



BIDDING QUARTERLY

ISSUE NO. 20  
NOVEMBER 2024

ALL I WANT  
FOR  
CHRISTMAS...

Dear Santa, I would like for Christmas...

- To win more bids
- Access best practice
- Learn from experts
- Understand market trends
- Develop my skills

Thanks!

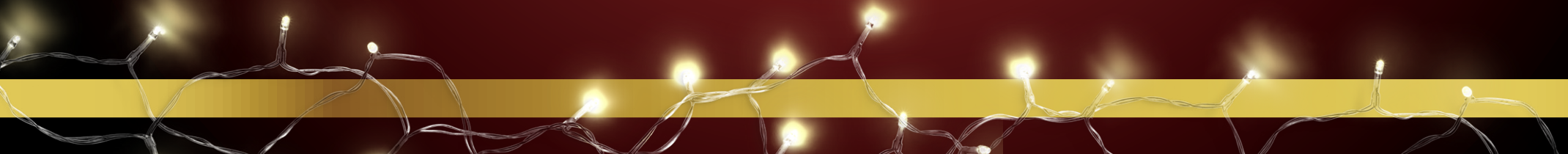


**Bid Solutions**  
Connecting Winners



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# GOOD TIDINGS WE BRING

MARTIN  
SMITH



When choosing the 'All I Want for Christmas' concept for BQ20, I wanted to be mindful that not everyone celebrates, recognises or feels included in this holiday. But it turns out Christmas is almost ubiquitous – only 18 countries\* in the world do not mark it in some way.

The proliferation of Bid and Proposal functions makes it feel like we have developed an equally ubiquitous 'bidding' profession. Formal procurement is driving an uplift in bidding activity in every corner of the world and BQ now has readers and followers across six continents. But it is worth noting that around 90% of those working in bid and proposal roles aren't part of any formal professional body. They are precisely the people we want to reach, support and invite on the open-source journey to share insights and guidance.

For me, Christmas is a time for reflection. I find myself yearning for our industry to be more open to new methodologies, practices, technologies and behaviours. By diversifying our knowledgebase, we can learn and develop more quickly as a profession.

And there is so much to look forward to in 2025 to drive that progress! Under our BQ banner, we will deliver the first annual UK National Bid Awards. Our latest UK Salary Survey will launch to gather data on current

salary trends, benchmarking (for employers and employees) and the overall state of our industry. Our BQ Research & Development (R&D) hub will be opened, welcoming contributions of professional insights and research from our entire global audience to help foster a collaborative environment for innovation and growth.

So, what do I really want for Christmas? Peace on earth and good tidings for all seems apt if somewhat ambitious. In the bidding context, I would happily settle for a level playing field for our global practitioners. Equal opportunities for one and all. We have to take the entire industry on the journey to better practices to build an open-source, inclusive profession that will ultimately deliver the universal respect we deserve.

BQ20 is absolutely loaded with Christmas crackers and presents galore. With 31 brilliant articles, our panel of experts have once again generously delivered their wisdom and experience to help you develop industry leading knowledge and skills and, ultimately, win more often.

**Wishing all our readers a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy 2025.**

\* Source: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-that-celebrate-christmas>



# IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS

**With the holiday season upon us, we often think of grand gestures or big surprises when it comes to what we want for Christmas. But in the world of bidding it's not dazzling innovations or sudden "ah-ha" moments that win contracts. Instead, it's something more fundamental: execution.**

Winning bids is like preparing a holiday feast that becomes family lore. The ingredients and recipe are well known - frameworks, processes, methodologies, experienced project managers, rigorous review gates, compliance checks, the strategic use of consultants. Answer the question and put the customer and their concerns first, and Bob's your festive uncle. But having these ingredients won't guarantee success.

Like cooking, where anyone can follow a recipe, the difference lies in the details - how the ingredients are combined, the timing, the skill in execution. Top chefs aren't successful because they know secret recipes - it's how they combine ingredients and lead their teams to achieve consistent, precise results. The same is true in bidding: it's about flawlessly executing every step - often under pressure.

Many chase innovation, believing a new game-changing tool will bring home the pigs in blankets. Clients often expect to be dazzled by some new or magical solution to their problems. The Artificial Intelligence under the Christmas tree is only as good as the Actual Intelligence of the person using it. But like Christmas gifts, the most exciting ideas often fade. What lasts and truly adds value is the gift of consistent quality and reliability. Innovation should raise the standard but reliability raises the bar.

So, here's our Christmas gift, a simple lesson tied with a well-executed ribbon. Don't woo clients with the next tinsel-drenched novelty, focus on helping them perfect the basics and fine-tune their processes. Aim to raise their standards at every step, from pre-planning to final submission and review processes, win or lose. Just as chefs sharpen their knives, plan their approach, refine their skills and taste the sweetness of success, you can help your clients understand that bidding is a long game of execution.

This holiday season, drop the gift of bidding enlightenment down your clients' chimneys and bring them into the warmth of consistent execution. Whether bidding on a simple project or a major flagship contract, forget about the bells and whistles. It's about how well you bring the elements together - how you execute, day in and day out. Perfect that and the results will speak for themselves. Oh...and think of getting your loved ones a boring but thoroughly reliable gift they'll use year on year - like a quality rolling pin...

**Happy holidays. Here's to a year of flawless execution.**



**JESSE MORGAN**

# THE TWELVE DAYS OF BIDDING

IZANE  
CLOETE-HAMILTON

## Sing with me: "On the first day of bidding, my team gave to me..."

Okay, okay, maybe we won't sing the whole thing but as the holiday season approaches, let's look at 12 gifts we all deserve.

### On the first day of bidding, my team gave to me...a clear bid strategy

It all starts with a strategy! Like a compass points north, a solid bid strategy keeps your proposal efforts on track. Before you dive in, understand the client's needs, your key differentiators and how you'll win.

### On the second day of bidding, my team gave to me...win themes

No bid is complete without strong win themes. These big ideas set your proposal apart and address your customer's pain points. Use them to guide everything from the executive summary to your solution.

### On the third day of bidding, my team gave to me...proof points

Client testimonials, case studies or statistics – evidence to show why you're the best choice. These trust-builders turn your proposal from 'meh' to 'must-have'.

### On the fourth day of bidding, my team gave to me... collaboration tools

Successful proposals don't happen in isolation. From Slack to MS Teams, there are plenty of tools to help your team stay connected and on the same page.

### On the fifth day of bidding, my team gave to me...gold standards

Ah, the heart of every proposal – the content. What are your gold standards for content? Think clarity, customer focus, conciseness, compliance and consistency.

### On the sixth day of bidding, my team gave to me...discriminators

What makes you stand out? It's not just about being good - it's about being *better*. Your discriminators explain why you're the best choice.

### On the seventh day of bidding, my team gave to me...brilliant SMEs

Your subject matter experts are the heart and soul of your proposal content. A team of trained SMEs will provide the insight and expertise needed to craft a compelling solution.

### On the eighth day of bidding, my team gave to me...templates ready to go

Templates save time and ensure consistency, which breeds trust. From executive summaries to pricing tables, have these ready to keep the bid process running smoothly.

### On the ninth day of bidding, my team gave to me...compliance checkpoints

Compliance is key. Whether it's meeting the client's specifications or following government regulations, a compliance matrix ensures nothing slips through the cracks.

### On the tenth day of bidding, my team gave to me...winning graphics

A picture is worth a thousand words, especially in a proposal. Graphics help visualise your solution, break up text and make your bid stand out.

### On the eleventh day of bidding, my team gave to me...reviews

Review, review, and review again – the win strategy, executive summary, pricing and final document. Ensure you have touchpoints where your bid is scrutinised, improved and polished to perfection.

### On the twelfth day of bidding, my team gave to me...a proposal present

The best part of the bid? The final product – compliant, compelling, and ready to go! Like the perfect Christmas present, it's all wrapped up with care. No last-minute rush, just a proposal that shines like the star on top of the tree.

Musical notation for the song "All I Want for Christmas". The notation is in 4/4 time and features two staves. The first staff has a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The second staff has a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The chords are: F, Dm7, Gm7, C7, F, F, Bb, F/C, C7, F, F, Dm7, Gm7, C7, F, C7.



# THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH OFF

JIM CARLEY

**We know the festive season is close at hand when supermarkets start stocking family-sized tubs of Quality Street, Mariah Carey is on the radio, and the office Secret Santas have all been drawn out of the hat. But there's another early warning system to alert us to the imminent arrival of Old Saint Nick: the traditional Christmas lights switch on.**

While it's obvious if you think about it, not everyone realises Christmas has its own industry when it comes to bids and proposals. Contracts Finder tells us that since 2015, over 400 public sector Christmas contracts have been awarded, and the lucky winners have clearly all been on Santa's nice list. There have been contracts for Christmas kids' clubs, Christmas bus services, sourcing Christmas trees, disposing of Christmas trees, and for various Christmas events, pantomimes, temporary ice rinks and such like. But around half of all Christmas contracts are for festive light displays with contract values from a few thousand pounds to over £1 million.

Christmas, even for the winter wonderland of proposals, has been big business.

When it comes to subject matter expertise, most of us are limited to the bare minimum of knowledge required to haphazardly wrap lights around our own tree (or, for those with a CP APMP, perhaps the slightly higher skills to illuminate a life-sized reindeer on your driveway). But fully managed solutioning and value propositioning in Christmas lighting is complex. There's a sack full of tasks to contemplate; inspection, testing, installation, tree dressing, maintenance, derig, removal, technical support for the switch-on ceremony and (dare I say) 'elf and safety.

