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COMING OF AGE

BIDDING QUARTERLY



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MARTIN SMITH



KEEP CALM

AND

CARRY ON BIDDING



I'M A BIG FAN OF TECHNOLOGY AND WHAT IT CAN DO TO MAKE OUR LIVES MORE EFFICIENT AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, LESS STRESSFUL. BUT I'M NOT ALWAYS AN EARLY ADOPTER. I'M RARELY FIRST IN. I'M CAUTIOUS. I'M NOT AVERSE TO CHANGE BUT THAT'S OFTEN HOW I'M TYPECAST.

As we 'come of age' as a profession my wish for the cautious, or perhaps more fittingly, considered amongst us, is to become less typecast for asking sensible and searching questions. It's understandable that people become fearful of what the future holds with unprecedented advancements in technology. Trailblazers will always shout, but we can admire their knowledge and achievements without immediate engagement. Waiting, watching, and analysing is not necessarily a flawed strategy – I personally believe it's a measured one. Of course, the vital thing is not to ignore the change or bigger opportunity, but perspective is crucial. Waiting and watching has been likened to burying your head in the sand in many social posts I read, and that's simply not true.

The best bid teams I work with are philosophical about the latest technology. They value and understand its place, but they are already creating winning customer-focussed proposals. They have strong leadership, a firm grasp of their win themes, win strategies, bid plans and bid content – fundamentally, they understand their customers.

Over the years, I have frequently heard salespeople say, "If you don't adopt this, you're going to get left behind". As a potential client on the receiving end, I've always found this 'selling by fear' strategy the most offensive (and most immature). If I see another pitch deck glorifying the death of the typewriter with the arrival of a PC, I might just implode. It's like comparing apples with cars. We are all infinitely more tech savvy than we once were.

Unquestionably, bidding technology has massively improved work-winning practices, but I don't remember anyone getting left behind. As solutions have been introduced, some watched from the sidelines, others waited until solutions and markets

matured, and (naturally) some were resistant to change. But I repeat: NO ONE GOT LEFT BEHIND. And let's not pretend everyone will lose their job overnight. Your organisation has obligations to train you if it suddenly deploys new systems and tools that affect your role. It usually requires huge organisational and cultural shifts – and lots of time.

For me, the bigger challenge isn't about embracing change, it's about finding the time to do so. So many of us are ridiculously time poor. As the owner of a small business, and with two young children, I already work long and unsocial hours to balance everything. I simply don't have the luxury of time to study. Many colleagues are in a similar predicament. Huge swathes of the workforce simply can't magic up hours or days to absorb the latest tech.

LinkedIn is awash with AI 'experts' sharing cheat sheets, best practices, or their top 100 new AI tools. If AI really is so difficult to grasp, how have so many people become overnight experts? And if you can suddenly achieve an 80% win rate increase by adopting a piece of bid tech, I'd argue there are much deeper questions you need to ask of your organisation and employees.

Right now, I see bidding tech helping more businesses catch up to the best bid teams and organisations, rather than leaving people behind. But it can be a very expensive strategy to get wrong. Just because the tech has been purchased, it doesn't mean employees will adopt it or apply it correctly. It's the same with many of the daily bidding productivity tools we use. Next time you open MS Word, Excel or the Adobe suite, examine the toolbar and sub-menu options. How many features do you really use (or even understand)? Just because the tech exists doesn't mean we want or need it to do our jobs well.

GenAI or Agents may fix many problems but without original source material, we may all ultimately end up with indistinguishable, similarly scoring RFP responses. The age of accepted plagiarism appears well and truly upon us.

While bidding technology will inevitably lead to redundancies in bid teams because of efficiency gains, the explosion of bid vendors has also shone a bright spotlight on our profession. For me, this is a positive change and will ultimately create more jobs than we lose – just redefined jobs. Right now, this redefinition should be our absolute priority as a profession. If we don't take ownership of this, you can be assured someone who doesn't really understand our value will.

In my experience it's team interaction on the bidding journey that delivers real enjoyment, purpose, job satisfaction, and ultimately success. Without that, what's really left? A computer driven process that 'plays' human in the hope another human using computer algorithms to assess our bid buys from it? That's not work-winning in my humble opinion, and with quantum computing just around the corner, GenAI feels to me more like a trailer rather than the main movie.

