and excellent listening. Key to this is controlling emotions.

As bid leaders, our roles are increasingly evolving to areas where the role is that of coach. Review feedback is an area where we can help others deliver and receive a message in such a way that everyone leaves the review committed to investing further because they know you care about them and the team.

As ever, it is our duty to ensure that the next time writers, presenters or reviewers are co-opted to a bid team, their experience of previous bids means they approach it with genuine enthusiasm, confidence and commitment.



The process of selecting and hiring bid professionals is changing, both in how organisations are attracting candidates, and the selection process itself. The last 5 years have seen significant developments in this regard.

The recruitment market for bid professionals is more competitive than ever and as such, hiring organisations are having to sell themselves just as much as candidates are. This makes sense, after all it is an 'inter' view; so it should be reciprocal. Flexible working is a great example of this. Organisations that offer flexible working arrangements can attract the best talent in the market and we appear to be moving away from the traditional 5-day week in the office. When you are not limited by office location, you can widen the net significantly to ensure you hire based on skills, rather than who is available locally.

We see an increasing number of in-house teams taking control of the recruitment process. The rise of LinkedIn over the past 5 years means that anyone can now reach a global audience of professionals within specialist markets. It has become one of the most powerful recruitment tools available. The only danger is developing an over-reliance on it and hoping someone will see your advert and apply. I believe that when recruiting you need someone proactively managing the process that understands what you are looking for, otherwise you are relying on hope as your main strategy.

The interview process is evolving too. There is a growing acknowledgement that spending too long on interviews (7 stage interview processes in some instances) will cause you to miss out on candidates to quicker decision-makers. We have seen the flip side too, where candidates are hired after 1 stage, but this is also not without risk.

Assessments and online testing are becoming more prevalent within interviews. This can take the form of executive summary re-writes, personality and behavioural assessments, proofreading exercises or presentations. I personally believe there is a lot of merit in this kind of testing, so long as it is relevant to the role that is being recruited. For instance, it still feels like there is a shortage of quality bid writers, despite the increased numbers within the profession. We've seen a large number of experienced bid professionals fail simple proofreading tests at interviews, which for a profession that relies on selling through a written document, is of great concern.

I believe that the development of an industry-wide bid writing qualification would therefore be greatly welcomed. At present it is possible to undertake a 1 or 2 day course to polish your skills, however a full qualification that is recognised by the Department for Education would hold far greater weight. As it stands, University degrees are often listed as a requirement on job adverts but are rarely an essential criterion. A formal bid writing qualification would change this and would offer a real differentiator for candidate applications.

In my opinion, as the bid profession evolves, the hiring process needs to keep evolving too. For example, for a position that requires virtual management of a team, is there still a need to meet face to face, or do you need to assess their ability to engage 'virtually' more than their 'face to face' skills? Tailoring your hiring process to your specific role, rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach, will produce better results and ensure you secure the best fit for your organisation.



**NATURAL SELECTION, AS WE SHALL
HEREAFTER SEE, IS A POWER INCESSANTLY
READY FOR ACTION.**

Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species

If our profession is to evolve in 2019, then will it be something we instigate or something forced upon us by circumstance? Natural selection is, after all, brutally cruel. It's born of conditions that test the resilience and adaptability of a species. The strong live; the weak die. How then do we account for things that should have died out long ago? Like the salesperson who thinks that 'USP' is some sort of plug socket on a computer, or the procurement manager who thinks that 24 hours is an acceptable turnaround time for an RFP response, or the bid manager who thinks that late-night pizza is an acceptable excuse for poor planning? They exist because we tolerate them – placing them into a safari park of bidding freak-shows where they roar and we smile uncomfortably while holding a bag of peanuts.

I propose that the best way for our profession to evolve is for us to ruthlessly exploit opportunities that arise in our working environment. The biggest one that I see right now? It's huge. An opportunity that could finally end the 'us and them' conflict between Bidders and Sales.