One recent brief stipulated that: "The theme must be colourful and classic, adding to the visual appeal and charm of the town centre, attracting attention, encouraging social media sharing, and promoting the town as a vibrant and attractive regional destination." Strewth! That might call for bit more than just leaving

out a glass of milk, a mince pie, and a carrot for Rudolph.

But this grand festive tradition is under threat from town hall Grinches and Treasury Scrooges. Many councils cancelled or downgraded their Christmas lights in 2023 in the wake of challenging budget outlooks, and Sheffield, Havering, Romford, and St. Neots are amongst the places to do the same in 2024. Humbug, I hear you say! But it's a stark choice for those holding the purse strings, choosing between critical services or sprinkling a little festive spirit.

So there are fewer Christmas lights and fewer Christmas light proposals – but let's hope it's just a temporary blip. After all, who doesn't want to see stars of wonder, stars of light, stars with royal beauty bright? Especially when they are festively draped between the lampposts of your local high street.

**A very Happy Christmas to one and all!**





JON WILLIAMS

# TALES OF THE ENTIRELY EXPECTED

**Some Christmas presents in my childhood came as a complete surprise. There'd be a big box under the tree. My parents - always generous, despite scarce funds - would look on eagerly as I unwrapped whatever they'd decided would keep me quiet for the longest time.**

And then there were the years when I'd asked for a specific gift. Wanted a bike, say. There was a bike-shaped thing wrapped up. Opened it. Guess what? Got a bike.

Reading an RFP is a bit like those Christmas morning gifts. Sometimes turning the pages is a voyage of discovery. You fix a grateful smile whatever emerges from the tinsel and get on with it. And then there are the times when reading the document is a journey of validation. "I got a bike!" becomes "We knew it was

coming! They've specified it in the way we wanted them to! They've used our language! They've asked the questions we'd predicted!" And with it comes a sense of "Game on: this is ours to win!"

So, here's a challenge. Do you know the ten most important new business opportunities you'll be working on in the year ahead, and your top ten renewals? And are you already actively preparing for each of them - and wiring them in your favour - with your sales and solutions colleagues?

Put another way: will your year ahead be filled with "bikes" rather than tales of the unexpected? Wouldn't that be a great festive gift?

But realistically, if you've not already built momentum and got

onto the inside track for 2025's big deals before you hang up your stocking and reach for the sherry, you're possibly already too late for next year.

So maybe I should ask for something simpler: the gift for you of twenty minutes in your CEO's diary at some point in January. Why? So you can make sure they really understand that you're the organisation's real growth engine - its job protection and creation department. So you can make sure you have their support and sponsorship for your bid and proposal function to become the very best version of itself.

Maybe forget "Dear Santa" this Christmas. Write your "Dear CEO" letter outlining what they could do to help you to help them. Making sure that you get to the point where every deal is a "bike" might be part of your list.

# A MAGIC BIDDING SOLUTION

DARRELL WOODWARD

**It's Christmas Eve and Santa is off on his annual circumnavigation of the globe to deliver presents to 400 million Santa-believing children. It's a feat of astonishing planning and coordination to prepare and submit 400,000 tons of presents, each individually specified, within a 31 hour deadline (including the Earth's rotation) while surviving on a diet of biscuits.**

That's why Santa is the world's greatest bid manager.

How does he do it? Well, firstly he spends most of December in shopping malls and garden centres building relationships, collecting client requirements and qualifying against the naughty/nice checklist - which he checks twice. Yes, Santa also invented Capture Management.

He has the world's biggest and most successful elven bid team behind him, including an army of elf on the shelf account managers asking daily clarification questions about naughtiness. His market, customer, and competitor intelligence is second to none.

But, most impressive of all is Santa's bid technology. He needs tech that can average 650 miles per second while also decelerating and accelerating 822 times per second for present drop offs. Luckily, he has access to flying reindeer and a magical sleigh capable of travelling at 3,000 times the speed of sound without instantly vaporising.

The problem for us non-magical bid professionals is there is no hypersonic technology capable of breaking the laws of physics to do all the tasks, track all the moving parts, and bring everything together on schedule. Not even AI.

What we have instead is a ho-ho-whole lot of choices (yes, I went there). There are software tools for automation, content management systems, AI-driven response generators, workflow integrations, CRMs with proposal features, and platforms claiming to do everything short of making you a gingerbread latte while you bid.

The market is full of over 200 bid-related tools competing for a slice of the proposal plum pudding, each with its own features,

advantages, and limitations. But it's not just a case of picking the flashiest features, it also needs to align with our organisational processes and our team's unique needs, quirks, and strengths.

So, how do we find our perfect technology solution? Because it isn't just the choice of tools, it's having the awareness of what's out there and how it fits our needs. The market is noisy, bustling, and full of promises of "AI-powered" widgets, but there's no jolly Saint Nick to ask us what we want and promise to deliver it if we're good.

But Christmas wishes sometimes do come true. All I want for Christmas is a simple way to go compare the best tools on the meerkat - I mean, market. A buffet from which we can choose pigs in blankets or Brussels sprouts and eggnog or mulled wine. And the Match & Compare software technology platform soon to be launched by Bid Solutions will provide just that.

It will be a gift to the profession that will have us walking in the air.



# WRAPPING UP DEADLINES

LISA READMAN

## T'was the night before Christmas...

...and Santa is delivering joy, right on schedule. He knows his annual 24 December deadline is non-negotiable and so he plans accordingly. But what if Santa procrastinated or failed to plan his schedule well enough to get everything done on time? What if he hadn't coordinated his elves, or checked the sleigh was ready, or neglected his toy inventory? If Santa missed his deadline, the result would be disappointment and broken expectations across the world. It would also provide a memorable lesson on the risks of poor planning.

The origin of the word 'deadline' is a little too gruesome for this holly, jolly edition of BQ. But we all know its modern definition: "The latest time or date by which something should be completed." So when did it become negotiable?

It isn't always possible for the project owner to move a deadline and yet extensions are still regularly requested. Of course there are sometimes exceptional circumstances but poor planning isn't one of them. If you start to rely on extensions to complete projects, it can damage trust and decrease productivity. Proactive planning ensures you're fully prepared to meet deadlines without any last-minute scrambles.

While missing a deadline might not affect every child in the world, it can create ripple effects on teams, clients, or partners further along in the chain. Planning effectively demonstrates responsibility and foresight.

This includes:

- Breaking down the work into manageable steps
- Setting interim goals
- Keeping track of progress to ensure you stay on track to deliver on time

Effective planning also helps mitigate unforeseen obstacles, making it easier to handle them if they arise.

For Santa, there are no second chances on Christmas morning. In our work, assuming a deadline is flexible can be risky and cost time, credibility and even business opportunities. If you can't meet a tender deadline, who will believe you can deliver on time? You may think an extension will always be available, especially if you've received one in the past – but this is a dangerous trap. Relying on past leniency creates a false sense of security.

Treat every deadline as if it's Santa's 24 December delivery date, with no option for delay. Plan your work accordingly and you will wrap up quality, reliability and trust. And you'll stay off the naughty list for next year.

**Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!**

DR NICEL HUDSON

# STARS OF WONDER

**About two thousand years ago, three clever chaps saw a star in the night sky. It was rather bright and twinkly. One of them said, "Cor, fellas, let's go follow!" And so they did, carrying gifts of gold, frankincense, and something my spellchecker wants to describe as 'M'eh'. So, I guess one of them wasn't that bothered. Anyway, the star led them to a cute little baby, a stable full of animals, and a couple of days off work each December. Not bad for a long trek caused by a severe case of curiosity.**

Whilst the biblical story of the Three Wise Men and their gifts symbolises the three phases of life - youth, adulthood, and old age - I like to think of the men as wise counsel for a child with great potential and that the star represents the promise of

greatness. It's easy to apply the 'follow yonder star' metaphor to oneself, pinpointing where we want to go and who can help us get there. But let's wish for something bigger, that could benefit our whole profession.

What is it, then, that should beckon most vividly for all of us within the bid and proposal profession? Do we have a Star of Wonder that everyone in our world can gaze upon with awe? And if we chose to travel towards it, who would be our Magi to guide us?

My wish is to see a star unobstructed by gatekeepers, associations, or ambiguity; I want it to empower our people by shining brightly on the one thing I've heard asked more

than any other in the last 25 years: "Show me". I want it to be the clearest and most transparently obvious vision of what good looks like in terms of behaviours, skills, pace, and output; so that everyone - including our peers in closely associated professions like Sales and Marketing - can see what good looks like and how amazing we can be. That's the brilliant, dazzling, star-like image that would fill us with awe and authentic wonder.

And the people to guide us? It's all of us. Every time we see someone doing something great, we should point to it so others can learn.

Our stars of wonder are all around us. Show them to the world.

# A CHRISTMAS APOSTROPHISER

SARAH  
HINCHLIFFE

I know I should learn to relax and chill out, but misplaced apostrophes make my blood boil. That's why one of my all-time heroes is the chap from Bristol who invented the apostrophiser - a rather effective if somewhat Heath Robinson bit of kit with a long handle (and a special stepladder to boot) that he uses to add or remove dodgy apostrophes. With a set square and scalpel for precision, this grammar vigilante reaches places that most others don't (correct apostrophe!) even realise need reaching.

Like Mr Apostrophiser, we bid professionals understand the importance of good punctuation - it helps to create meaning and readability. Equally, we pride ourselves on knowing our grammar. The apostrophe, however, is a busy little bee popping up in different grammatical scenarios, so I thought a quick recap might be helpful.

