

BQ

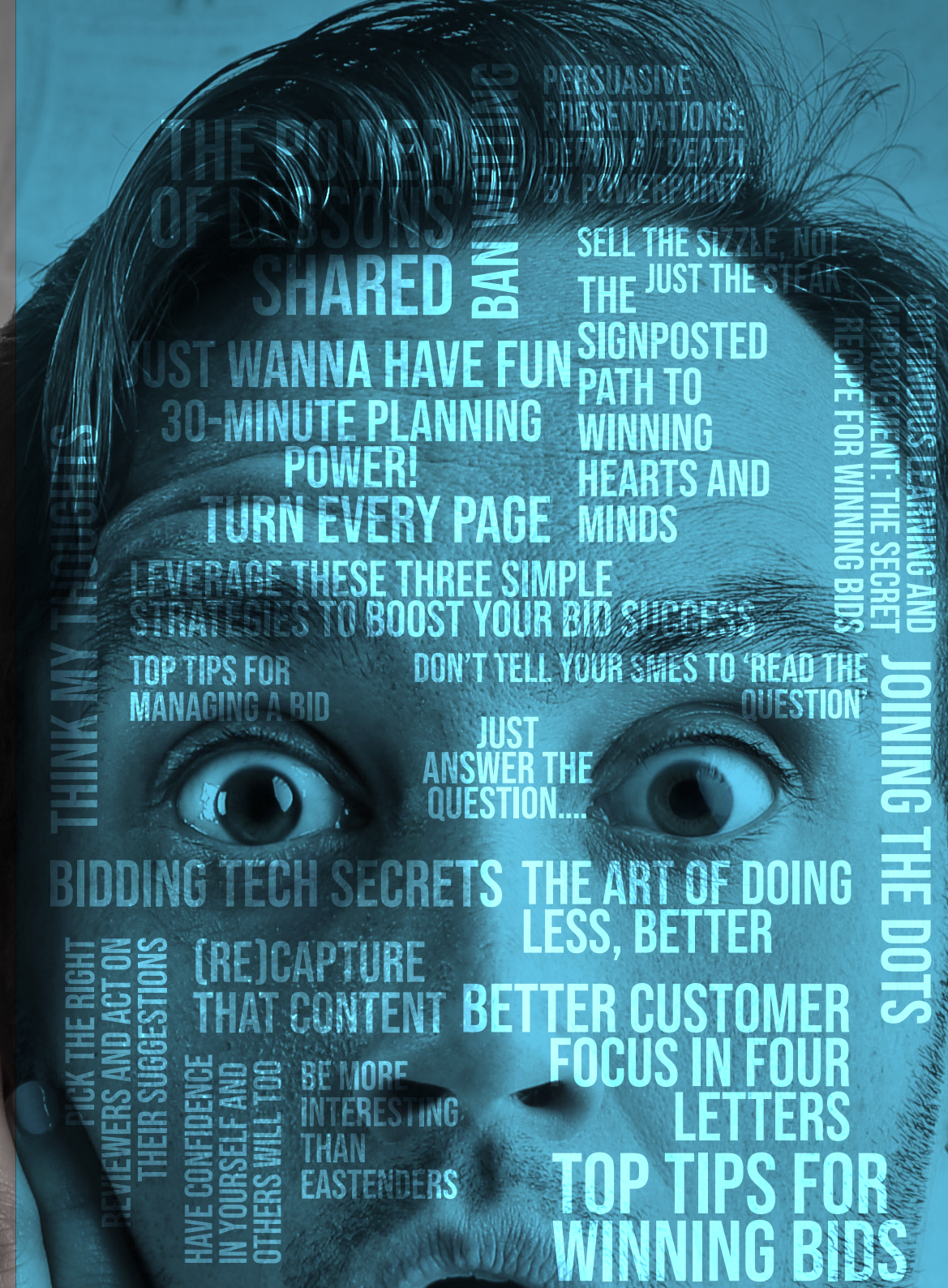
ISSUE NO. 18
MARCH 2024

BIDDING QUARTERLY

SECRETS TO SUCCESS

QUICK WINS IN 2024

Brought to you by



THINK MY THOUGHTS

PICK THE RIGHT REVIEWERS AND ACT ON THEIR SUGGESTIONS

THE POWER OF LESSONS SHARED

JUST WANNA HAVE FUN
30-MINUTE PLANNING
POWER!
TURN EVERY PAGE

LEVERAGE THESE THREE SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO BOOST YOUR BID SUCCESS

TOP TIPS FOR MANAGING A BID

BIDDING TECH SECRETS

(RE)CAPTURE THAT CONTENT

HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS WILL TOO

BE MORE INTERESTING THAN EASTENDERS

BAN WHISTLING

PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS: BY THE DEATH BY POWERPOINT

SELL THE SIZZLE, NOT THE JUST THE STEAK

SIGNPOSTED PATH TO WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS

DON'T TELL YOUR SMES TO 'READ THE QUESTION'

JUST ANSWER THE QUESTION....

THE ART OF DOING LESS, BETTER

BETTER CUSTOMER FOCUS IN FOUR LETTERS

TOP TIPS FOR WINNING BIDS

CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT: THE SECRET RECIPE FOR WINNING BIDS

JOINING THE DOTS

CONTENTS

Martin Smith	FOREWORD	Kate Cummins	TOP TIPS FOR MANAGING A BID
Pippa Birch	TURN EVERY PAGE	Peter Lobl	DON'T TELL YOUR SMES TO 'READ THE QUESTION'
Dr Nigel Hudson	JUST WANNA HAVE FUN	Ceri Mescall	PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS: DEFYING "DEATH BY POWERPOINT"
Charlotte Rees	HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS WILL TOO	Lorraine Baird	30-MINUTE PLANNING POWER!
Sarah Hinchliffe	BAN WRITING	Isabella Stevenson	THE SIGNPOSTED PATH TO WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS
Jon Williams	THE POWER OF LESSONS SHARED	Kathryn Potter	(RE)CAPTURE THAT CONTENT
Chris Whyatt	THINK MY THOUGHTS	Nigel Dennis	BETTER CUSTOMER FOCUS IN FOUR LETTERS
Javier Escartin	BIDDING TECH SECRETS	Chris Kälin	LEVERAGE THESE THREE SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO BOOST YOUR BID SUCCESS
Tony Birch	PICK THE RIGHT REVIEWERS AND ACT ON THEIR SUGGESTIONS	Larissa Cornelius	SELL THE SIZZLE, NOT JUST THE STEAK
Rita Mascia	CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT: THE SECRET RECIPE FOR WINNING BIDS	Mike Reader	BE MORE INTERESTING THAN EASTENDERS
Tricia Blatherwick	TOP TIPS FOR WINNING BIDS	Jeremy Brim	JOINING THE DOTS
Darrell Woodward	THE ART OF DOING LESS, BETTER	Karen Croshaw	JUST ANSWER THE QUESTION...



MARTIN SMITH

HOW DO YOU GET MY ATTENTION? HOW DO YOU KEEP IT? HOW DO YOU GET ME TO ENGAGE? I RECEIVE UP TO 20 COLD CALLS/SALES EMAILS/LINKEDIN SALES MESSAGES PER DAY.



ARE YOU IN THE 1% OF OUR PROFESSION WHO MADE YOUR CV PERSONAL? DID YOU FULLY DECONSTRUCT THE CLIENT'S JOB DESCRIPTION AND IDEAL CANDIDATE PROFILE?

PERSONALISATION IS KEY TO CV SUCCESS

I skim read and delete 99% of these. The 1% which pique my interest do so because the sender has genuinely tried to understand my needs, my business or an issue I might be dealing with. Going to the effort of making it personal ensures a response (and a polite decline if I don't want what they're selling).

We talk about personalisation all the time with our bids and proposals. We highlight the importance of producing an executive summary and proposal that is absolutely laser focussed on addressing our client's needs. But when it comes to addressing your own needs – your career for instance – are you really going the extra mile to personalise your approach to your target employer?

Think of the last time you saw a job advert that really caught your eye. After the initial excitement comes the application

process. Did you simply add your latest job to your CV, update some dates, drag in half of your current job description, hoping your target client would decipher just how good you were for the role?

Or are you in the 1% of our profession who made your CV personal? Did you fully deconstruct the client's job description and ideal candidate profile? Did you identify which of your skills, experiences and achievements specifically align? Did you re-write the content in your potential new employer's language, in a way that makes sense to them and plays to their business goals?

More importantly, did you provide evidence? Did you remove irrelevant content which adds absolutely no value? Did you categorically state why you want the role, and why you should be the preferred candidate? Your CV must articulate

a clear value proposition of 'why you'; if it doesn't, don't be disappointed if you fail to receive constructive feedback about why it wasn't.

I've seen far too many people miss out on brilliant jobs because they assume it's the employer's job to make sense of their CV. Remember, a CV shouldn't be about 'what I can do'. It should absolutely be about 'what I can do for you'.

BQ18 is absolutely loaded with more quick wins and secrets to success. With 24 brilliant articles and four fabulous Win in 60 Seconds videos, our panel of experts have once again generously shared their wisdom and experience to help you develop industry leading knowledge and skills and, ultimately, win more often.

TURN EVERY PAGE

MANY MOONS AGO, WHEN I WAS NEW TO BIDDING, A MUCH OLDER AND WISER PERSON TOLD ME TO “TURN EVERY PAGE”. IT’S A HABIT I HAVE HAD FOR OVER TWO DECADES.



PIPPA BIRCH

OK, SO WE DON'T HAVE TO PRINT OUT AND PHYSICALLY TURN THE PAGE THESE DAYS. PERSONALLY, I DO PRINT OUT DOCUMENTS AND GO THROUGH THEM OLD SCHOOL WITH MY HIGHLIGHTER BEFORE STARTING.

We are in an era where we want to do everything faster, quicker, now; and when there are multiple bids on the go, this can seem counter-intuitive. Easier just to read the bits that are important, right? Or let the AI do it. The ITT should be enough to learn about what is being evaluated – what more do we need to know? But this is how you fall into the procurer's trap.

THEY HIDE STUFF.

Whether on purpose or not, procurers hide important bits of information that can trip us up.

They WANT us to fail to make their jobs easier. “Ooh Terry, they've not mentioned xxxx, I'm going to knock some points off.” The easiest way to whittle down bidders.