Think for a moment about your relationships with sales colleagues. Are you the honest broker, protecting your company's reputational and commercial assets while Sales seeks to 'trash' the deal by accepting unprofitable or excessively risky terms? Do you have to tolerate lazy, clueless, good-

for-nothing salespeople who are obsessed with their commission and blind to the efforts made by your wonderful, diligent, hard-working, super-skilled, passionate and professional bid team? Beware the clichés. Put yourself in their position. What's causing their behaviour? How could you help them and, in doing so, help yourself?

A different lens provides a different perspective, especially when you have more information upon which to base your stance. For example (and here's the big opportunity for us) do you know that there's a crisis happening globally regarding the training, development and provision of skilled salespeople? Sales consulting firm Miller Heiman published a paper about it this year, citing increasing market competitiveness (and thus pressure to sell) as the reason why new salespeople don't get enough time to learn, practise and master their skills. This increases the demands placed upon more experienced and capable salespeople, who are expected to fill the gaps. So, it's pressured at the bottom and even more so at the top.

The opportunity for us? Through better teamwork and by redefining our roles, we could let Sales focus on lead generation and relationship building while we take responsibility for capturing opportunities. They'd have more time to master a reduced skillset while we could crack on with winning the deal. Sure, we might need to learn new skills, but we'd be growing into the void and seizing the opportunity. It would potentially lead to the biggest win-win situation in the history of bidding.

Capture the opportunity, for our evolution.





Requests for Proposals (RFPs) have become increasingly “buyer-led” meaning that the solution and requirements are dictated by the buyer, for easy cost-comparison. Such a rigid purchasing approach should make things simple and easy to get a good product or service at the best price. Instead, it can lead to suppliers being too restricted to demonstrate the value that they can add, and therefore not lead to the best solution being procured.

So how about evolution in 2019 and for the next ten years?



Evolution for me relates to allowing RFPs to become “seller-led” and for the industry to learn from what has worked well and what would have been ‘even better if...’ in the past. Being “seller-led” is not about allowing exorbitant amounts to be charged and for buyers to be tricked, far from it. It is about the buyer communicating (via open and collaborative workshops) the problem or need to the marketplace. Sellers can then propose innovative solutions, maybe even by a presentational/pitch process akin to Dragon’s Den. In this modern age of digital communication, start-ups and tech-enabled solutions there are increasing counts of suppliers who can provide solutions to problems and needs that buyers have but who may have no idea where to start.

This evolution would need to start with a buying organisation. Whether a product or a service is sought, they would need to articulate what they would like in summary. It could be the operations department of the organisation that defines this. If there is little clarity of what is required then they could simply explain the problem. It could go into a briefing document that invites suppliers to respond with their concepts for delivery or problem-solving. All responses could be screened by those defining the original requirement/problem and a shortlist of suppliers would be invited-in to present – as mentioned earlier, in a Dragon’s Den format perhaps. After that a more conventional RFP process could be adopted and cost estimation and pricing could commence.

To evolve away from being buyer-led and moving more towards being seller-led could enable all parties to communicate effectively and thereby realise cost efficiencies and finding the best fit between supply and demand.



Johnny 5 said, "More input! More input!"

Procurement teams are turning increasingly to transparent, real-time, digital data to make the exercise of procuring suppliers more efficient and cost-effective. Automated supplier performance monitoring, for example, relies on data about the supply chain's work for the procuring supplier and others. The trend is for the use of data to show how value is added from a strategic perspective. The shift is towards evaluating procurement using measures linked to strategy and financial metrics.

Similarly, in bids, we have to convey measurable benefits by showing how the bid adds value to the buyer in terms of operations, human capital, service delivery and logistics, among other disciplines.

The bid profession will remain an evolving one in the year ahead. How will data play a role in helping bidders to be better positioned to show clients how value will be added?

The following are examples of bid initiatives that use data. These have arisen in my conversations with the bid community in recent months.

Will these make a difference to your bidding in 2019?