## Indicating possession

- Singular nouns: *Grandma's Christmas Tree*
- Plural nouns ending in "s": *The boys' Christmas presents*
- Plural nouns not ending in "s": *The children's Christmas stockings*

The joker in the pack here is to never put an apostrophe in "its" when indicating possession: *The Christmas tree and its brilliant white lights*. And be aware there is persistent controversy over the possessive form of names ending in "s" - is it the *Christmas'* or *Christmas's'*? (and yes, we are referring to anyone with the legitimate surname Christmas - thank you, Victoria).

Apostrophes are also used to express time or measurement in possessive form: *A week's holiday at Christmas*, or for the lucky ones, *two weeks' holiday at Christmas*.

## Indicating missing letters or numbers

- In contractions: *Do not* -> *don't*, *it is or it has* -> *it's*, *they are* -> *they're*, *cannot* -> *can't*, and so on.
- Omitted numbers in dates or numerical expressions: *The Christmas of '99*.

Although this rule doesn't apply for commonly accepted shortened words such as:

- Xmas (Christmas!)
- Fridge (refrigerator) and phone (telephone)
- Anything to do with addresses - Rd (road), Ave (avenue) or St (street) - presumably because it would cost councils too much in extra signage!

## Plurals

Apostrophes are generally a no-no in pluralisation, including abbreviations. It's *CDs* (not *CD's*) of *Christmas Carols* (older readers may recall the days when this wasn't the case, and Americans would still regard it as sacrilege).

## But there are always exceptions to the rule...

First, with the plural form of letters or numbers. This can cause some controversy, not least between UK English and American English. For example, *In the 1900s/1900's* (UK/US) *we had more white Christmases* or *Jane won the Christmas bingo with lots of 7s/7's* (you choose).

Second, with letters - *How many s's are there in Christmas?* Or *we'd better mind our p's and q's when Grandma comes on Christmas Day*.

And the really pesky one... *A list of Christmas* (a) *dos and don'ts*, (b) *do's and don'ts* or (c) *do's and don't's*? Reputable style guides vary here, so take your pick!

I hope you've enjoyed this quick apostrophal skirmish. Hats (not hat's) off to Mr Apostrophiser and to Lynne Truss for the brilliant "Eats, Shoots and Leaves" which has more esoteric examples and reference to the 'Apostropher Royal'. Check it out.

The boys'  
Christmas  
presents

The  
children's  
Christmas

Christmas'  
or Christmas's?

KATHRYN POTTER

# -ADVENT CONTENT CALENDAR FOR BID TEAMS

There's something rewarding about a good advent calendar as you open each little window or parcel - so why not have an Advent Calendar for Content? It's only got 15 days - because there are weekends and actual pre-Christmas days and office festivities...

If you follow each day's tips you'll have a plan to follow in the week between Christmas and New Year if you're enjoying a quiet, empty office or something energising to start 2025 with. If you already have a library this is a good way to make sure it's still doing what it should; if you haven't got one yet you'll have a good starting point to work from.

Time allocated - no more than 45 minutes a day and team effort.

- 1** Brainstorm what you want your content library to deliver and where you want it located.
- 2** Make a list of folders needed and/or review the ones already there (no more than three clicks to get to any information). Use this to create an index you can allocate owners to.
- 3** Review your style guide or set out a plan to create one if you don't have one yet.
- 4** Check each folder/section has an owner (someone to approve the content) and that they're the right person - add their details to the index.
- 5** Split the folders up across the bid team - if you are the bid team or it's a small team, get business development and pre-sales involved.
- 6** Go through each folder and see when things were last updated/created - anything older than three years needs a quick check/update - or possibly to be archived or deleted.
- 7** Carry on reviewing, archiving or deleting anything older than three years.
- 8** Spot the duplicates. Aim for no more than two versions of anything unless there is compelling reason to have more. Exercise the delete button.
- 9** Send anything that needs updating to the relevant owner with a brief note of what they need to do to it and a due date.
- 10** Apply the correct styles and templates to anything you're updating or reviewing.
- 11** Make a list of content to be developed or created and who to contact.
- 12** Contact relevant subject matter experts to make a date to catch up in the quiet week or early new year to discuss what's needed.
- 13** Draw up a list of infographics to discuss next year.
- 14** Outline a project plan to get on top of the content starting in January.
- 15** Go out with your team for hot chocolate and mince pies before breaking for Christmas and New Year.

*And don't forget to keep track of any feedback from submissions and incorporate this into updates as you work through things.*

# BE MORE MARIAH CAREY

VIRGINIA  
AINSCOUGH

**Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You" has marked the start of Christmas since 1994. Whilst Mariah is recognised for her vocals, for many years her skills as a songwriter went unrecognised.**

How does this relate to bid professionals? In my career, I've been both 'singer' as an account manager and 'songwriter' as a bid manager. How often does the former take all the glory (and bonus/commission), while the latter/team who has done most of the hard work isn't recognised?

The song's long-lasting success stems from it working as both a love song and Christmas song. Mariah understood her customer (the 'paying public') and what they wanted in a Christmas song (the 'product'). She was competing with hundreds of years of songs and memories (aka 'the incumbent'). To win the bid for a Christmas number one, she sprinkled in specific

Christmas references her audience wanted: the tree, presents, Father Christmas, a stocking, reindeer, sleigh bells, children singing, mistletoe (aka her 'win themes'). "That was my goal, to do something timeless that didn't feel like the '90s," Carey explained in a *Good Morning America* interview.

We can learn from her creative experience when bidding in a crowded market place. "I was working on it and thinking, 'What do I think about Christmas? What do I love? What do I want? What do I dream of?'" she said. If you replace the "do I" with "does our customer", it could help get your team's creative juices going when coming up with hot buttons and win themes. We are often bidding for long-standing products or services, so brainstorming sessions are important to create something different - as Mariah did when she devised an adult take on a Christmas song to reach a new (and very large) demographic with something everyone could identify with.

However, in getting herself recognised as the writer of "All I Want for Christmas is You", Mariah has also been criticised for not acknowledging the part her co-writer, Walter Afanasieff, played. He wasn't mentioned during her *Good Morning America* interview. Does this ring any bells for you as a bid professional?

My wish for you is to stop being the Cinderella in your organisation. Give yourself the gift of inner confidence to speak out and ensure your worth is recognised. One way to start this is in your post-submission White Hat review. Make sure the contribution of the bid professionals is acknowledged, documented and circulated to senior management.



**NIGEL DENNIS**

# PLEASE SIR, I WANT SOME MORE...

**Bidding is intense. It's exhilarating, unpredictable and stressful - sometimes all within minutes. It takes a special type of person to thrive in our profession, and it takes a special environment to make that happen.**

For that reason, I'm incredibly proud that BidWrite's efforts to build a winning culture have been recognised with an Australian Business Association 2024 Employer of Choice award.

Sure, this award acknowledges that we have all the right policies and procedures in place. But for me it goes much deeper. It reflects our efforts to build a working environment that's co-created by our staff, all of whom work so incredibly hard to achieve success for our clients.

But it hasn't always been like that. I admit that when establishing BidWrite 16 years ago I viewed staff solely as a means to achieving particular commercial outcomes. Thankfully, since then I've come to realise that staff are people too, and that de-humanising them is a sure way to kill culture.

So, for this issue I am not listing what I want for Christmas. Here are nine things the BidWrite team have told me are valuable enough to be gift-wrapped and placed under the tree - every year!

1. **Commitment:** having a passion for our craft and the quality of our work, so we can deliver over-the-odds value for clients.
2. **Harmony:** respecting that different colleagues have different needs and enabling an environment that allows us to bring our best to the table.
3. **Resilience:** supporting each other through life's inevitable ups and downs.
4. **Inclusivity:** welcoming and valuing colleagues from a rich blend of social and cultural backgrounds.
5. **Support:** empowering us all to do our best work, irrespective of how much pressure we are under or how busy we are.
6. **Teamwork:** feeling part of the 'same team' in an open environment, striving together to produce results we are proud of.

7. **Mentorship:** having more experienced colleagues unselfishly entertain our questions and guide us daily.
8. **Adaptability:** always, always finding a way to help clients win.
9. **Synergy:** ensuring memorable instances where everything just comes together, whether perfectly or imperfectly.

If that's not a blueprint for a high performing 'bid sleighing' team then I don't know what is.

So what do I want? That's simple. As CEO, and with an ode to the famous line by Oliver Twist, "Please sir, I want some more". I want to keep delivering what our team needs so they can continue to do their best work for clients and each other. Although we have proven to be making great strides, the pursuit is never over. Bring on 2025!

Until then, here's wishing all BQ readers a safe and (hopefully) peaceful Christmas.

# SECRET SANTA: PERFECT GIFTS FOR PROPOSAL PROS

CERI  
MESCALL

'Tis the season...of annual leave, holiday parties, and January 2 deadlines. Your team has been 'sleighting it' all year and decides to play Secret Santa.

**Your proposal manager appreciates the neatly wrapped parcel that arrives early. They open their present to reveal...**

- A well-written RFP with clear mandatory and rated requirements
- Flexible submittal instructions – no font type/size or word/page count restrictions
- A bidder briefing with an opportunity for live Q&A

They're able to minimise the number of clarifications, give their graphic designer flexibility, and develop compelling win themes. They guess that Secret Santa is...the customer's procurement contact!

**Bonus:** Strategic Proposals' Bidders Guide to Buying whitepaper offers advice on how to engage potential suppliers effectively through an RFP process - <https://strategicproposals.com/en-ca/cat-white-papers/entry/our-new-white-paper-the-bidders-view-of-buying>

**Your proposal writer smiles when they see the calligraphy label. They read...**

- Timely proposal draft feedback in the format requested
- Specific recommendations for improvement with rationale for the changes
- Suggested replacement wording

They can consolidate comments quickly, close gaps effectively, and elevate scoring 10-20%. They think Secret Santa is...the internal reviewer!