There might be a line in the pricing return that would be a good thing to mention in our methodology. Or it might be something we have to ask about. The contract might state an activity that you can't physically deliver. The scope might give you a great idea for some added value, or you may find something important that you didn't know, like they want a dedicated social value manager. If you're in

construction, the drawings can tell you a thousand things. Like the fact that the works could block a school delivery entrance, or there are more drainage items than they've mentioned in the pricing schedule.

And yes, you may be thinking, I've done my comprehensive capture process, I have a relationship with this client and we have been talking to them for years – I KNOW what they want. But don't forget, to be compliant, we have to do what is asked for in the tender documents, and this could differ from what Henry in the buyers' department has been banging on about for the last two years.

OK, so we don't have to print out and physically turn the page these days. Personally, I do print out documents and go through them old school with my highlighter before starting. Mainly to give me a break from the screen and allow me to concentrate without things pinging at me while I'm reading. But you don't have to. The highlight function on a PDF, or scribbling and circling with your electronic pen on your tablet are just as good. But please, digest the information on each page. Don't get caught out.

TURN. EVERY. PAGE.

Dedicating this article to the legendary Frank Midwinter, as he was the originator of this tip.



DR NIGEL HUDSON

JUST WANNA

RECORD THE FUN LEVEL THAT YOU EXPERIENCED EACH WEEK (0 FOR MISERY, 5 FOR ELATION), WHY YOU SCORED IT SO, AND WHAT YOU WILL DO TO IMPROVE IT.

IF YOU'RE HAVING FUN, YOU'RE GETTING THINGS RIGHT. IF YOU'RE NOT, SOMETHING'S WRONG.

HAVE FUN

MY NUMBER ONE SUCCESS FACTOR IN BIDDING? HAVE FUN. IF YOU'RE NOT HAVING FUN, SOMETHING'S WRONG.

In an average 25-year career, a nine-to-five will work more than 40,000 hours. Many bidders will work twice that. It's a huge chunk of one's life; a long time not to be having fun.

Of course, 'fun' has a measurable scale. It begins with a tiny smile and the quiet satisfaction that comes from doing a job well; it ends with the heart-fluttering elation of knowing that you and your team are absolutely 'smashing it'.

So, when was the last time you enjoyed your work so much that you could barely wait to get started again the next day? What was the fun element that caused this feeling? I bet it had something to do with the 'how' you were working rather than 'what' you were doing. Most likely you were playing to your strengths, working with others who were playing to theirs, supporting one another and doing it in a way where you could see yourself and others fly high on success. That's the ticket to the fun factory.

If people think that fun requires us not to take our work seriously, ask them for their definition of fun. At a personal level, fun is likely to be driven by how we feel. At a team level, it's through camaraderie and collective success. At a corporate level, it's by winning good business and delivering it well. When the definitions of fun align, the magic happens.

Discuss fun when you review your annual objectives and performance, your team charters, and governance process. Put it at the heart of what you do. Record the fun level that you experienced each week (0 for misery, 5 for elation), why you scored it so, and what you will do to improve it. Plot this over time, so you can track the upward trend and correct things if the trend dips. See how it compares with others, benchmark it and use it as a conversation starter. "How are things? Are you having fun? How do we have more fun?"

If you're having fun, you're getting things right. If you're not, something's wrong.

HAVE FUN.

MANY OF US HAVE DEALT WITH IMPOSTER SYNDROME (LOOSELY DEFINED AS DOUBTING YOUR ABILITIES AND FEELING LIKE A FRAUD), BUT IN MY EXPERIENCE HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN SETTING YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS.

SELF-BELIEF CAN BE DIFFICULT, BUT WHEN YOU START BELIEVING IN YOURSELF, OTHERS WILL START BELIEVING IN YOU TOO. AND BY HAVING SELF-CONFIDENCE, WITHOUT EVEN REALISING YOU'LL PORTRAY YOURSELF IN A WAY THAT APPEARS MORE CONFIDENT, SKILLED AND TRUSTING.



CHARLOTTE REES

HOW CAN YOU 'BECOME MORE CONFIDENT' IN OUR PROFESSION?

Of course there are a number of elements such as learning best practice and gaining experience. But there's an extra piece of advice I'd like to share when it comes to confidence – sometimes you have to 'fake it 'til you make it'!

There will always be times where you don't feel as confident as you'd like to, whether that's through nerves or uncertainty, or just a lack of self-belief. Having confidence in your own ideas is crucial to overcoming imposter syndrome. Your ideas and suggestions are always valid and significant.

It's also important to consider the actions you can take to make yourself feel confident.

Maybe it's being fully prepared with a backup agenda before heading into a meeting. Perhaps it's wearing a 'power suit' that you always feel your best self in. Or maybe it's talking to a friend who has the ability to hype you up before an important presentation (one of my personal favourites!).

HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS WILL TOO

Whatever it is – make the time to give yourself the confidence boost you need when you need it.

Finally, something I've been saying for years... remember you are here to be the bidding expert! No matter who you're working with, your purpose is to be the expert when it comes to bids and proposals. You don't need to be a technical solutions expert, a fee earner, a sales manager or a health and safety specialist.

Your expertise lies in using your skillset to get the most out of the teams you work with and leaning on the skillsets of those around you to develop the best, client-focused bid/

proposal/pitch possible. Position yourself how you want to be seen by the team, with full confidence.

Self-belief can be difficult, but when you start believing in yourself, others will start believing in you too. And by having self-confidence, you'll portray yourself in a way that appears more confident, skilled and trusting without even realising it.

IN SUMMARY: HAVE SELF-BELIEF, GIVE YOURSELF EXTRA CONFIDENCE BOOSTS WHEN YOU NEED THEM, AND REMEMBER YOU'RE THE BIDDING EXPERT!

**NO, I HAVEN'T COMPLETELY LOST THE PLOT!
IT'S JUST THAT I SPEND MORE TIME IN MY
PROFESSIONAL BID ROLE TELLING PEOPLE TO STOP
WRITING THAN I SPEND TELLING THEM TO WRITE.**

The first thing I do with a new bid team (my regulars are well-schooled) is ban writing until we are 15%-20% of the way through the response timeline and only then when I give the go-ahead.

Such a counter-intuitive instruction at the start often surprises people, but it's incredible how it makes them sit up and listen. And I don't mind if they think I've lost the plot – they soon realise I haven't when I explain the rationale. With encouragement and reassurance, even the sceptics generally get on board.

By banning writing, everyone can focus on pre-kick off preparation. When you consider that preparation includes validating the win strategy, creating the proposal strategy, analysing the tender documents, building a plan, allocating resources, designing the response structure and designing content plans, it's simple to see why writing isn't top of the agenda.

Even after kick-off, I keep the writing ban in place until content plans are complete and reviewed. Although it's often tough to convince people to plan content, it's an invaluable activity.

BAN WRITING

EVEN AFTER KICK-OFF, I KEEP THE WRITING BAN IN PLACE UNTIL CONTENT PLANS ARE COMPLETE AND REVIEWED

BY BANNING WRITING, EVERYONE CAN FOCUS ON PRE-KICK-OFF PREPARATION

**SARAH
HINCHLIFFE**



I can't count the number of times I've done a final document review only to find the right words in the wrong order (the 'Morecambe and Wise moment' for those old enough to remember the André Previn sketch). Getting the structure right and agreeing on the key content points helps the author get the right words in the right order the first time. It also helps achieve consistency and coherence between responses and sections. I tend to use the analogy of decorating – if you sand, clean, fill, smooth, get the right tools, brushes and so on, the painting will take less time, last longer and be of higher quality than if you just slap the paint on without the preparation. So, regardless of whether you've got days, weeks or months to respond, never be afraid to ban writing – it's a quick win.



Play here

THE POWER OF LESSONS SHARED

THE SECRETS TO BIDDING SUCCESS? CELEBRATING AND IMPROVING.

I asked participants on a recent course whether they'd run a learning review on their last bid. None had. I asked why - and was relieved to hear: "Time". At least it wasn't that the team couldn't face talking to one another...

So, win or lose. In the past, we ran post-mortems or inquests. Someone I trained recently had just been invited to a "bid witch-hunt". I'm just as (perhaps more) interested in why we won.

Two simple questions to your team:

- **What did we do well - that we should do again on similar bids?**
- **Perhaps with the benefit of hindsight, what should we do differently on deals like this in future?**

We have a 100-question lessons learned checklist, of course, but those two simple questions unlock so much value so quickly. You could even pose them over SurveyMonkey or Google Docs.

And then: be absolutely committed to gathering client feedback. Don't be afraid to ask for a debrief, even if it's not offered: it's in their interests that their vendors send them better proposals next time.

When you get in front of them: shut up! Listen to what they want to reveal. And then ask simple, powerful questions: how did our solution/pricing/team/proposal/presentation compare to other bidders?

And the final leg of the lessons learned process: "win/loss" audits. Systematically, away from the heat of the battle, interviewing the team to really get under the skin of what went on - and spotting trends.

Then: this all needs to lead to sharing ideas - and to action. A commercial manager in Romania once memorably told me: "For us, it's more a case of lessons logged than lessons learned." Celebrate success and hard work. And refine your aim, to win more, more easily.



JON WILLIAMS

WHAT DID WE DO WELL - THAT WE SHOULD DO AGAIN ON SIMILAR BIDS?

PERHAPS WITH THE BENEFIT OF HINDSIGHT, WHAT SHOULD WE DO DIFFERENTLY ON DEALS LIKE THIS IN FUTURE?

SIMPLE, POWERFUL QUESTIONS: HOW DID OUR SOLUTION/PRICING/TEAM/PROPOSAL/PRESENTATION COMPARE TO OTHER BIDDERS?

CELEBRATE SUCCESS AND HARD WORK. AND REFINE YOUR AIM, TO WIN MORE, MORE EASILY.

THINK MY THOUGHTS



CHRIS WHYATT

I'VE ALWAYS LOVED AND APPLIED THIS CICERO QUOTE: "IF YOU WANT TO PERSUADE ME, YOU MUST THINK MY THOUGHTS, FEEL MY FEELINGS AND SPEAK MY WORDS." IF I COULD ASK THE PEOPLE WHO CREATE ALL THE RFPS AND ITTS WE RECEIVE IF THEY AGREED WITH CICERO, I'M SURE THE VAST MAJORITY WOULD SAY YES.