- Developing **knowledge management systems** to retrieve critical bid information, e.g. coded examples of project activities to identify evidence examples. Gathering evidence remains a challenge for many bidders, often because past projects do not, at face value, reflect buyers' exact requirements. By coding types of activity – e.g. resolving local stakeholders' concerns – the bid team can rapidly interrogate past projects for evidence of experience that demonstrates the ability to add value. For the stakeholders' example, sub-codes could be used for, say: stakeholders' concerns about construction traffic; traffic near schools; and effective collaboration with school staff, a supplier competence sought by the client of, say, an infrastructure project near schools.
- **Better bid management**, e.g. by analysing past bid performance and lessons learned, an important step in the bid lifecycle. The data will probably be qualitative, with topics including bid team structure, involvement of sales staff, response planning, and gateway reviews. The objective is to improve the process of bidding to help keep focus on how value will be created for the client.

- Using measurable **data to record the benefits of health interventions**, e.g. anonymous data on staff performance (sick days, performance review scores, etc.) following participation in mental health programmes. Buyers are placing increasing importance on mental health in their own and suppliers' workforces. Measuring this phenomenon in the workplace is becoming a greater requirement as part of learning how to improve workforce wellbeing.
- There is much talk of **technology in bids** – e.g. drones, 3D printing, and visualisation – which can provide powerful tools for demonstrating value to clients. Data is shown visually in ways that relate to clients' operations, demonstrating value-adding benefits via simulated user experiences.

How will your bids demonstrate value to your clients' value chains in 2019?



ABOUT OUR EXPERTS



JON WILLIAMS

Proposal Management & APMP Training Expert

Jon and his team work with clients worldwide to help them establish winning proposal capabilities and to capture major deals. He has built and led numerous bid and proposal centres; managed, reviewed and benchmarked countless proposals; worked in over thirty countries, and trained many thousands of course participants.



ROB STEWART

Robert is an experienced business psychologist, psychotherapist and coach with over 10 years' experience in the field of psychology. He possesses a vision to help individuals and businesses grow, achieve their goals, and realise their full potential through developing their Human Capital.



MARTIN SMITH

Managing Director, Bid Solutions

Martin is passionate about helping clients win new business. With increasingly savvy procurement professionals, more competition and new technology changing the way we bid, it is his job as Managing Director to ensure we offer you market leading people, tools, training and solutions to help you win more business.



ANDREW HAIGH

Public Sector Bidding Expert

Andrew is an expert in bidding and tendering, specialising in competitive formal bids into EU Public Sector organisations. Andy is an authority on EU procurement legislation and can bring all these capabilities together to initiate and drive major complex bids through to a successful completion.



CHLOE DILLON

Chloe is a Work Winning professional specialising in bids and proposals, with 15 years' experience working in Consulting, Legal and Construction firms in the UK and Middle East. Chloe currently leads a team at PwC in London, focussing on Government & Health Industries Consulting bids.



PETER MCPARTLAND

Bid Team Leadership & Innovation

Peter is recognised for his strengths in bid team leadership, innovation and performance improvement. One of the first law firm employees to achieve the APMP Certified Professional qualification, Peter is also a winner of an APMP UK national award for Innovation.



BEN HANNON

Recruitment Expert

Ben is responsible for consistently providing long-term success for our clients in an increasingly competitive market. He understands the culture and winning mentality that ensures we stand out from the crowd.



NIGEL HUDSON

Professional Development Expert

Nigel is passionate about professional development. He designed and delivered the APMP award-winning Bid Academy for Vodafone and co-authored Europe's leading proposal syllabus with Strategic Proposals. He's trained more than 4,000 people worldwide.



PETER BRYANS

Costing & Pricing Expert

Specialising in strategic cost modelling, estimating and pricing, Peter's 15 year career has seen him at Network Rail, Arup and Detica (now BAE Systems Applied Intelligence) and most recently in senior cost estimating and pricing roles at Aegis and Thales.



HOLGER GARDEN

Construction Expert & Professional Coach

Holger is a bid manager and writer, and a personal / team performance coach. He spends most of his time supporting construction clients bidding for civil infrastructure and building projects, but his transferable skills have led to his work in the medical, charity and security arenas also. He works with businesses of all sizes to help them win more work.

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