**Bonus:** Agree a process for incorporating comments after the review (e.g. use a decision log for potentially contentious or conflicting comments).

**Your proposal coordinator receives three packages. They multi-task and unwrap them all at once to hear about...**

- Sponsorship for training/certifications
- Access to role models, coaches and mentors across your organisation
- Stretch assignments with appropriate support

They're able to understand industry terminology, feel more confident, and ask questions. They believe Secret Santa is...the proposal team leader!

**Bonus:** Consider how your organisational design, hiring and development practices need to change in alignment with Generative AI use (e.g. revised job descriptions).

**Your graphic designer notices the complementary colours of the paper and ribbon. They open their gift and are excited to see...**

- The phrase "make it pretty" has been banned
- There are example diagrams from past proposals rather than illegible sketches on cocktail napkins
- The creative brief has been completed

They can prepare a design concept and mood board, expedite graphic development, and understand the customer's communication style. They guess Secret Santa is... the business development manager!

**Bonus:** Make sure your approach is collaborative rather than transactional (e.g. engage your graphic designer early - invite them to your kick-off and win strategy workshops).



**Your proposal team leader makes sure they unwrap their present last. They're pleasantly surprised to receive...**

- An approved budget for 2025
- Proposal metrics that go beyond win rate and proposal volume
- Proposal-related KPIs for subject matter experts contributing content

They're able to recruit, retain and train, plus reduce the risk of burnout. They believe Secret Santa is...their organisation's leadership/the proposal sponsor!

**Bonus:** Evaluate where the proposal function sits within your organisation and how you can raise their profile (e.g. internal good news stories/case studies on proposal wins).

# THE GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST AND YET TO COME

As the year draws to a close, it is often a time for reflection - including on the bids you submitted and the client feedback you received. We often focus only on feedback from the 'past' - what comments were received from the buying authority? How did we score? However, there is much (festive) cheer in being able to take on feedback you have received at the very start of the procurement lifecycle, to help shape a successful submission 'yet to come'.

Client feedback can be generous like Old Fezziwig in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* or have more semblance to Ebenezer Scrooge. Either way, it is important to take the 'gifts' from both the past and future submission feedback.

Past feedback will contain many beneficial elements to help embed a continuous improvement ethos in your bid process applicable to bids won or lost.

These include:

- **Strengths** - What has the evaluator highlighted as impressive? Is it a reference to a particular policy or client objective? If so, can this approach be used again for similar, future submissions?
- **Weaknesses** - What are the obvious weaknesses the client has raised? This could be lack of relevant evidence, which instigates a re-fresh of case study information to ensure correct alignment for bids.
- **Key words** - What key words or phrases has the client used to demonstrate what type of future supplier they want? These will act as clues to the hot buttons for future procurement opportunities.

Perhaps the more thoughtful (seasonal) gift from the procurement process is the 'future' feedback that will strengthen the bid that is yet to come. This is often in the form of solid pre-tender engagement, such as briefing webinars or 'meet the buyer' days.

This level of engagement regularly includes key information such as provisional scope of services, contract terms and estimated project value, as well as aspects such as what their priority outcomes are and unique social value requirements. All these will enable you to pull together a client focussed and meaningful submission when the bid arrives.

Bid feedback, past and future, should always be viewed in the spirit of goodwill, where lessons learnt and continuous improvement can be enhanced. Take advice from Scrooge following the visitations of Christmas spirits past, present and future: "I will not shut out the lessons that they teach."

But what about the ghosts of Christmas present (the client engagement during a live tender process)? That is a fireside story (with optional mince pie and mulled wine) for another time...



# GIFT-WRAPPING YOUR PROPOSAL FOR SUCCESS

LARISSA  
CORNELIUS

Let's discuss the spirit of holiday design in proposals.

"Emotional response to visual content can influence a consumer's intent to buy by up to 80%." *Psychology Today*

As the holiday season approaches, the competition can feel as fierce as shopping on Christmas Eve. How do you make your proposals stand out and deliver a lasting impression?

The answer lies in applying design strategies that echo holiday warmth and resonate with clients on an emotional level.

1

## STEP 1 - EMPOWERING DESIGN THINKING

### Unwrapping the power of visual appeal

Like a beautifully wrapped gift, a proposal that harnesses the magic of design thinking should captivate and engage right from the start.

93% of people say visual appearance is key to their decision-making, so make your proposals visually inviting (source *Kissmetrics*). Think of warm colours, subtle touches, or thematic layouts that don't overwhelm but gently remind clients of the season's joy (or, more importantly, the joy the outcomes of your solutions offer).

2

## STEP 2 - MASTERING TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

### The perfect wrapping paper

Remember, your 'wrapping paper' (the layout, font choice, imagery) should enhance the story you're telling.

Elevate your proposal by using design tools to make every detail count. Simple elements like tailored headers or motifs can be impactful without being overbearing. Use high-quality images to evoke emotion (the right ones—no Grinches needed).

3

## STEP 3 - REAL SUCCESS STORIES

### The proof is in the pudding

Real-life success stories (and the visuals and videos) prove that proposals combining creativity with strategy win more often. Bringing more cheer!

Share visual examples illustrating how a little festive flair (or your solutions) made a difference. Like proposals that use thoughtful design touches to stand out in crowded inboxes or effectively capture a client's end-of-year ambitions.

After all, the holidays are about going the extra mile.

SUCCESS

## RINGING IN THE WINS

Successful proposals during the holidays show high engagement and better win rates because they stand out. Like a well-wrapped gift, clients remember the extra effort, which makes all the difference. Delivering a bid that feels crafted just for them demonstrates care and commitment.

## THE GIFT OF VALUE

This holiday season, consider your proposal a gift to your client. Beyond all the visuals and 'holiday touches', what will make it memorable is the lasting value it promises. Show how your solution will continue to provide returns long after the season ends, making it a gift that keeps giving.

Make every month special with more design tips. [Click here](#) for more design tips from nFold.



# THE GIFT OF NEGOTIATION

As Christmas approaches, many of us will be finalising those last-minute bids, wishing for a win to end the year. What if this Christmas, we gave ourselves the gift of negotiation mastery? Negotiation is about creating a win-win situation where all parties feel valued. Think of it as unwrapping presents under the tree – you want everyone to walk away with something they're excited about. In bids, this means negotiating effectively with your sales team, subject matter experts (SMEs), clients, and your bid team.

RITA MASCIA

## Trimming the wish list

Sales teams often promise clients the moon – a faster project delivery, extra services, or pricing discounts. However, not every promise is feasible. Imagine negotiating with a sales lead who has promised a software upgrade within a three-month timeline while your tech team knows it requires six months. Negotiation here means collaborating to strike a balance.

## Focusing SME input on what shines brightest

When working with SMEs, the challenge is gathering enough valuable input without overloading the bid. For example, an SME might want to include detailed technical specifications in a bid that's meant to be high-level. Too much information could overwhelm the client. Here, negotiation involves asking the SME to focus on the most impactful data – what is a case study

or success metric that can make the biggest difference for the client? That's the star on top of the tree.

## Wrapping up the perfect deal

Negotiating with clients can be tricky. Imagine a client who wants to expand the project scope without increasing the budget - perhaps they ask for an extra service or faster delivery. You could offer a discount for a longer contract or suggest reducing a less critical part of the project to stay within budget. By offering reasonable compromises, you reassure them that the final package will meet their goals - like finding that perfect gift under the tree.

## Tying the perfect bow

Negotiating within your team is often the most overlooked part of the process. Each member

brings different 'gifts' and it's important to harmonise them. Picture this: your marketing team wants to push a creative angle for a bid while your finance team is focused on cutting costs. Perhaps you agree to include some creative elements while maintaining a strict budget. Negotiation is about finding common ground. Allow space for honest conversations and address conflicts early. Treat these discussions like wrapping a gift – you need the right amount of tension for the bow to look perfect.

This Christmas let's embrace negotiation as our 'bid present'. By honing our negotiation skills, we'll end the year with stronger bids, better relationships, and a festive spirit of collaboration that lasts well beyond the holidays.

# SANTA'S UPGRADE FOR YOUR PROPOSALS

JAVIER ESCARTIN

A better gift for 2025 is to think about what's new in the AI bidding tech space. I've called this "Santa's Upgrade" and that's as cheesy as this article gets. (Believe me, it's better this way; I'm more of a direct-insights guy).

Since late 2022, everybody has been busy trying to land this "AI thing" into their respective fields - me included - and we have cracked part of the puzzle with tools and chatbots. But the overall feeling (and real-life implementation) can be summarised as "meh".

## It seems that's about to change.

A new type of AI solution, which we who sell software insist on calling "agents", has already been born and will likely define how teams work with AI in the coming years.

The funny thing is that, at least for now, AI agents are not much smarter or more capable than your current AI. They just integrate much better into the workflows everybody has in place, which I bet will rocket-ship implementation by erasing learning curves.

Most bidding peers are currently disappointed with AI because they haven't found useful ways around its inherent limitations. Struggling to select the right set of inputs so you don't overwhelm it, working with that two-page cap for a single request, the hallucinations

hiding in your drafts, and the out-of-the-box robotic style - these are examples of current AI limitations which can be overcome if the time (almost) no one has invested.