Obviously, we are all in the persuasion business but how many of us understand our potential customers thoughts, feelings, or the language (words) they would use? Not enough is my guess. Obviously, their words (language) are in the documents they send us, so read and analyse them in detail BEFORE creating any proposal content. You should be able to identify words or phrases that are used repeatedly and create win themes and key messages from there.

Cut and paste content will almost certainly fail to persuade as it doesn't reflect any specific customer's words (language). Thoughts and feelings are much tougher to understand and reflect in a proposal if there is no relationship or history with the customer. I've advised a no bid in these situations, but always a 'constructive no bid' as in you tell them you're not bidding and why.

On several occasions this has resulted in an invite to meet the customer – and once (Highways Agency) the result was a win!

Beyond having an actual relationship with the potential customer, there is a mass of information online that will enable you to gain further insights into their thoughts, feelings and words. Company mission statements and values are a good starting point, as are shareholder briefings. A massive win at a major German bank was largely due to one of the team doing a deep dive in the shareholder briefings video and identifying a major barrier that only we could address.

So, my 'quick win' is simple; keep the Cicero quote at the forefront of your thinking when deciding to bid and whilst writing the proposal.

BIDDING TECH SECRETS

EVERY TIME I FACE A NEW
BID TASK, I ASK MYSELF:
COULD I SPEED THIS UP
WITH TECHNOLOGY?



JAVIER ESCARTIN

Indeed, this is the number one reason I still consult as a proposal manager: to discover tech use cases I can then feed into my bidding software business.

So, when BQ asked me to share my quick wins, “using tech” was my first thought. But then, I remembered I only like actionable tips, so here are my top three:

#1 BUILD A PROPOSAL MANAGEMENT PLAN USING A PROJECTS APP TO ENABLE ASYNCHRONOUS WORK.

Email, meetings, and spreadsheets are the most time-wasting tools when used for proposal management and communications.

Instead, I use one of the many project management tools available – the flexible ones that allow you to create whatever structure you want, those that often look like a Kanban board. This allows me to do proper bid management while forcing everyone to work asynchronously, which is already a huge win.

These centralised bid management plans save me 70% of my bid management and communications time. No kidding.

#2 PARSE RFPs INTO MANAGEABLE DATA AUTOMATICALLY

Reading RFPs is about “splitting” them into small pieces of information you can then distribute, manage, and act on.

This “shredding” often involves tedious manual work to build things like compliance matrices, templates, work packages, bid task descriptions, and so on: a necessary step yet a waste of my productive energy.

I have a process to automate this first step, which combines a tool to convert RFPs into a matrix-like analysis (using AI) and an everyday script to automate template building.

This saves me around 12h per proposal. You think about it once and free your time forever. Totally worth it.

#3 DITCH THE TEMPTATION TO WRITE THINGS FROM SCRATCH

It doesn’t matter how poorly written some contributors’ inputs are; I use an AI tool kit designed for bidding to generate the first drafts, perform successive revisions, and all sorts of styling, finishing, and summarising tasks.

This alone is a huge time-saver. I’m developing bids two times faster, for real. But there is more.

Lately, I’m going a step further and making subject matter experts and other contributors iterate on their inputs with that same AI tool kit, so the drafts that get to me are already quite advanced. This trick is a time-saver and a workload-reducer. The final bid content is also better, and technical people own it more.

BONUS POINT THAT WORKS FOR ANY TOOL.

I always learn the shortcuts and hotkeys. It takes 30 minutes, and it pays off forever.

One silly example I realised the other day: many bidding peers don’t know what the combination of “Windows key + V” does. It’s nuts! (FYI: It brings up your Clipboard History, from which you can retrieve the last 25 cut or copied items.)

PICK THE RIGHT REVIEWERS AND ACT ON THEIR SUGGESTIONS



TONY BIRCH

THE TITLE SAYS IT ALL REALLY. THE DATA SHOWS ORGANISATIONS THAT PROPERLY REVIEW THEIR PROPOSALS TEND TO WIN MORE. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT TO PROPERLY REVIEW A PROPOSAL, THE REVIEWERS MUST BE THE RIGHT PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN BRIEFED ON WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM.

How do we put this into practice? Set a date for each review as part of the proposal planning process and ensure the appropriate content is ready on those dates. It is good practice to ask reviewers to review in parallel, comparing their views on improvement suggestions and gaining consensus before providing their feedback to the team.

Invite the right people to be your reviewers. Get their agreement to participate in the review. If there is content about project management, ask an experienced project manager to review that content. If there is a commercial section, ask a person who understands the customer's commercial world to review that content.

Senior people in organisations often invite themselves to reviews because they want to approve material that is being submitted. That is not the purpose of a review. A reviewer should be in the mindset of improving the content, not approving it.



Before the review, give the reviewers an indication of what is expected of them. Brief them on the customer's expectations, the scoring system, your proposal strategies (including planned ghosting of the competition) and any other relevant aspects of the proposal.

At the start of the review remind the reviewers that you are asking for their help, not criticism. It is not a reviewer's responsibility to check grammar or spelling or to decide whether what you have written tells a story. That is your responsibility and

should already have happened before the review. The reviewers should suggest improvements that might result in scoring five out of five instead of a four or a three out of five. Over and above that, they should suggest improvements in the way proposal strategies are implemented.

If you ask a reviewer for suggestions, respect their views. If a reviewer suggests an improvement, make the improvement in the way that they suggest. Get the right person and you will get the right feedback.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING



RITA MASCIA

THE SECRET RECIPE FOR WINNING BIDS

THERE ARE (TOO) MANY FACTORS INVOLVED IN A SUCCESSFUL BID – BUT WHAT ONE THING HAS BEEN A CONSTANT PRESENCE AND ENABLED ME TO WIN MORE OVER THE 24 YEARS OF MY BIDDING CAREER?

Continuous learning and improvement stand out as the secret ingredients that helped me win more bids. My investment in learning and development is the one factor that has paved the way for more wins. In my experience, it empowered me to:

1. Be agile: Our client needs, services, and products are constantly evolving. Continuous learning allowed me to adapt bid strategies to meet changing market demands. Staying informed ensured that bids remained relevant and competitive. The past six months my development has focused on learning everything there is to learn about the Procurement Act 2023. The six months previously I was trying to get my head around how AI is going to affect winning bids. And it goes on...

2. Incorporate best practices: Learning from past experiences and industry best practices is crucial for success. By continuously seeking out and incorporating lessons learned from previous bids, I have refined my approaches and avoided repeating mistakes. This increases the likelihood of success in future bids.

3. Expand my knowledge: Attending APMP conferences and other events, I made new connections, learned about topics I didn't know I should have known and benefited from other bid professionals who shared their knowledge with me.

4. Become a more rounded individual: Finally, when I talk about continuous learning, I am not just talking about bid-specific learning. Understanding myself has been the best investment as a bid professional that I could make.

Knowing my weaknesses and strengths allowed me to work better with colleagues, partners, and clients. Over the years, I've applied learning gained through unrelated fields like neurolinguistic programming, leadership and management, mentoring, negotiations, sign language, martial arts, emotional intelligence, and empathy training. Each of these disciplines provided me with nuggets of brilliance or wisdom I could apply to my day job, helping me win more bids.

By embracing a culture of lifelong learning, we can adapt to changing landscapes, refine bid processes and strategies, and differentiate ourselves from competitors. We need a multitude of skills to win bids, not just bid-related skills. As bid professionals, we are people providing solutions to other people. Embrace the journey to continuous learning or ignore it at your peril.

TOP TIPS FOR WINNING BIDS

ANNOUNCING YOUR WIN BEFORE STARTING TO WRITE CREATES ANTICIPATION AND EXCITEMENT AMONGST STAKEHOLDERS.
MUCH OF WINNING IS MINDSET. CONFIDENCE SHINES THROUGH A GREAT PROPOSAL.
IDENTIFY AND LOCK DOWN YOUR KEY MESSAGES
RESEARCH INFORMS YOUR ENTIRE TENDER

BEFORE YOU START WRITING THE BID, DRAFT THE PRESS RELEASE YOUR CLIENT WILL ISSUE AFTER THEY SELECT YOU AS THE WINNING BIDDER. PRINT IT OUT ON BUSINESS CARD-SIZED 'AIDE MEMOIRES'. CIRCULATE THESE TO YOUR BID WRITERS, SALES TEAM, SENIOR STAKEHOLDERS AND SUPPLY CHAIN PARTNERS.

"Why on earth would I do a strange thing like that?", I hear you say.

This is why:

1. ANNOUNCING YOUR WIN BEFORE STARTING TO WRITE CREATES ANTICIPATION AND EXCITEMENT AMONGST STAKEHOLDERS.

Much of winning is mindset. Confidence shines through a great proposal. A shared understanding of 'Why' you will win among your proposal, sales and commercial teams is a unifying factor – building confidence and ensuring message alignment throughout what is often a lengthy and high-pressure process.

2. PREPARING THE PRESS RELEASE EARLY CLARIFIES KEY MESSAGES AND BENEFITS.

Developing your client's press release ahead of time provides you with an opportunity to identify and lock down your key messages. Press releases are relatively short. No time for waffle. This is your opportunity to simplify, clarify and synthesise your core proposal. It's the answer to the 'Why Us?' question.

3. CRAFTING THIS PRESS RELEASE FORCES YOU TO DEEPLY UNDERSTAND YOUR CLIENT'S NEEDS AND OBJECTIVES, IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR TENDER.

This is not your press release. It's your client's press release. You are drafting it from their perspective. This forces you to consider what is most important to the client and their stakeholders. Do you know how the product/service you are bidding for fits into their wider business strategy? Do you know their senior stakeholder? You are putting yourself into your client's shoes. You need crystal clarity – and that will only happen if you deeply understand your client's drivers for this procurement.

4. IT FORCES YOU TO DO YOUR HOMEWORK.

The research needed to create this press release enhances your understanding of your client's needs, which directly improves your ability to meet those needs. The research doesn't just form the basis of the press release, it informs your entire tender.

Press releases often use certain terminology or language reflecting the client's specific industry or company culture. Incorporating this language into your tender can demonstrate that your company 'speaks the same language' and is more capable of fulfilling the client's needs.

And then, when you do win the bid, it's great fun to compare the press release that your client issues with the one you crafted all those months ago...