We are entering a year where you won't need to work around AI limitations anymore; just assign some tasks as you'd do with a remote colleague and wait for the AI agent to figure it out. Even with the same level of intelligence, this change in user experience is big and for the better. That's what I believe anyhow.

The first part of this article's gift is the raw insight: AI agents are already a thing you may want to have a look at. Here's a start: <https://deeprfp.com/blog/category/agents/>

The second part is opening the conversation so you have a chance to think about this: how can these new tools (that feel more like working with remote colleagues) improve your bidding and proposals?

Now, for closing, let me try to put that in a more holiday-like tone.

Sometimes, the most valuable gifts aren't physical objects but ideas that transform our way of working.

**Happy bidding!**

# A CAREER IN CAPTURE - A CALLING OR A COINCIDENCE?

NICKI DODDS



**The framework for capture management has been firmly established over the last decade, with formal accreditations launched and methodologies refined. Today you can pursue a career which has capture management at its core rather than as an accessory to bidding. I hadn't considered at the start of my career that capture was my calling. Then came a very particular day which changed everything.**

I heard of an exciting bid imminently coming to market. When I learned we didn't have a well-established relationship and strong position with the client, I was more disappointed than getting the tape measure in a Christmas cracker. What followed was the usual series of team pressures with hard bidding on the back foot. We won! But the bid was as challenging for everyone involved as wrapping and delivering all your gifts on Christmas

Eve. Sound familiar? I realised that capture might have changed this story. And this is where my capture career started.

I liken capture to training for a race. Usain Bolt won his 100 metre races before he touched the start line. He knew his start was his competitive weakness so he trained for that explosive beginning. By the last 10 metres, no one could catch him. He didn't want to be second and neither do I! Competing without preparation is like auditioning for a festive play without learning your lines or understanding your audience. What is the point in competing if you haven't put in the hard yards in training to win?

Capture management is not new. **Capture Past?** It has been around as long as Ebenezer Scrooge. But capture as a career choice *is* new. I had earned my proposal management, writer

and designer stripes by then, but the excitement and complexity of positioning-to-win really called to me after this experience. Perhaps it was my calling rather than coincidence. A bright star leading the way. Either way, capture management is my **Capture Present**: a challenging, exciting and highly rewarding career.

As for **Capture Future?** All I want for Christmas is for others to *choose* capture, rather than arriving by chance or expecting it to be delivered on a reindeer-drawn sleigh. If you know capture might change your chances of winning great contracts, why not get capture educated in 2025 and add it to your repertoire?



MICHAEL BROWN

# SANTA'S LITTLE HELPER: PROPOSAL TIPS FOR A WINNING CHRISTMAS

**As the festive season draws near and the moth-bitten stockings and plastic trees are retrieved from crumbling cardboard boxes, spare a little thought for bid teams, beavering away like elves in hope of festive cheer. Here are some thoughts around proposals in this special time.**

## **Don't assume things will slow down - plan for a busy Santa's workshop**

Companies often spend great efforts to demonstrate the festive season is a time to slow down and let your hair down, what with Christmas parties and often mandatory leave days in between Christmas and New Year. While this is welcomed by most, I have witnessed first-hand that clients may not be so accommodating, especially in global bid teams. One suggestion is to ask if anyone wants to work during this presumed downturn. I personally enjoy working the few days between Christmas and New Year to get things done and then take time in lieu later on. Not everyone wants to down Santa's tools as soon as the reindeers and the big bearded man have left Lapland.

**Recognise some sore heads – not necessarily from festive partying but from a long and tiring year!**

The end of year period has a psychological impact on all of us. It is often the realisation of how quickly time has passed and of how much work has been done. It should be a time of reflection and congratulation of all the achievements in the year to date. There is also a natural instinct to want to lighten the workload and cut short the long hours. This is often at odds with the wishes of clients to get RFPs out before the end of the year; as burnout increases, so may workload. Leaders need to empathise with teams and work around the need to give people a break whilst maintaining quality.

**Even clients enjoy some festive cheer, and most have a sense of humour!**

One final point about bidding at this time of year is that it's perfectly acceptable to add a little festive flavour in your proposals and presentations. Adding a reference to 'Season's Greetings' or even some tongue in cheek 'Christmas discounts' can go a long way in differentiating yourself from your competition – who may even come across as Scrooge if your offering stands out!

**Season's Greetings everyone!**

# HO(W), HO(W), HO(W)

ANDY HAIGH



**“How” is a simple word we encounter in every RFP and ITT. “How will you meet the performance targets? “How will your proposed service delivery model meet our requirements?” Carefully crafting answers to these questions is no Christmas cracker joke. And when you have finished, it’s my turn to evaluate the responses.**

When I mark response drafts as ‘not good’, the authors are often surprised. “We said we’d do everything they need. Why isn’t that enough?”, they ask. Most often because claims that performance targets will be met through “robust” and “world-class support” are unproven. Evaluators will dismiss this as marketing fluff. They may even get annoyed, choosing not to give any extra points. Proven claims carry more weight. But if the “how” is not addressed, then the question hasn’t been answered – and the evaluators would be justified in awarding zero marks.

Evaluators want to see a clear process describing the “how”; they need to see ownership and transparency to have any assurance the solution will achieve what they need.

You can unwrap the “how” for evaluators by:

- Describing your process as a roadmap to success
- Specifying who will lead and execute each step (Who’s steering the sleigh?)

- Explaining the purpose and value of each step (Why take this route over another?)
- Laying out your timeline and measures for success (When will each step be completed and how will progress be tracked?)
- Detailing your reporting plans and contingency actions (In case a chill wind blows you off course.)
- Providing evidence of where you’ve done this before, including demonstrable successes (After all, the proof is in the Christmas pudding!)

If you can deliver on these points, your proposal will be in great shape to score well. It’s a bit like packing for a winter holiday getaway – tricky to fit in all the essentials, but essential for making it to your destination. Think of your detailed response as a beautifully wrapped present to the evaluator. Show you’re prepared, confident and ready to deliver and they will be as delighted as a child with a shiny new bike on Christmas morning.

Remember that answering every “how” question completely and thoroughly will give you the best chance to make your solution the gift that keeps on giving – at Christmas or any time of year!

# ROCKING AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE...

PIPPA BIRCH

'Tis the season to be jolly...

...nearly. This time of the year also sees conferences, exhibitions, and get-togethers. We all feel differently about networking – from crippling social anxiety to full-on hugging everyone. Recently, I've seen an appetite for getting back together in-person, as proven at the International Day for Bids and Proposals connections event in September. So how can we get the best out of these occasions?

- **Prepare in advance:** Understand why you are going and what you want. Set yourself a target, e.g. I want to connect with five new people, or I want to get at least one lead for my business. Think about interesting conversation starters that avoid boring small talk, e.g. "What do you most enjoy about your role?"
- **Breeeeaathe:** Even the most confident people find networking hard. I love people and am a proper hugger, but since the pandemic I get anxious about large groups. My coping mechanism for handling this? Use breathing techniques like the Wim Hof method – breathe into the belly before expanding your lungs and then breathe out long and slow through pursed lips. I do this five times, and it settles my heart rate before I head on in.
- **Look for the group with a gap:** A great way to join conversations is to look for the group with a gap and insert yourself with a "May I join you?". It's not

always easy if you are at an event where people know each other, so I'd urge you all to *create* that gap too – you never know who you might encourage into your conversation

- **Do the LinkedIn thing:** It's rare that people have physical business cards now, and LinkedIn has a brilliant feature which allows you to connect easily. Click on the search bar then the icon with the 4 squares – this brings up your unique QR code that others can scan and connect immediately.
- **Follow-up with your connections:** What's the point in networking if you speak to fascinating people on the day and never connect with them again? Set yourself a reminder a week later to drop them a message and include a call to action. For example, "It was great speaking with you about your plans for the future, I'd love to hear how you are getting on".

**And a bonus tip, because it's nearly Christmas:**

There are many more tips for networking effectively – look after your social battery, actively listen, write everything down, be flexible etc. Find #BidBites on LinkedIn and look for October's article – it includes masses of great networking advice from your bidding peers. Why not share your tips in the comments too?

**And the most important thing? Just throw yourself in – something magical just might happen!**

# AN END TO 2ND JANUARY DEADLINES!

ALISON ZALECKI



## **Yes, it still happens. Every. Humbug. Year.**

I've already had a good public moan about this on LinkedIn and Instagram this year when Contracting Authorities hit Mozer's clients with more summer deadlines than I've ever seen in my 15 years in bids. It's hard enough to juggle childcare, work deadlines, and attempt a family holiday over summer when everyone is taking time off at different points. But Christmas? This time of year offers the best chance at a genuine break whilst everyone else in the Western world is doing the same thing.

## **Why Contracting Authorities do this to us**

Is it because their own timetables have shifted, and they must turn it around by a critical date? Are they testing bidders to see who wants the contract the most? Yep, an international Contracting Authority actually said this to one of our well-known architect clients! Or is it just thoughtlessness?

## **And the Monday deadlines**

Earlier this year, I had a chat with a Project Manager at a national consultancy that runs procurements processes, and he said, "If I set a Friday deadline, I'm not going to open it until Monday anyway, so I might as well give bidders a few more days". Nice thought, but that means bidders are working their weekends. And if you're

working in bids for a living, it means you nearly always work your weekends. Blame Parkinson's Law where "work expands to fill the time available until the completion date". If you have a week to turn something around, you do it. If you get an extension for a week, you'll fill it. I appealed to the Project Manager to move them to Fridays. We don't need the extra few days; we need weekends to switch off from work.

## **How to ask for an extension**

Here's some text you can cut and paste into a clarification box for your Christmas bid deadlines. Make the request early. An organised ask and (with a bit of luck) anyone with a bit of Christmas spirit (and sense!) should understand – especially if they want to keep you in the running.

***As the submission deadline is in the Christmas break period, members of our team will be taking their annual leave. We want to be able to honour this and let them spend time with their families whilst balancing our commitment to presenting the best possible submission to you. Would it be possible to extend the deadline to the third week of January to allow us to do this?***

So, public sector clients, please plan your procurement timetable better, and put an end to 2nd January deadlines!



# ALL I WANT FOR YOU THIS CHRISTMAS...

CLARE FOLEY

**Bid managers are used to doing a dozen things at a time. It's something we are brilliant at. Juggling multiple bids, plugging the gap of an absent team member, checking deliverables are on track and getting the approvals in place... Add to that making sure the kids are taken care of, being around to let the plumber in or making sure there is food in the fridge, and you can see we are pretty good at keeping multiple plates spinning.**

But just because we CAN do it all the time, it doesn't mean that we SHOULD. In fact, it's important we give ourselves downtime to just do nothing. Step away from the spinning plates! And just be.

At home, if you're not really in the room, your loved ones will pick up on that. Plus, if you're making mental notes of the 34 things you need to do when you get back to the office, you're not giving yourself the time to really replenish.

It's tempting during holidays to have a sneaky peak at your inbox and clear a few jobs. But what if this Christmas you gave yourself the gift of really being present with the people that matter for you? Yes, there may be deadlines in the new year but have you ever actually missed one? I bet you haven't – and you won't make that happen by allowing yourself the time and space to really switch off and enjoy yourself.

In fact, one of the things you can do to ensure you do a good job in the new year is to recharge your batteries. Sleeping and watching a few crappy old films are part of that but don't underestimate the importance of fun and connection when it comes to replenishing your energy. More importantly, be there for the people in your life who really matter. And include yourself in that please.

If you still need a work/life justification, breakthroughs often happen when you give yourself the space to just be. So if you are ruminating

over a challenge at work, you may well find the answer presents itself when you just switch off.

All I want for you this Christmas is to give yourself the gift of time. Give yourself permission to relax, sleep and really be present with your loved ones and just chill. Take care of yourself this Christmas, so that you get to be your favourite version of yourself at work and at home as well.

**Merry Christmas!**



# IN BIDDING WE CAN'T ALL BE SANTA, BUT...

**We cannot make proposals without providing a price. There are an almost infinite number of ways to calculate and present prices for the products and services we provide. Yet pricing is one of the core criteria on which all proposals are inevitably evaluated.**

**As it will soon be Christmas, here's my pricing advice – neatly wrapped.**

## **Product > Price**

Having the right price is meaningless without the right product or service. In the end it will be the quality of the product you deliver that defines whether your price was high or low. It can sound like stating the obvious, but the most important part of pricing is actually to move the focus away from pricing and onto *what* you are pricing.

*The wrong product will always be too expensive.*

Your job as a proposal writer is to explain why your product is right – and thereby why your price is too.

## ANDERS DYRHOLM

### **Be transparent**

The best way to get a fair price for the product or service you're selling is by explaining how you got there. All the clients I've ever met hate 'black boxes'. They don't mind that I need to make money selling my product but they can't stand me being secretive about how I got my number. Lack of transparency creates distrust. If you can't or won't explain how you got there, what else aren't you telling me?

### **Get rid of discounts**

Discounts are a clear path to a muddy client relationship. Your ability to give a discount means that the first price wasn't the right one. Why should a client believe that the second price is?

### **Always deliver more**

When a client doesn't know you there is a high probability that any price you offer them will be considered "high". Again – the price itself is irrelevant. It's what the client is paying for that matters. When they don't know you they will be less certain of whether you can deliver the quality you promise, and thereby more wary of your prices.

So when you do win, always ensure you deliver more than they expected. Proposals are a marathon – not a sprint. You are never stronger than your last delivery.

Your references are your chance to talk about value instead of price – and to make your price seem reasonable, because the client knows you can make good on your promises.

A low price won't make a client trust you. But explaining why you charge what you charge and proving they made the right choice might make them trust you in the future – ensuring your bids will be on clients' wish lists for next Christmas too.





**SAM BURNS**

# WINNING WITH WARMTH

Can we really create a positive team environment and influence at the same time? The answer, simply, is yes! I'm always looking at how we can transform leadership behaviours to better both business outcomes and team fulfilment. By applying principles of influence we can create a supportive, high-performing team environment ready for any tight timescale or poorly written client requirement.

Here's a look at a few influential principles and how they can transform your leadership powers.

### **Principle 1: Reciprocity**

The principle of reciprocity suggests that people feel obliged to return favours or positive actions. In a team setting, when you offer support or help to a colleague, they're likely to return the gesture, creating a cycle of cooperation and collaboration.

During the bidding process, when you notice a teammate under pressure, offer help - whether that's taking on a few tasks, providing resources, or simply being a supportive listener. This not only boosts morale but also fosters a culture where team members are more willing to support each other, enhancing overall performance.

### **Principle 2: Social Proof**

Social proof suggests that people follow the actions of others, especially when they're uncertain about how to behave. If you establish a culture where collaboration, appreciation and positivity are visible, others are more likely to follow suit.

Lead by example. If you show appreciation openly, celebrate small team victories, and recognise contributions, these behaviours will become norms. When people see such actions valued, they're more likely to adopt them, creating a ripple effect of positive influence throughout the team.

### **Principle 3: The Pygmalion Effect**

The Pygmalion Effect states that people tend to perform better when higher expectations are placed upon them. When leaders express confidence in their team's abilities and set clear, ambitious goals, they create an environment that drives higher performance.

Set challenging but achievable goals for the bid team, and communicate your belief in their skills and potential. Combine this approach with regular, genuine recognition of their efforts. When people feel valued and capable, they are more likely to be motivated, leading to better collaboration and stronger results.

### **Wrapping up on a high**

By incorporating psychological principles of influence, we can create an even more effective and engaged team dynamic. But ultimately, nothing replaces being authentic – show genuine care, build real connections, and remember that the things you do matter. This is all I want for Christmas because I really do believe what we do in our day job massively impacts people on a personal level. And there is always a better way to achieve good results, even if it is something simple!



# A CHRISTMAS VISION

My BQ Christmas present for you is something to think about. It's your vision for your career and yourself. Many people contact me for advice on where they should go in their careers and how to develop themselves. Some are early doors in their careers, some are in the middle and some are meandering toward retirement.

My first piece of advice to them is: take a step back and create a vision for yourself. Have a think through (perhaps with your partner if you have one) where you see your life being. Don't focus on specific jobs, or specific companies you're working for (or might want to work for), or even specific businesses you start yourself. Just consider where you see yourself and what your life looks and feels like in five, ten and 20 years' time.

Split your vision into three streams of activity:

- **Income generation** - How much is necessary for the life you want?
- **Personal** - Where do you want to live? Where will your children (if you have them) go to school? What is most important to you?
- **Wellbeing and achievement** - What kinds of things are you going to do for yourself?

If you create your roadmap from this information, you will give yourself a North Star from which you can inform decision making. Once you know where you're going, you can draw dotted lines back from that which can influence the kinds of decisions you make. Perhaps you push for a promotion, leave and get a job somewhere else, move to a different area or start your own business.

If you develop your vision through that kind of lens, you will be much more successful no matter what decision you make. We do have a free tool in our Destination Freedom programme to help get you down the road you have visualised. You can find it here: <https://destinationfreedom.online/playbook>



# THE GIFT OF THE PROCUREMENT ACT GOING LIVE

GEMMA WARING



The Procurement Act 2023 (going live on 24 February 2025) marks a major shift for suppliers navigating UK procurement, with reforms focused on enhancing transparency, commerciality, and fairness in public contracts. All of this will benefit suppliers, especially those savvy enough to take advantage of it from day one.

## Transparency

Key notices under this Act include:

- **Pipeline Notice:** All authorities spending £100 million or more on public contracts must disclose major procurement plans over the next 18 months, providing foresight into future opportunities.
- **Pre-market Engagement Notice:** Authorities must produce this notice before a tender, detailing any pre-market engagement undertaken or explaining why they haven't done any. This will help suppliers responding reactively to tenders or missing early engagement to still compete effectively.
- **Procurement Termination Notice:** Authorities starting but later abandoning a procurement must publicly disclose their reasons. This transparency helps us identify the authorities who do this regularly - we all know who they are!
- **Payments Compliance Notice:** This notice reveals how many days, on average, an authority takes to pay invoices and what percentage are paid within 30 days. Won't it be nice to profile potential customers based on this?
- **Contract Performance Notice:** For contracts valued above £5 million, this notice details performance against contractual KPIs, providing valuable insights into competitors and the success of large projects.

## Commerciality

The Act also aims to simplify procurement processes and eliminate repetitive steps, such as completing the same SQ (Selection Questionnaire) multiple times. Instead, suppliers will use a centralised electronic SQ, accessible through the new digital platform. Additionally, the introduction of Dynamic Markets, Open Frameworks, and the Competitive Flexible Procedure will remove repetitive parts of the tendering process and make procurements faster end-to-end. While faster processes might not always yield the best outcomes, the reduction in paperwork and time spent can make engaging with public sector tenders more attractive, especially for SMEs/VCSEs.