TRICIA BLATHERWICK

This article was written by Tricia Blatherwick in collaboration with AutogenAI's General Language Engine 1.

THE ART OF DOING LESS, BETTER

When I was at school, teachers graded us on a dual scale of performance (A to E) and effort (1 to 5). Being naturally competitive, my friends and I compared results but with very different goals. Most pupils and teachers assumed A1 was the highest possible combined grade. I disagreed. A1 indicates the highest possible achievement but also the maximum effort. Surely, thought I, A5 is the optimum grade? Top marks, while being efficient, and redirecting energy to bump my Bs to As.



DARRELL WOODWARD

The truth is: I'm lazy. Not the couch-potato kind – I play squash five times a week – but the “work smarter not harder” kind. Why would I admit that to a community of extremely hard working, midnight oil burning, deadline day adrenaline junky bid professionals? Because I'm lazy in a specific and seemingly paradoxical way. I crave exceptional results while detesting wasted or low-value effort. I call it rigorous laziness.

Rigorous laziness is about finding the shortest, fastest, easiest route to achieve your goals, without sacrificing quality. At its heart, it means understanding the value of work and focusing on the biggest return on investment. The rest is ditched, delegated, or digitised.

How can you achieve rigorous laziness? Here are three quick wins to get you started with the minimum of effort:

1. EMBRACE THE 80/20 RULE

Also known as the Pareto Principle, it's a general guideline that roughly 80% of outcomes come from 20% of causes. Rigorous laziness means focusing on the 20% of activities that deliver value and ruthlessly eliminating the rest. Take meetings: a huge investment of time and resources for relatively little output value. Conversely, going for a walk or even staring out the window can be incredibly productive if it leads to just one great idea.

2. AIM FOR EXCELLENCE, NOT FLAWLESSNESS

Perfectionism can be my biggest productivity killer. Learn to recognise when 'good enough' is good enough. Overthinking and overworking may feel productive but our bid only needs to win the race, not break a world record.

3. AUTOMATE, DELEGATE, AND ELEVATE

The rise of AI heralds a new era for the rigorously lazy. With technology as our ally, we free our minds from the compliance matrix of busywork. We can automate repetitive tasks, delegate the mundane to a digital assistant, and elevate our uniquely human genius for strategic, high-impact thinking.

Remember, rigorous laziness is not about slacking off, but about intelligent application of our time and energy to what really matters. I believe this is long overdue in a profession that's previously idolised overwork. It's time to stop the relentless drive for more human productivity and fight for more humane productivity. It's time to love being lazy.

THE TRUTH IS: I'M LAZY. NOT THE COUCH-POTATO KIND – I PLAY SQUASH FIVE TIMES A WEEK – BUT THE “WORK SMARTER NOT HARDER” KIND.

TOP TIPS FOR MANAGING A BID

I HAVE GAINED EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN BOTH BID MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OVER THE YEARS AND MY FIVE TOP TIPS FOR MANAGING A BID ARE:



1

Know the 20/50/20/10 rule when managing the bid timeline.

- 20% of your time should be dedicated to planning
- 50% should be dedicated to creating and writing the response
- 20% should go to editing, reviewing, seeking approvals and packaging up your bid
- 10% should be contingency time - because it's bidding, and inevitably something could go wrong



2

Identify the bid team early on.

- Know who the opportunity owner is
- Identify the SMEs
- Ensure the SMEs are aware of the bid and have committed to supporting it



3

Create a bid workbook. This is your bid bible. As a bare minimum, it should contain the action plan, stating who is doing what and by when. It can also contain differentiators, win strategy, etc – any information to help you win the bid.



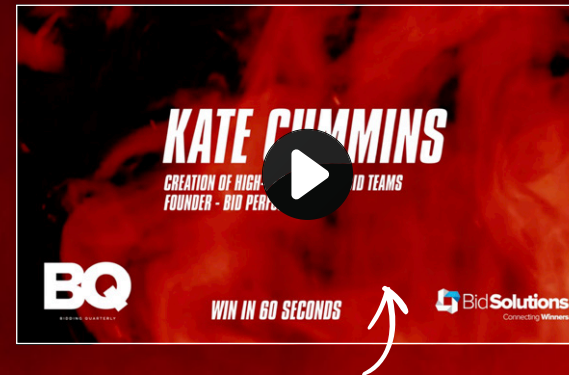
4

Create a regular cadence of calls to review progress and make sure the bid stays on track. This will also help you mitigate any risks before they occur.



5

Ensure there's an effective communications channel established for the bid team. MS Teams is great for this as it enables the bid team to communicate easily and efficiently. MS Teams can also store files (like your bid workbook and your work in progress files) in a central, accessible location.



KATE CUMMINS

Watch Kate's Win in 60 Seconds video here.

I HOPE THIS HELPS YOU WIN MORE OFTEN!

DON'T TELL YOUR SMES TO 'READ THE QUESTION'

PETER LOBL



WHY? BECAUSE THEY WON'T DO IT!

We were told repeatedly to 'read the question' at school. I have always repeated that advice to my Foundation exam students. I even remind myself to do it. And still we get answers wrong because we haven't fully answered the question. In the bids we review, my experience is that some questions go unanswered by the authors on every bid.

In fact, the Senior Procurement officer for Central Government agrees. He once said that the biggest reason that bidders lose marks is that they do not fully answer the questions asked. So, something is going wrong at a fundamental level.

Generally, all SMEs know they have to answer the question. They also know they should read the question in detail. So just reminding them to do it does not change anything. Instead, we need a process that enables it to be done effectively. Bid management needs to ensure the contributors have read the question and must take action where there is missing information in the response.

I think there are three steps to achieve this:

STEP 1

You must deconstruct the question and share the result with your SME. Break the question down into its smallest component parts. For example, 'Describe your approach to the design and build of the core solution and supporting applications' can be broken down into four questions. These could be deconstructed as shown in Fig 1.

STEP 2

Ask the SME to verify that they have addressed every part of the deconstruction by self-checking (Fig 2). In my experience this step alone is not enough. However, it does help get closer to the desired result.

STEP 3

Assign a member of the bid team to act as a verifier. They should review the question purely based on 'Have all parts of the question been fully answered?'

Question 3.2.1		
	Design	Build
Core solution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Applications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Fig. 1 Question Deconstruction. The question is broken down into its smallest constituent parts to aid analysis.

Question 3.2.1		
	Design	Build
Core solution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Applications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Fig. 2 Content Development. The SME self-checks that they have answered all possible parts of the question.

You may well be asking yourself 'What's so special about all that?' And I'd agree with you. It isn't special. It's really simple, but if it is done it makes a massive difference to the bid because you won't lose points for 'not answering the question'.

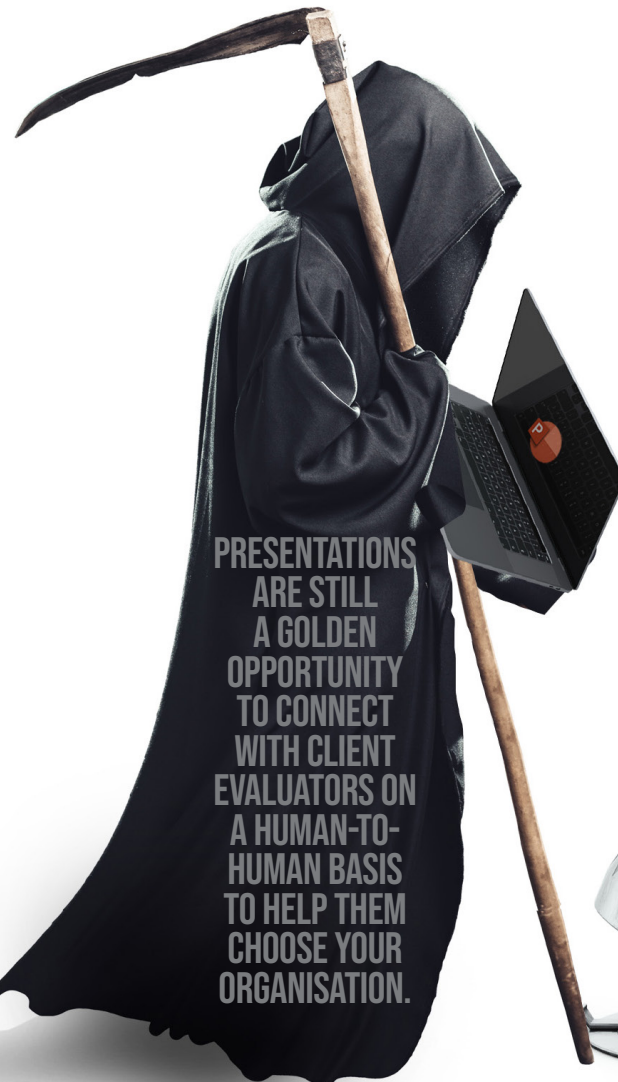
I've been doing this deconstruction and checking process on most bids I've been involved in for several years. This is because it filled a gap in our client's processes. Typically, we found 5% of the questions would have gone unanswered. These clients won over £500m worth of contracts in the last two years. And who knows? Maybe they wouldn't have been so successful if we hadn't fixed those missing questions.

PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS: DEFYING “DEATH BY POWERPOINT”



CERI MESCALL

MY PRO TIP IS...WHEN PREPARING FOR PRESENTATIONS, RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO DEVELOP YOUR SLIDES FIRST – LEAVE THEM UNTIL LATER.



PRESENTATIONS ARE STILL A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH CLIENT EVALUATORS ON A HUMAN-TO-HUMAN BASIS TO HELP THEM CHOOSE YOUR ORGANISATION.

WHY IS THIS PRO TIP IMPORTANT AND WHY NOW?

Bids can be won or lost at presentation.

With the rise of generative AI, it's becoming more challenging to differentiate at proposal stage, especially as some client procurement teams are using AI to evaluate proposals. Presentations are still a golden opportunity to connect with client evaluators on a human-to-human basis to help them choose your organisation.

However, presentation prep is often rushed and under-resourced. Poor presentations re-hash the proposal or are a “Frankenstein’s monster” of slides from past presentations.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO BEFORE DEVELOPING YOUR SLIDES?