## Fairness

The Act will establish the Procurement Review Unit (PRU). Acting as a semi-independent regulatory body, the PRU oversees compliance with procurement laws, offers guidance, and manages the supplier debarment process. For suppliers, the PRU provides a centralised accountability point and a mechanism for addressing concerns, promoting fair treatment. For authorities, it enforces a more rigorous approach to managing unsuitable or poorly performing suppliers. I think this oversight may encourage closer collaboration between suppliers and buyers to avoid scrutiny and deal with issues in-house rather than airing it in public.

**Bring on 24th February - and here's hoping for no further delays!**



# THE HIDDEN GIFT OF INTERNSHIPS

**Internships have become a big part of university life for undergraduates, recent graduates and people wanting to gain invaluable experience. The term internship is increasingly used to reflect a salaried placement programme, from three to 18 months, where people gain experience in an array of different departments (often for three to four months at a time). While there is no restriction on age (and I'm sure many of you will have seen both *The Intern* (Robert De Niro) and *The Internship* (Vince Vaughn) movies), internships are mainly opportunities for younger people to gain valuable experience and exposure to working life in different environments.**

## **Peter McPartland:**

As UK Head of Bids and Presentations, I was asked in May 2024 to host Jamie Lewis, an undergraduate studying Business Economics at the University of Liverpool. This would be the first of his four seats in the Crawford & Company internship programme, spending four months in each. When the theme for BQ20 was announced, Jamie and I both felt his time with the bids team was something of an unexpected gift for us all.

Jamie confidently provided us with ideas from a fresh perspective which enhanced our thinking as he was not influenced by previous roles. His attention to detail and ability to patiently support people who needed more attention was invaluable. This meant we became even more productive and efficient and there was a visible positive impact on the momentum on projects. He also enriched the appreciation the Bid Execs within the team had of their own talents.

The reality is that I'd never given thought to what we would offer an intern or what they would contribute in return.

My message for all leaders of bid and presentation departments: you have a lot to offer an intern and they will bring a wealth of value to you and your teams.

## **Jamie Lewis:**

It became increasingly clear during my second year of university that while qualifications are clearly important, education gained through real life experience is vital. Seeking out experience is a big part of university life and placements or internships are extremely sought after. Expectations of employers and the high standard of applicants wanting to start careers means strong qualifications must be augmented with enriched experience.

This was my first ever 9-5 office job and I had very minimal knowledge of what bids were. Admittedly, I had always watched bids for the World Cup or Commonwealth Games with interest and I was intrigued to see if my thinking was on the right lines. On meeting Peter on my first day, he pointed out the internship was something new to both of us. We agreed both we and other members of the bids team should work hard to ensure we all learnt and benefitted from our time together.

The bids department showed me how important strong people skills and emotional intelligence are in enabling project teams to excel. Creating environments for constructive challenge and development of ideas was something that became apparent very early on. People working on bids all have different

talents, styles and experiences. Leadership is needed to bring these individuals together and ensure the customer remains at the centre of the bid and pitch. This knowledge, amongst other things (for example the importance of creativity and psychology to maximise the impact on audiences), were real standouts from working within a bids department.

What also felt unique was that the bids team is both a very client facing and internally facing team. I was able to quickly understand what makes our propositions compelling and engage with a wide variety of functions. This was an added bonus to the first seat of my internship.

I genuinely could not have hoped for more as I reflect on my time with the bids team. I encourage interns to seek out opportunities within bidding environments. You have so much to offer and the experience you receive from an important area within a business will be incredibly rewarding.



# SLEIGHING THE COMPETITION

CHRISTINA CARTER

When proposal and sales teams align as strategic partners, their collaboration can be transformative. Proposals become more than just documents - they become competitive assets that drive revenue and capture key market opportunities. I've seen how aligning with sales leaders can elevate the proposal team from a transactional exchange to a dynamic, results-driven partnership.

## 1. Speak to Sales Leaders' Core Objectives

Sales leaders operate in a high-stakes, target-driven environment. Their professional goals revolve around meeting quotas, shortening sales cycles, and maximising revenue - objectives that a strong proposal team directly supports. We must align with these goals with transparent, metrics-driven communication. Rather than merely delivering proposals, we need to demonstrate the measurable value our proposals bring to revenue and growth.

Data is our ally here. By showing that proposals contribute substantially to the bottom line (e.g., proposals drive \$15 million in quarterly revenue), we reinforce our work's strategic importance. This approach goes beyond standard project updates, helping sales leaders see our role as integral to achieving their sales targets.

## 2. Build a Unified Strategy

Sales leaders possess deep insights into the client's pain points and business objectives. As proposal experts, we know how to translate that understanding into a structured, persuasive response that aligns with the client's needs. Creating a collaborative win strategy - one that merges client insight with proposal expertise - positions the proposal as a cohesive solution rather than a set of transactional responses.

## 3. Use Data and Insights as Competitive Tools

The most effective sales-proposal partnerships use data as a continuous feedback loop. Sales leaders often have access to client feedback, deal outcomes, and performance metrics, which can enhance proposal content and approach. For proposal teams, tapping into this data gives us what we need to refine our approach with precision and relevance, enhancing win rates over time.

And highlighting the data that sales leaders care about - strategic value, operational efficiency, and financial impact - is just as important for your team. By showing via data that your proposals are driving a substantial portion of new revenue, you can strengthen the relationship and establish proposals as a vital component of the sales engine.

## 4. Streamline Processes for Maximum Efficiency

Sales leaders often view proposals as time-intensive distractions from client-facing work. Streamlining your processes through templates, content libraries, and automation/GAI tools allows you to deliver high-quality proposals quickly and efficiently, freeing sales leaders to focus on closing deals. Clear process improvements also help you communicate your contributions in tangible terms, further solidifying the proposal team's strategic role.

An efficient process isn't just about speed; it's about creating a system that sales leaders trust. When proposals are delivered on time and with precision, it reinforces our credibility, making sales leaders more likely to engage in future collaborative efforts.

## 5. Invest in Training and Development

You become a thought leader within your sales team by deciding to become one. Give workshops, trainings, and strategy sessions on your area of sales expertise.

When you teach your sales leaders something new and help their teams win more, you'll become trusted advisors who add strategic value.

## A Partnership That Wins

When proposal and sales teams operate well and respect each other, the benefits are clear: higher win rates, shorter sales cycles, and a competitive edge that distinguishes you from the competition. You can transform your proposal team into a recognised strategic asset.

# “WE’RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER”

*HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL*

**Bid teams work hard to create proposals set on a stage of logical reasons explaining why theirs is the best show in town. They often recruit freelance team members able to integrate seamlessly. Before joining civil infrastructure and building bid teams, I ask key questions to ensure I work effectively from day one:**

**What’s the big picture?** Engineers are naturally drawn to the ‘weeds’ (technical details). This is usually essential, but only with sound understanding of higher levels, e.g. the client’s required business outcomes and overall project delivery strategy. Useful early information for me includes the:

- Procuring client’s vision, mission, and values
- Design and Access Statement (a report accompanying the planning application)
- Logistics Plan (including the site layout and traffic management routes)
- List of key stakeholders and constraints imposed by their requirements

These give me a feel for the project environment before I delve into specific topics with subject matter experts. Armed with the ‘big picture’, I have a better idea of why the bid questions are being asked and what matters to the end client. We contribute more effectively to projects when we see them in the mind’s eye. The capture plan is obviously also a great place to start (if one is available) in the bid context.

**What’s happened before?** I spend much of my working time writing and planning bid responses with the team. Before leading planning workshops and related meetings, I ask what’s already been done (e.g. existing collateral) to avoid rework. We also recap lessons learned from past sessions; I ask others for theirs and share mine. This matters because successfully integrating into teams relies heavily on using team members’ usually limited time efficiently.

**What’s the team’s workflow?** Best practice in any topic needs adapting for implementation within an organisation’s management system, including the types and timings of bid reviews. When I’m not required to propose them, I must understand how the team structures its reviews and proposal development in general. This is essential for delivering on team and individual performance expectations and keeping to programme. Clear understanding of deliverables deadlines is central to effective integration into a team. The point applies even at topic level such as deadlines for actions from meetings.

This all boils down to most effectively applying our respective time and capabilities so we achieve great things. After all, we’re all in this together.





CHRIS KÄLIN

# THE PROCUREMENT GUY – YOUR FRIEND AND HELPER

A few years ago, a bid director of a large IT company asked me to facilitate their strategy process. I sent him an offer for a two-day workshop that (obviously) perfectly met his expectations, as he told me on the phone. We agreed to start the project four weeks later. But before we hung up, he said: 'Oh yes, the purchasing department will also get in touch with you. About the formal contract.'

And so it was: "Hello Mr Kälin, we have received an offer from you, the terms of which I would like to discuss," said the friendly purchaser. The rest of the conversation could be aptly described as a 'deadlock': I knew my client (the bid director) had already decided to work with us. The kick-off meeting had been arranged, so the order had actually been placed, even if not through the formal purchasing channel. So why should I make any concessions on the price now? For my counterpart on the other end of the phone, however, the matter was also clear: the purchasing department had not concluded a contract with us, and as long as no contract had been concluded, negotiations would continue. And so a little negotiating ping-pong took place between the buyer and me.

This lasted until he said: "But we've never worked with your company before. That's a risk for us. We expect an introductory offer from you." That was my chance. "This is already an introductory offer. We normally charge around 300 euros more per day," I replied. "But that's not visible in your offer," was the buyer's reply. "No problem. I'll make it visible for you," I replied. "Okay, then you'll send your updated quote?" "Sure!," I said and sent him a new quote, the final price of which was exactly the same as in my first quote. The only difference was that there was now an introductory discount.

While I hadn't actually given any discount, the buyer was able to go back to his boss and show that he had 'negotiated' 600 euros off for this workshop! I don't know whether he received praise or even a bonus for this. But it is also clear that I no longer granted the above 'introductory discount' for my second and third projects with this company!

De facto, the buyer actually drove up the price for our services.

So, what can we learn from this?

First, get to know the unique needs and desires of each member in your customer's buying centre.

And second, when treated right, procurement folks can actually become valuable allies. Who knew?

# WALKING IN A BIDDERS WONDERLAND

PAUL JOHNSTONE

**At the end of another busy year of helping clients win work, I'm sitting writing my list to Santa about all the wonderful gifts I hope he will bring us bid professionals to make our work lives better next year.**

We've all been very good this year – working long hours and juggling multiple submissions at one time, waiting for our subject matter experts to give us the information we need, using our expertise and creativity to submit compelling, winning bids.

We definitely deserve something nice this Christmas.

Here are three things on my list this year:

- **Improved procurement timelines** - In the last 12 months, we've noticed a big increase in the number of tenders that have been significantly delayed compared to their proposed publication dates on procurement organisations' pipelines. This causes significant challenges in terms of planning and resourcing, and puts our teams under pressure when they are then issued without warning (particularly at peak holiday seasons like summer and Christmas). We are wishing the procurement elves will gift us this year with greater certainty around procurement timelines – along with better engagement with bidders to help us be prepared. Hopefully the new Procurement Act will solve some of these issues.

- **More efficient ways of working** - The process of bidding for work is still so inefficient and labour intensive. With such rapid development of technology (and AI in particular), it feels like procurement is stuck in the dark ages with clunky, outdated portals. And many bidding organisations still rely on disparate business systems and manual processes that cause huge inefficiency and cost to businesses. My wish this Christmas is for procurement teams to take advantage of new technologies to streamline the procurement process. I also hope the advancement of tools and technology available for bidders continues, so we can spend more time on value added activities that help our clients win more work.
- **Greater recognition of our value** - I believe the role of the bid profession continues to be vastly undervalued by colleagues and counterparts within organisations. I often make a distinction between 'bidding' and 'work winning', where 'work winning' is the objective while 'bidding' is the activity. Our expertise and insights of what it takes to win work – whether that is through capture, bid strategy, bid writing or design – make us a strategic enabler within our organisations. I'm hoping that Santa will share some of our gold dust with our colleagues this Christmas so we can get more seats at the top table and better influence how we help them win work.

IMPROVED  
PROCUREMENT  
TIMELINES

MORE EFFICIENT WAYS  
OF WORKING

GREATER  
RECOGNITION OF  
OUR VALUE

# ABOUT OUR EXPERTS

Listed Alphabetically



## VIRGINIA AINSCOUGH

Virginia is the owner of Lanvine Services Ltd. She is the world's first Certified Expert Capture Manager and is an experienced bidding and sales professional (M.ISP). She is highly skilled in Capture Management, Business Development, Bid Strategy, Sales and Bid Processes. Starting dialogues with clients to determine their needs and then working with a multi-disciplinary capture/bid team to win the opportunities is what Virginia finds most satisfying.



## PIPPA BIRCH

Pippa owns award-winning Pipster Solutions Ltd and has over 20 years bid writing experience, mainly in highways and civil engineering. She is an active member of the Institute of Asphalt and has won several industry awards. 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.



## 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.



## MICHAEL BROWN

Michael Brown is a seasoned bid professional having won multiple projects across the built environment throughout Europe, the Middle East, APAC and North America. He is passionate about leading global teams to deliver top quality proposals and pitches to multinational clients.



## SAM BURNS

Sam Burns CP APMP is a Senior Bid Manager. Sam has over 11 years' experience and has worked in both the private and public sector, helping clients win transformational projects across the UK and globally. She has a passion for technology and pioneering solutions in the full business development lifecycle.



## JIM CARLEY

Jim Carley, founder and Managing Director of Carley Consult Ltd, leads a top bid consultancy in the vocational education, employability, and justice sectors. His firm won APMP's UK Supplier of the Year Award in 2021. He chairs APMP UK's Procurement Group, is Vice President of the Doncaster Chamber of Commerce, and directed Doncaster's successful city status bid in 2022.



## CHRISTINA CARTER

Christina is the founder of Win Every Proposal. She has helped businesses win billions of dollars through RFPs and has sold to multi-million dollar deals to nearly every Fortune 100 company. She teaches SMBs and Mid-markets how to master the art of enterprise proposals. She provides tailored business strategies and comprehensive training to empower your teams with the skills to win. Her ongoing support creates sustainable momentum and results.



## IZANE CLOETE-HAMILTON

Izane is the Master of Inspiration at nFold, a strategic proposal consultancy in South Africa. She is a compassionate leader with a rare and innate ability to develop people. She has held various senior management positions in business development, marketing, and bid management for over 20 years. Izane joined nFold as a partner in 2021, where she continues to inspire success in others through thought leadership, training and strategy development.

# ABOUT OUR EXPERTS

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## 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.



## 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.



## NICKI DODDS

Nicki is one of the UK's leading practitioners in Capture Management with 20 years' experience in proposals, work winning and market development. She is also the winner of the inaugural APMP Capture Excellence award. Nicki leads capture planning for strategic pursuits at WSP, focusing on coaching teams to understand client motivations, craft value propositions, and build high-performing, client-focused teams. She shapes winning strategies and delivers award-winning capture and bid training.



## ANDERS DYRHOLM

Anders Dyrholm is a Client Manager at the Danish bid and process management software company Orbit Online. He works primarily within the AEC sector, consulting or managing projects for over 100 companies and specialises in resume and reference management solutions. He was also the lead organiser of Denmark's first Proposal Conference in September 2024 in Copenhagen.



## 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.



## CLARE FOLEY

Clare Foley is a Bid Manager with over 16 years' experience in IT, Defence and other industries. Her interest in personal development grew from a desire to manage the demands of her role. She qualified as a Coach in 2020 and now provides coaching to help individuals achieve more with less stress. She also provides training to organisations who want to enhance team performance through a focus on wellbeing.



## HOLGER GARDEN

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.



## ANDY HAIGH

Andy is an expert in bidding and tendering, specialising in competitive formal bids into EU Public Sector organisations. He 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.

# ABOUT OUR EXPERTS

Listed Alphabetically



## SARAH HINCHLIFFE

Sarah labels herself a 'Storyteller, Organiser, Timekeeper'. After a 30-year sales career in the IT industry, 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.



## 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 career spans more than 25 years and includes 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.



## PAUL JOHNSTONE

Paul is a 'poacher-turned-gamekeeper'. He established Optimum Business Growth in 2020 after spending 15 years in procurement roles across financial services, manufacturing and the public sector. He has led strategic infrastructure deals and large Framework Agreements. He knows 'what good looks like' to buyers, enabling him to help clients win profitable contracts using a more strategic approach to winning work. Paul has also developed the award-winning Bid Journey methodology.



## CHRIS KALIN

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.



## JAMIE LEWIS

Jamie is an undergraduate student studying Business Economics at the University of Liverpool. He is currently completing a 15-month Internship with Crawford & Company, where he began his time with Peter McPartland in the Bids and Presentations department. Jamie is recognised for his enthusiasm and positive impact towards bids.



## RITA MASCIA

Rita's 24 year journey into the world of bids and proposal started while working for an award-winning language and culture business organisation. She has extensive 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 MCPARTLAND

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.



## CERI MESCALL

Ceri is the Managing Director at Strategic Proposals Canada. Clients trust her to help them win. Ceri is a presenter/panelist, podcast guest, article author/contributor, and awards judge. She holds all four signature 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) and APMP Accredited Trainer (2024).



## JESSE MORGAN

Jesse founded Hillhouse Morgan to help transform his clients' expertise into successful proposals. He has spent the last two decades helping clients win more bids in infrastructure, medicine and energy. He has authored several books and has an extensive background in consulting, communications and journalism. Jesse is also a trained lawyer, allowing him to help clients navigate procurement's complex legal landscapes.

# ABOUT OUR EXPERTS

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## 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.



## LISA READMAN

Lisa is an expert Content Evaluator and APMP Certified Practitioner as well as a highly skilled proofreader and copy editor of bidding, sales and marketing documents. Her bid and proposals career began in 2003 and she established her own business (Readman Writes) in 2018 after 15 years as a Bid Writer, Bid Coordinator and Knowledge Manager.



## 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.



## ISABELLA STEVENSON

Bella started her career in bids over 16 years ago, coordinating EMEA-wide bid submissions for a recruitment consultancy. She has been working as a Bid Manager for 12 years in sectors including the built environment, facilities management, security, dentistry and the E-mobility sector. She enjoys collaborating with technical teams to build win themes, install best practice and develop creative thinking to win more contracts.



## GEMMA WARING

Gemma has been a dynamic force in tendering and procurement for 20 years. Her commitment to excellence, determination to succeed and passion for empowering others has resulted in exceptional career achievements. She is a key player in the roll out of the Procurement Act 2023 and was a recent Runner Up in the APMP UK's annual awards in the Supplier of the Year category.



## 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 the right blend of content beans – compelling narratives, tailored solutions, and persuasive arguments – and the expertise of bidding baristas to craft the perfect proposal brew.



## 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.



## ALISON ZALECKI

Since 2009, Alison has been helping companies to win more business. She has led successful deals from £50k - £1.2b across the public and private sector with an 80% success rate. As the Managing Director of Mozer, she works with SMEs through to global brands in Professional Services, Real Estate, Development, Construction, Sports and Legal.



BIDDING QUARTERLY

ALL I WANT  
FOR  
CHRISTMAS...



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