- **Establish key parameters:** Ask clarification questions such as “What’s the agenda?”, “Will the presentation be in-person or virtual?”, “Who are the client attendees?”, “What are the evaluation criteria/scoring rubric for the presentation?”, “How much time do we have?”
- **Assemble your team:** Select team members based on the value they will provide to the client at the presentation rather than just seniority level or availability. Agree speakers for each agenda item. Provide team members with the RFP, your proposal, and any other relevant information.
- **Draft your messaging framework:** People buy based on emotion and logic. Align the client’s agenda items with your win themes to construct a compelling story. Establish how you want the client evaluators to feel at each stage of the presentation (e.g., curiosity, trust). Decide what you want them to remember (e.g., proof points and responses to potential objections). Determine what action you want them to take (e.g., contract award recommendation).
- **Prepare individually:** Draft speaker notes (not a full script) and practice. Consider using Microsoft’s Speaker Coach to

evaluate your pacing, pitch and use of filler words, informal speech, euphemisms, and culturally sensitive terms. If the client presentation will be in-person, rehearse in front of a full-length mirror so you can see your stance, posture, and movement.

- **Rehearse as a team:** Run through your content. Give and receive feedback. Work on tricky areas such as transitions/handovers between presenters and how to answer tough questions from client evaluators.

THEN DEVELOP YOUR SLIDES, BUT:

- **Be brief:** A good benchmark is one slide for every three minutes of presentation.
- **Be visual:** The human brain processes images much faster than text. It's difficult for a client evaluator to read text and listen to you present. Opt for diagrams and charts rather than bullet points. If you're feeling uninspired, use a text-to-image AI tool for ideas for graphics.
- **Be inclusive:** Consider aspects like font sizes, colours, headings and alt text.

WHY DOES THIS PRO TIP WORK?

- It increases persuasiveness
- It drives accountability from each speaker
- It minimises re-work



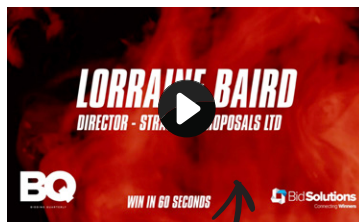
WHY HAVE THEY ASKED THIS QUESTION?

WHAT ARE THEIR REAL UNDERLYING ISSUES AND CONCERNS?



LORRAINE BAIRD

30-MINUTE PLANNING POWER!



Watch Lorraine's Win in 60 Seconds video here.

Even if you have as little as 30 minutes, you can still plan to get better responses more quickly from your subject matter experts.

Time is precious...yet we all love a bit of procrastination don't we? That brilliant Ted Talk about the instant gratification monkey and the panic monster hits it on the head for me – if you've not watched it, it's a must.

Your subject matter experts (SMEs) will procrastinate if you send them off with a blank sheet of paper to provide their responses to an RFP/ITT question. It'll be pushed to the side of the desk and be picked up last minute when the panic monster kicks in. What did you expect? Goodness knows what you'll get back.

How can we get our SMEs to provide proposal content quicker? And how can we improve the quality of what they give us?

Let's not send them off with a blank sheet of paper. Even with just 30 minutes together, you can devise a high-level answer plan.

The key thing initially is to capture bullet points. Don't worry about how anything is written at this stage. This is about making sure you're on the same page with your SME, agreeing on what should be included, and why.

First, discuss these two questions:

1. **Why has the customer asked this question?**
2. **What are their real underlying issues and concerns?**

Answering these questions for the SME will help ensure a shared understanding of the customer's requirements. You can show you know why they've asked the question, the benefits sought, and perhaps risks to avoid in the response. You can consult with other team members to fill any knowledge gaps.

Next, you can discuss building your response:

- Break the answer into subsections in the order of the customer's question. We all know customers tend to include multiple elements in their questions! Ensure each subsection is addressed.
- Capture bullet points for each question that cover the technical content required to answer each part – solution, options you considered, process, approach, etc.
- Add further bullets where appropriate, e.g.,:
 - o Benefits to the customer
 - o Proof points – where have we done this before successfully?
 - o Differentiators
 - o Do we have a graphic that could articulate our message more clearly than words, or can we create one?
 - o Keywords from the specification/criteria to reference
 - o Win theme(s) to be brought to life

Even this short 30-minute session can make a big difference. You'll get better quality content faster, and your SME will find they save time too.

Let's avoid that procrastination!



THE SIGNPOSTED PATH TO WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS



ISABELLA
STEVENSON

EMPATHY BASE POINT

The first step of that path comes from the base point of empathy with the client – listening to their project requirements, understanding their desired outcomes, and partnering with them to deliver their long-term objectives.

THE TWO-WAY STREET

Once the buyers' tender documents have landed, the empathic element should remain. This can be done by asking relevant questions of the tender requirements, e.g., has the client asked a certain question to mitigate a particular concern or risk for themselves? This illustrates that signposting can work both ways, with the client providing direction for you to carry on your journey with the tender.

WALKING THE WINNING PATH

The signposting will become more literal once you start responding to the tender. Procurement departments potentially have a lot of supplier tender responses to read and assess. As such it is important to make their review of your submission as enjoyable an experience as possible. This can be achieved through signposting as follows:

- Clear, structured responses, ensuring that key requirements are addressed, and that the question is fully answered
- An easy-to-follow format with relevant images, tables and infographics that add value to the whole submission
- Full compliance with the specified requirements, including maintaining word limits
- Supporting evidence to illustrate your organisation's ability to deliver the project and showcasing to the buying authority that you are the supplier of choice

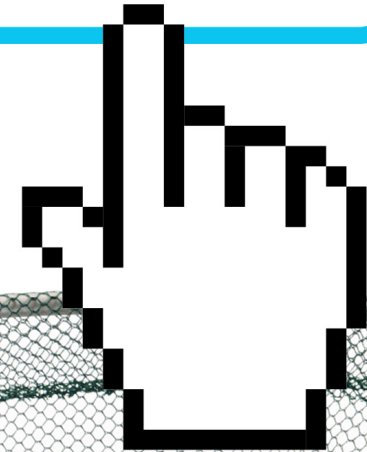
Considering signposting at every step of the tender lifecycle may not guarantee a winning outcome. However, it does create a robust framework for how to approach a tendering exercise. The approach can be continually built upon, with the distance of the path extending regularly. We have learnt from clients through feedback and relationship building exercises that if one bidding path is blocked, there is always an opportunity to create a new route.

(RE)CAPTURE THAT CONTENT



KATHRYN
POTTER

SUBMIT



IT'S FRIDAY, YOU'VE JUST BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF THAT YOUR SUBMISSION MADE IT IN (THROUGH THE PORTAL, WHICH MIRACULOUSLY DIDN'T FALL OVER) AT 11:58:59 - LEAVING YOU HANGING ON TO THE EDGE OF THE TABLE, HOLDING YOUR BREATH AS THE LITTLE WHIRLY-CIRCLY THINGY DID ITS JOB AND THE SCREEN FINALLY FLASHED - SUBMISSION SUCCESSFUL - WITH ONE MINUTE AND ONE SECOND TO SPARE.

You're debating heading out for lunch (and a pint!) when 'PING' your inbox starts making a racket. You realise lunch is going to be a desk affair again as the next bid (which was due to arrive on Monday) has landed. It is due back to the client in way less time than you'd hoped (OR that had been indicated in the preliminary talks).

The last thing you want to do is revisit the submission you have just gotten rid of, and I wouldn't expect you to do that right now either. What I would suggest is going out for that sandwich and a milkshake or 0% pint, walking round the block a few times (not the one under your desk!) and then coming back with a clear head to have a quick readthrough of that bid

that landed a few seconds after you hit submit on the last one.

My steps to success (or at least a few less tension headaches) are:

- **Print out that new bid – including all the questions (or if you prefer digital options, save a clean copy and follow the steps below electronically)**
- **Grab a highlighter**
- **Highlight everything that looks the same/similar to the bid you just sent off**
- **In a different colour highlight everything not the same/similar and who you think the right person is to answer it**

- **Send off what you need answered**
- **Copy over what is the same/similar**
- **Make sure you leave the office on time and enjoy the weekend**

Seriously though, now that you have a plan for answering the next bid you can take five minutes here and there while you're working on the response to tidy up an answer as you use it and save it in the right place in your library. It's worth making sure you have an index system to track what you save, when you save it and when you change it so that it doesn't become an alphabet soup.

BETTER CUSTOMER FOCUS IN FOUR LETTERS



NIGEL DENNIS

THIS QUICK WIN HELPS WITH WHAT IS ARGUABLY THE LARGEST PROBLEM IN BIDS – LACK OF CUSTOMER-FOCUSED WRITING. IT IS A TECHNIQUE CAPTURED BY JUST FOUR LETTERS. EVEN THOSE COMPANIES THAT BELIEVE THEY ALREADY HAVE CUSTOMER-FOCUSED BIDS ARE AMAZED WHEN THEY LEARN AND APPLY THIS TECHNIQUE.

What is it?

The technique is called ISBP® and is an acronym explained as follows.



ISSUE
(for your customer)



SOLUTION
(by you)



BENEFIT
(for your customer)



PROOF
(by you)

What really matters to your customer?

What problem is your customer trying to solve? What are their key drivers? Get behind the words written in the customer request and to the heart of what they (not you) believe will really make a difference.

If you do not know what matters, how can you provide the best solution? Then articulate the issue in your own words so that your customer knows you understand it.

How will you address your customer's issue?

Write in terms of what will directly solve the issue, not what is convenient for you. Describe how your solution directly addresses the issue.

Poorly written bids give a boilerplate answer based on what is good for your organisation and not what is good for your customer's organisation. This is a sure way to scoring low.

Highlight the benefit that your customer will receive from your issue-driven solution.

A benefit is what the customer will get from your solution. It is their outcome. Don't assume it is obvious and don't assume your customer will know. And don't get a benefit mixed up with a feature. For example: power steering on a car is the feature; easier parking is the benefit.

Prove the benefit of your solution will really solve your customer's issue.

Demonstrate how you have used this solution before. Provide the evidence. State previous contract successes, give examples or case studies, or provide third party references. These will all provide a feeling of comfort for your customer and show your organisation is credible.

The solution is often the component that many unknowingly gravitate to first. It is also not uncommon to forget about the issue and proof.

How and where can ISBP® be used?

Applying the technique in the ISBP® order naturally drives customer focus. Using it as you start to write helps articulate your thoughts which will then have a whole lot more meaning in your submission. Your writing will be more customer-focused, more benefit driven, and will have the main elements needed in a compelling response.

The ISBP® technique can be applied at many levels of a tender submission:

- When forming an overall bid strategy
- As a framework for Executive Summaries
- When structuring a major section
- For answering a specific question or evaluation criterion
- When responding to a component of one section

It does take a little practice, but try it and benefit immediately from better customer focus in your bids.

ISBP® is a registered Australian trademark of Bid Write Pty Ltd

LEVERAGE THESE THREE SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO BOOST YOUR BID SUCCESS



CHRIS KALIN

DRAWING FROM OVER 25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE COLLABORATING WITH NUMEROUS BIDDERS, THREE PIVOTAL QUICK WINS STAND OUT AS CATALYSTS FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN WIN RATES.

1. TOUGH BID DECISIONS: WORK LESS, WIN MORE

This is certainly the biggest lever for any bid team! Still, far too many organisations regularly shoot at everything that moves... instead of making informed, tough bid/no-bid decisions.

By implementing a systematic approach (such as the simple but effective Six Magic Questions) your bid team can focus on winnable prospects leading to increased win rates, turnover, and profit. With more wins and fewer rejections, it also improves your troops' morale!

The bad news: To do this professionally requires discipline. The good news: It requires only a little know-how and doesn't require any financial investment.

2. INVEST IN STATE-OF-THE-ART DOCUMENT TEMPLATES: IT WILL PAY OFF, SOON!

Honestly, over my entire career, I haven't seen many good proposal templates. Most templates (regardless of document format) either don't have any visual appeal, or they are not user-friendly at all (lacking proposal-specific features), or both.

A professional proposal template will save you from plenty of stress and time spent creating and formatting. Your proposals will also make a consistently good first impression on your client. And last but not least: Your proposals will comply with your corporate identity (CI), meaning that your proposal documents will be immediately recognisable to your customer as YOUR proposal (don't even think of imitating your customer's CI!).

3. IT'S A SALES DOCUMENT, STUPID! INCLUDE DOCUMENT QUALITY INTO YOUR REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

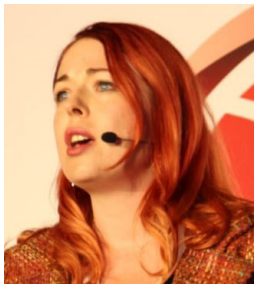
Let's not forget that a proposal document is first and foremost a sales document. It may or may not trigger your customer's buying decision!

Surprisingly, many organisations overlook this aspect in their processes, focusing on product/service design and business case approvals (costs, risks, margins, price). They have forgotten the proposal document as such. As a result, great solutions are often poorly sold!

If you care about the way your products/services are presented to your customer, always invest some time in reviewing your proposal document as a standard step in your process. Plan a red team review (often called final document review). Proper red team reviews are conducted by independent and objective peers not previously involved in developing the proposal! They assess the proposal by simulating the customer's perspective and by providing fresh, constructive feedback. This significantly enhances the overall quality of the proposal, potentially providing you with the leading edge over your competitors' documents.

Finally, ensure management both approves the products/services and prices and signs off on the proposal document. This will increase the attention given to the overall proposal management.

SELL THE SIZZLE, NOT JUST THE STEAK



LARISSA
CORNELIUS



Watch
Larissa's
Win in 60
Seconds video
here.

CREATING AND USING A VALUE PROPOSITION STATEMENT IS A KEY TIP I USE WHEN CRAFTING WINNING BIDS, PROPOSALS AND PITCHES.

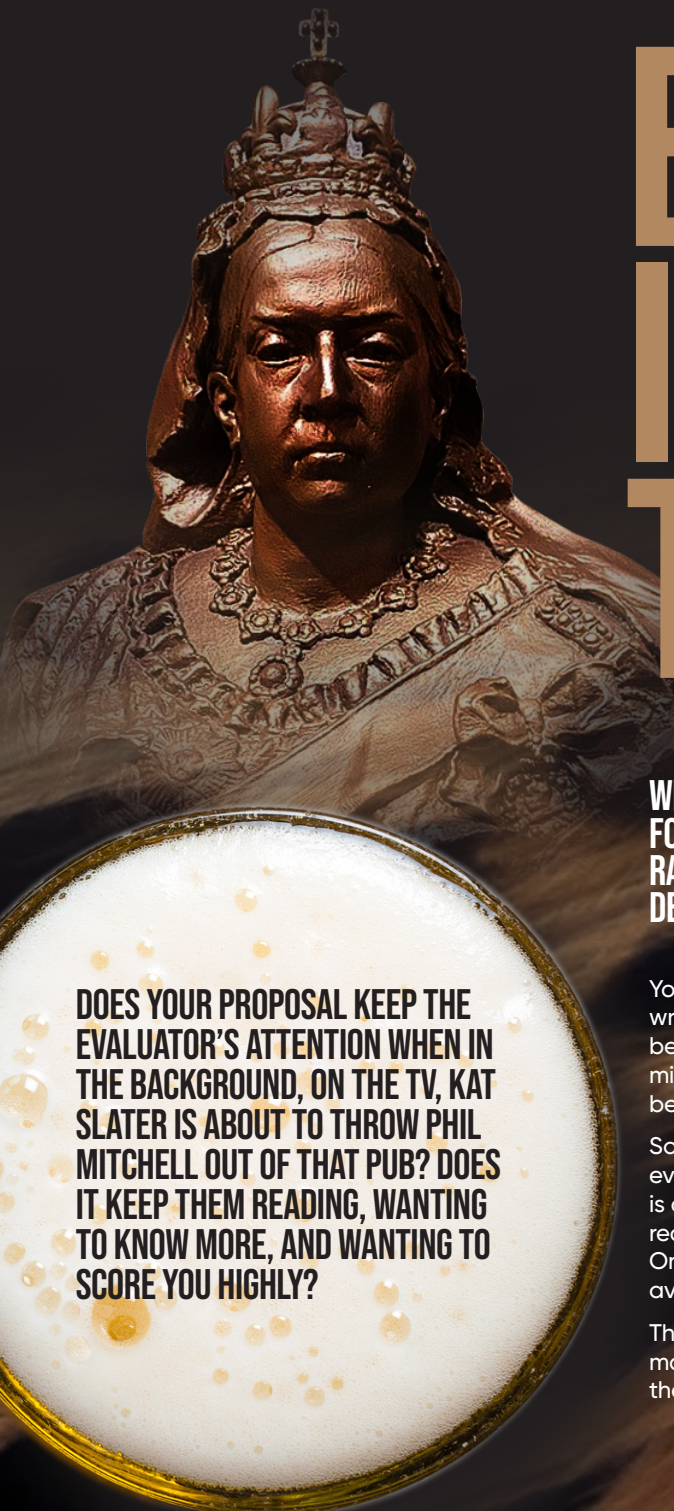
While this concept is not new in the realm of bidding best practice, its effectiveness cannot be understated. A value proposition serves as a statement that persuades a specific customer to choose your offer by connecting your message to the value they will receive. It shifts the focus from 'what' you are offering to 'why' they should choose you.

A value proposition addresses the 'why' behind your solution, making it more captivating and compelling to potential clients. In practical terms, the value proposition template we use is:

"[Customer], by addressing your [Needs], will meet your [Future State]. We will achieve this by implementing [Company] [Outcome-based Solution]. [Legacy Facts] prove we will deliver. [Driving Action] is needed to gain value."

An example would be: "By increasing your win rate by 31%, Unicorn Holdings will meet your £400 million target. We will increase your wins by outsourcing your bid function to Magic Proposals. As a demonstration of our success, we increased the Wizard Group's wins by 42% within six months and Magic Lane's by 33% within 12 months. The solution will pay for itself within one year for an investment of 1% of your target."

You can use this concise and customer-specific statement in executive summaries, cover letters, pitch decks, and conclusions. Wherever it is used, it will succinctly convey the customer's problem, your proposed solution, and why you are the best choice among competitors.



BE MORE INTERESTING THAN EASTENDERS



MIKE READER

WHENEVER I TRAIN COLLEAGUES AT MACE OR OTHER ORGANISATIONS THAT WE SUPPORT, I START WITH MY TOP 10 TIPS FOR IMPROVING YOUR NEXT PROPOSAL (I'M SURE MANY OF THEM WILL APPEAR IN THIS EDITION OF BQ). THE TIP THAT RAISES THE MOST EYEBROWS (AND CAN BE THE MOST CONTENTIOUS, AS PEOPLE LIKE TO BELIEVE IT'S THE DEPTH AND DETAIL OF THEIR CONTENT THAT MATTERS MOST): THE NEED TO PASS THE EASTENDERS TEST.

DOES YOUR PROPOSAL KEEP THE EVALUATOR'S ATTENTION WHEN IN THE BACKGROUND, ON THE TV, KAT SLATER IS ABOUT TO THROW PHIL MITCHELL OUT OF THAT PUB? DOES IT KEEP THEM READING, WANTING TO KNOW MORE, AND WANTING TO SCORE YOU HIGHLY?

You know your bid needs to be interesting, eye-catching, well written and easy to evaluate. We know evaluators will generally be marking your tender outside of work in their spare time with a million distractions going on in their lives. Your submission needs to be more interesting than these distractions.

So the Eastenders Test is simple. Does your proposal keep the evaluator's attention when in background, on the TV, Kat Slater is about to throw Phil Mitchell out of that pub? Does it keep them reading, wanting to know more, and wanting to score you highly? Or do they skim-read and put you in the pile with all the other average bidders?

There are several ways we can create interest in our proposal, make it stand out, ensure it is memorable and is the one that the evaluator wants to tell their colleagues about. Here are a

few things to add to your Eastenders test cheat-sheet: focus on the structure and navigation of your bid, create visual interest (I typically aim for one graphic or pop-out box per page) and cut out corporate waffle. If you want to keep interest, stop talking about your company's history, journey, mission, values and successes and talk about the client.

As an evaluator on a multi-billion pound procurement, I have seen firsthand how bids that keep attention score higher. On a major infrastructure procurement, with an evaluation team of 20 people, bids which would pass the test generally scored 10-15% higher than those which didn't – even though the content was largely similar. It's scary how personal evaluation really can be!

JOINING THE DOTS



JEREMY BRIM



Watch Jeremy's Win in 60 Seconds video here.

I've also talked about the big missing link with key account management (KAM) and how – if you are business to business (B2B) or business to government (B2G) – you should be getting 80% of your margin (not profit) from 20% of your clients.

My tips for your organisation include:

If you do all this right, bidding is just the end game. In my opinion, most deals are won before the RFP is ever written. Let's get ahead of this. It's time to join the dots through the funnel.

My top tip for BQ18 is all about joining the dots through the marketing funnel – from the initial stages of procurement right through to the purchasing stage.

I've banged on about the capture process for years, which is starting to gain momentum:

- Identifying and qualifying opportunities
- Developing a win strategy which documents your understanding of the customer's objective (e.g., value adding solutions, price to win, capability requirements to pursue and win the contract)
- Transferring customer intelligence and information about the specific opportunity and your competition to the proposal team
- Identifying, analysing and mitigating the customer's perception of contract performance risk

- Aiming to influence your senior leaders into focusing your efforts on key clients
- Deploying capture on your key recompetes (which is something that's often missed)
- Consider account-based marketing as a subset of your business plan
- Make friends with your marketeers and get them on board with the key opportunities in your pipeline
- See how you can be aligned throughout the funnel of marketing, through KAM and capture

JUST ANSWER THE QUESTION...

IT SOUNDS SIMPLE RIGHT? FIRST RULE OF BID WRITING.

However, so many of my clients ask for help because answering the question doesn't prove as easy as it first sounds. Especially when multiple questions are all twisted together into one – very long – sentence. Plus, when you're relying on subject matter experts to write the answers, you don't always get back what you need.

Do you recognise any of these characters from your recent bid?

- **Winston Churchill:** answering the question they wished the client had asked
- **Alice in Wonderland:** diving down rabbit holes while avoiding answering the question
- **Thomas Telford:** "I'm an engineer, not a writer!"
- **James Joyce:** stream of consciousness narrative provider

Yep, they're there – lurking in your organisation, all busy with their day jobs. Being faced with a complex question and a blank sheet of paper, doesn't always inspire – it tends to intimidate. So, what can we as bid professionals do to a) get the high quality responses we need and b) allow our SMEs to do what they do best? I'm fairly sure there are complex solutions out there using AI and harnessing the power of algorithms but...

...I use a simple matrix. Word for preference; Excel doesn't play nicely for narrative.

Before I send the question to my SMEs (and risk overwhelming them), I break the question down

into a matrix. This ensures we are aware of any multiple parts to a question. I put in a column for 'What?', 'How?', 'Why?', 'So what?' and 'Where have we done this before?'. I ask them for data, facts and evidence, all in a bullet-pointed format. I send them just the matrix – with the actual question in the email for completeness.

Then I have a quick call with them (where possible) to explain what they've received and that:

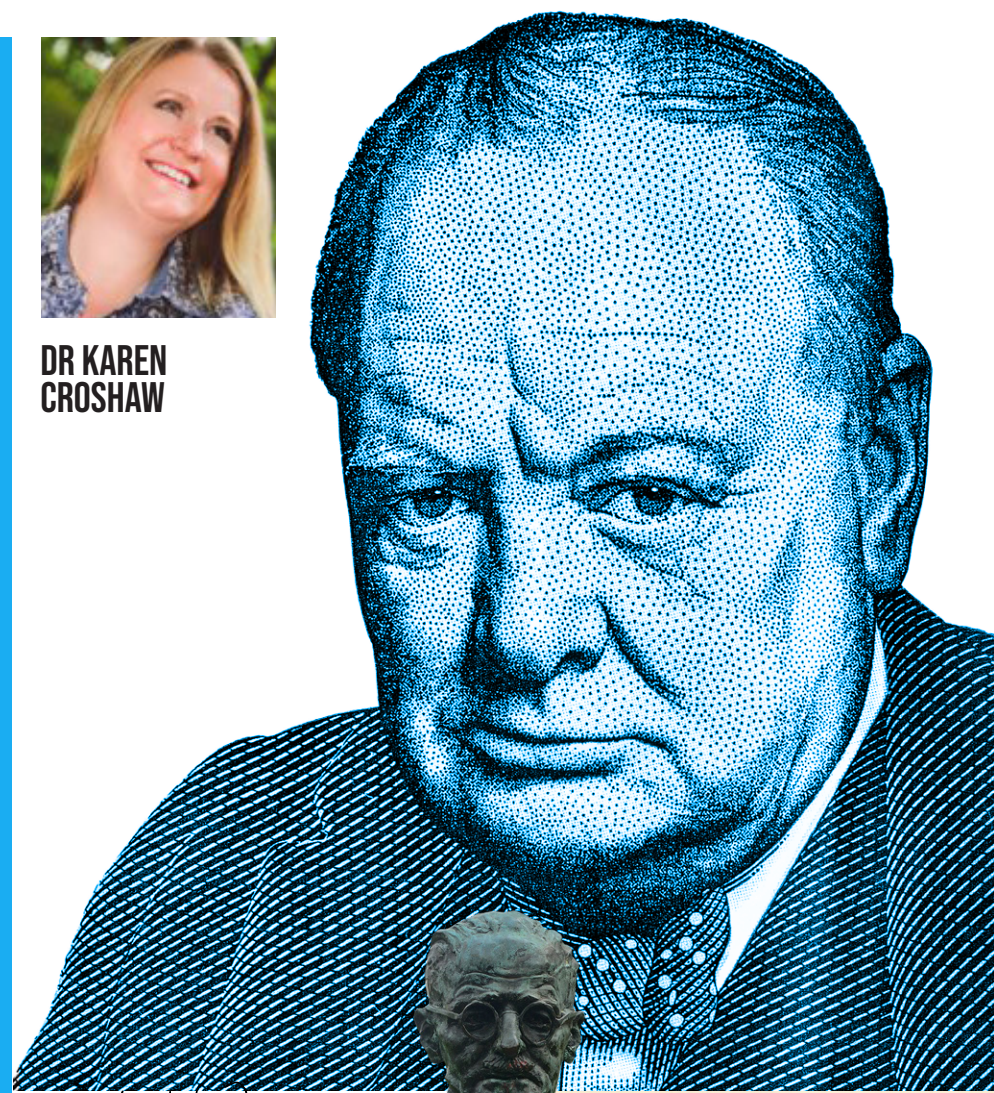
- They don't need to write continuous prose
- Bullet points are fine
- Grammar is optional
- Punctuation is my problem

They are usually so relieved that I get the data tables back on time. I can easily spot where we've not answered the question or provided enough evidence because there will be a blank box on my matrix. This approach means it doesn't matter if I have domain knowledge or not because, for a first draft, an absence of information will let me know that we haven't answered the question.

Once I have all the pieces, I can assemble the jigsaw myself.



DR KAREN CROSHAW



ABOUT OUR EXPERTS



MARTIN SMITH

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 Bid Solutions provides market leading people, tools, training and solutions to help you win more.



PIPPA BIRCH

Pippa owns Pipster Solutions Ltd – an award-winning bid consultancy. Pippa has been a bid writer for over 20 years, mainly in highways and civil engineering. She is well known in the sector and is an active member of the Institute of Asphalt and has won several industry awards. Pippa went freelance in 2012 and started growing the Pipster team during the Covid pandemic. She is APMP Professional certified and mentors other bid professionals, winning Contribution to the Profession in 2022. She also developed #ThursdayThrong and #BidBites – free online meetings for the bidding community to reduce isolation.



DR NIGEL HUDSON

Affectionately known as 'The Bid Doctor', Nigel has a doctorate in workplace learning and is BQ's resident professional development expert. His research was an industry first, exploring how people learn from experience within the bid profession. It builds upon his 25-year career, coaching and leading sales and bid teams, training more than 5,000 people worldwide, winning multiple awards for his bid academies, and – with Jon Williams – creating Europe's leading proposal training syllabus. A customer and people champion, Nigel's mantra is: "What does the customer value most, how will we deliver it better than the competition, and if we do this, will we have fun?"



CHARLOTTE REES

Charlotte has worked in the bidding profession for nearly a decade, starting her journey as a bid and proposals apprentice for an engineering company. She has worked across several industries including IT services, facilities management and construction, and is currently Head of Bids, working within professional services. In 2018, Charlotte founded the Wellbeing and Inclusion in Bids and Proposals (WIBAP) community to target gender inequality within the profession and provide a space to share experiences and overcome the challenges we all face on a regular basis.



SARAH HINCHLIFFE

Sarah labels herself a 'Storyteller, Organiser, Timekeeper' – three things that come naturally to her. After a 30-year sales career in the IT industry, where she learnt every popular sales methodology and sold millions of pounds of software and services, Sarah decided to share what she'd learnt about winning business using great stories, a systematic approach and consistently delivering on time. She continues learning and sharing through her freelance consulting work and volunteering as a writer, speaker and mentor.



JON WILLIAMS

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 35 countries; and trained many thousands of course participants.



CHRIS WHYATT

Chris is the co-founder of the UK APMP, prior to which he founded and led Practical Bid Solutions, and its successor, Get to Great Results. He has worked on major growth initiatives, sales and channel growth, sales turnarounds, must win deals, and sales and bid process improvement.



JAVIER ESCARTIN

Javier is an aerospace engineer who has climbed the corporate ladder from engineering to business development. He is a full-time freelance Proposal Manager and has recently launched a business to make our work easier with artificial intelligence.

He is the founder of DeepRFP.com, runs the proposals newsletter jescartin.com, and manages proposals for worldwide technology companies as a consultant.



TONY BIRCH

Tony Birch is the founder and current Chairman of Shipley Limited in the UK. Tony served on the main board of the APMP for four years and was elected a Fellow of the organisation in 2006, for his work in developing and launching the APMP's Certification Programme. Since founding Shipley, Tony has trained thousands of sales and bid professionals around the world.

ABOUT OUR EXPERTS



RITA MASCIA

Rita's journey into the world of bids and proposal started while working for an award-winning language and culture business organisation. Rita is a bid professional with 24 years of experience in the public, private and not for profit sectors. Her expertise in the bid cycle includes business development, capture, bid management, bid writing, and contract negotiations. Her passion lies in leading teams to win business by producing persuasive proposals that deliver what they promise.



PETER LOBL

Peter is a director of Sixfold International, which helps businesses win public sector contracts through training and consultancy. He has decades of experience in advising clients on how to navigate the complex bidding process. He has held positions as a director of the APMP(UK), an EU Commission expert reviewer, and sales professional at IBM and Unisys. He is an accredited professional of the APMP and an APMG approved trainer for both Foundation and Practitioner level certification.



TRICIA BLATHERWICK

Tricia is the Chief Commercial Officer at AutogenAI and she has spent over 30 years working for some of the UK's largest IT and Outsourcing companies, generating sales of more than £4 billion. She holds a degree in English Literature and an MBA in Strategic Discourse - and is passionate about the power of language - including business language - to motivate, inspire and create change in the world.



CERI MESCALL

Ceri Mescall is a proposal consultant based in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Clients trust her to help them win. Ceri's a thought leader - a presenter/panellist, podcast guest, article author/contributor, and awards judge. She holds all four signature Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP) certifications plus the Executive Summaries and Bid & Proposal Writing micro-certifications. Ceri was an APMP 40 Under 40 award winner (class of 2019) and is an APMP Fellow (2020).



DARRELL WOODWARD

Darrell Woodward is an award-winning consultant helping organisations unleash the full power of proposal automation to win more business faster. As a Bid Geek and coffee lover, he believes technology in bidding is about combining a blend of content beans - compelling narratives, tailored solutions, and persuasive arguments - and the expertise of bidding baristas to craft the perfect proposal brew.



LORRAINE BAIRD

Lorraine specialises in helping organisations to win - evidenced by her personal win rate of over 85%. She's recognised for equipping bid teams with the right skills and tools to produce winning proposals and pitches for their organisations. Formerly heading up the bid team at Aviva, Lorraine's career in sales and bidding spans over 20 years. Lorraine is qualified at the highest level of certification in the profession - APMP Professional - and also recently attained the new APMP Capture Practitioner certification.



KATE CUMMINS

Kate Cummins is a highly experienced Bid Consultant with a proven track record of success in the ICT, Software, Telecoms and Fintech sectors.

With over 20 years of experience as a Bid Author, Bid Manager, Head of Content Management, Assistant Vice President - Customer Business Development, and Head of Bid Management, Kate has developed a broad range of skills that enable her to provide significant value to her clients.



ISABELLA STEVENSON

Bella started her career in bids over 14 years ago working for a recruitment consultancy co-ordinating their EMEA-wide bid submissions. For the last 10 years, she has worked as a Bid Manager, mainly within the EV infrastructure and built environment, but also in sectors as diverse as facilities management, security and dentistry.

She enjoys collaborating with technical teams via workshops and review sessions to build win themes, install best practice and develop creative thinking to win more contracts and help organisations meet their business development objectives.

ABOUT OUR EXPERTS



KATHRYN POTTER

Kathryn's experience in bid writing covers sectors as varied as IT outsourcing to financial services, security services to reprographics and construction and rail. She sees content as the cornerstone of proposal development and understands that no matter what, it needs to be relevant and up-to-date.



NIGEL DENNIS

Nigel has been called a proposal pioneer in Australia for his work in shaping the professional bidding landscape in the region. He has three decades of proposal consulting experience and has trained thousands of people. Nigel started the APMP Australia New Zealand Chapter, runs Australia's largest specialist bid consultancy and is a strong advocate for development of the profession.



CHRIS KÄLIN

Chris is a global authority on bid and proposal management. He was co-founder and chairman of the German-speaking APMP chapter and regional director for Europe/Africa. He is APMP-certified at Professional Level (CPP APMP) and is an APMP Approved Trainer. In 2013, he received the prestigious Fellows Award.



LARISSA CORNELIUS

With over 12 years in business development and proposal consultancy, Larissa offers bid expertise across various industries. She has trained thousands of people and worked with over 260 companies on strategic bid work. She has a further seven years of operational management expertise and actively promotes the proposal profession by combining proposal best practices with her operational and sales background, helping businesses win more.



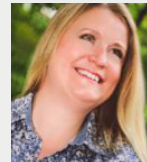
MIKE READER

Mike Reader is one of the UK's leading work winning professionals, helping senior leaders navigate the bidding and sales world. He leads a specialist team at Mace who work across all continents pursuing mega built environment and infrastructure projects. He also loves cold water swimming, politics and good food.



JEREMY BRIM

Jeremy works with leadership teams and business owners as a consultant and advisor to plan and deliver sustainable growth through analysis and interventions across the sales cycle. Jeremy has also taken on leadership of the Bid Toolkit, bringing with him a wealth of bidding knowledge and desire to help businesses of all sizes improve their win rates.



DR KAREN CROSHAW

Karen has been involved in bidding and tendering for nearly 25 years, firstly with universities and training providers, then in large private sector organisations. She now runs her own successful freelance bid consultancy. Her consulting career spans public and private sector bids including government frameworks, nuclear, rail, road, construction, digital, defence, healthcare and skills. She has strong Middle East bid/project delivery experience gained by living and working in the UEA, Saudi Arabia and Oman, where she also trained and qualified as a scuba instructor.

BQ

BIDDING QUARTERLY

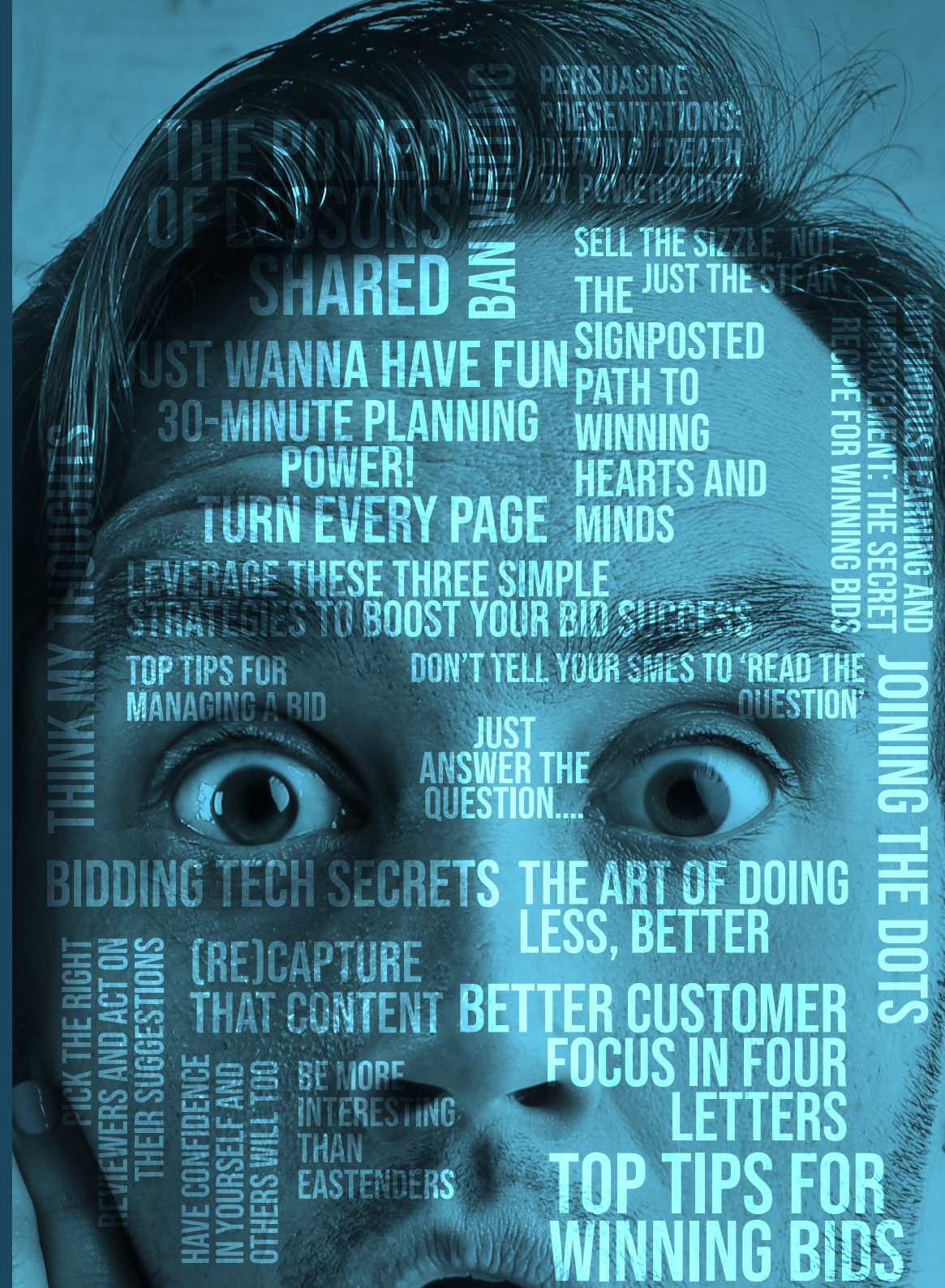
SECRETS TO SUCCESS

QUICK WINS IN 2024

Brought to you by
Bid Solutions
Connecting **Winners**

+44 (0)20 8158 3952
facebook.com/bidsolutions
twitter.com/bidsolutions
enquiry@bidsolutions.co.uk
bidsolutions.co.uk

Design by
FMA
CREATIVE AGENCY



THINK MY THOUGHTS

PICK THE RIGHT REVIEWERS AND ACT ON THEIR SUGGESTIONS

THE POWER OF LESSONS SHARED

JUST WANNA HAVE FUN
30-MINUTE PLANNING
POWER!
TURN EVERY PAGE

LEVERAGE THESE THREE SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO BOOST YOUR BID SUCCESS

TOP TIPS FOR MANAGING A BID

JUST ANSWER THE QUESTION...

DON'T TELL YOUR SMES TO 'READ THE QUESTION'

BIDDING TECH SECRETS

THE ART OF DOING LESS, BETTER

(RE)CAPTURE THAT CONTENT

HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS WILL TOO

BE MORE INTERESTING THAN EASTENDERS

BETTER CUSTOMER FOCUS IN FOUR LETTERS

TOP TIPS FOR WINNING BIDS

BAN UNWELLING

PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS: DYNAMITE OR DEATH BY POWERPOINT

SELL THE SIZZLE, NOT THE JUST THE STEAK

SIGNPOSTED PATH TO WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS

CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT: THE SECRET RECIPE FOR WINNING BIDS

JOINING THE DOTS