BQ21 – Coming of Age, has 26 amazing expert contributions, full of fantastic advice and thought provoking ideas for you to ponder as our profession comes of age.

Bidding has never had a greater global platform from which to become a respected profession.

Please people, keep calm and carry on bidding.

An open book with aged, yellowed pages is shown from a top-down perspective, resting on a dark wooden surface. The background is a deep blue night sky filled with numerous white stars and soft, glowing nebulae. The title 'Great Expectations' is written in a large, white, elegant gothic script across the upper half of the image, appearing to float above the book. The overall mood is magical and scholarly.

Great Expectations

PROFESSOR NIGEL HUDSON



BQ has turned 21. It has come of age, earning the key to the door to go boldly into the 'bid wide world'. With BQ as a fully-fledged adult, we have a moment of calm in a quiet house to reflect upon the life of the magazine we created. And knowing that the most famous coming of age story is *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens, I shall grab a file, a pie, and some brandy, to see where the story will lead.

Bidding Quarterly was first published in April 2017. At just 12 pages long it contained articles by Martin Smith, Simon Wellstead, Peter Bryans, Andy Haigh, and Jon Williams. Themed 'Hope is Not a Strategy' it promised 'Tales, insight and opinion from bid industry experts.' The theme and promise were subtly connected, as BQ was formed not in hope but as part of a carefully conceived and executed strategy to provide unconstrained thought leadership. I say 'unconstrained' because BQ is free and accessible to all, and its contributors are encouraged to be innovative and radical in their thinking. There's no 'only available if you join our club' or policing of message if a contributor doesn't toe a party line. It's the exemplar of free thought, with unbounded value and potential. Proof, as the guru of future studies John Naisbitt said, "The new source of power is not money in the hands of a few, but information in the hands of many."

Throughout its existence, BQ has been at the forefront of debates and thinking, and – as per Martin's introduction to the first edition – has broken free of any gravitational pull to be light years ahead of anything else out there. The November '24 edition demonstrated this by being a 39-page, 32 contributor, bumper edition that 'went viral' as it became essential reading to tens of thousands of people across six continents. So, BQ 'got big'. We're proud of that. It has resonated with readers in ways that other bidding publications have not. But has it prophesied anything? Let's look at that first edition and see what future glimmers were forming in the cosmos.

In BQ1 Martin wrote about qualification, specifically the importance of customer groundwork and prior relationship to understand client drivers. Peter wrote about executive managers' influence on bidding decisions via pressure to be 'in it to win it', and Simon discussed the emotional element of decision-making where buyers want a certain bidder to win because they like them. Andy talked about the importance of writing for the evaluator, and Jon spoke about the need for proposals to tell a compelling story that can be told internally when making the award recommendation. Within all of these was what Jon (citing BJ Lownie) described as: 'Why us, why not them?' This is one of the all-time great quotes of our profession, most accurately distilling our purpose as strategists, storytellers, alchemists of value propositions, and architects of confidence. The irony, of course, is that Jon was not talking about something new. He was discussing something he presented in 2001. It was relevant then, and in 2017, and it's relevant today. It highlights the importance of knowing, and not forgetting, the core building blocks of our art. These are the foundations upon which we can build and innovate, sharing what works with those who seek the thrill of innovation and wisdom of experience.

Simon's article, for me, gave the freshest perspective in BQ1. He advised taking the principles of advertising, marketing and design into the bid process to create a more emotional journey for the evaluator. We've since seen growing proof of the importance of design within proposals and the need for alignment between business development functions (sales, marketing, bidding) when crafting capture campaigns and market propositions.

It was the acknowledgment in BQ1 for the need for proactivity, by Martin and Peter, and bid team alignment, by Andy and Jon, that most predicted the future. Fast forward to today and the topic of leadership is at the forefront of discussion. 'Proactivity', 'alignment', and 'leadership' highlight a fundamental need within our profession for visionaries who can see different futures and create change needed to realise them. This is where BQ1 and BQ21 are one in the same, only that this edition is bigger and bolder with greater ability to make a difference.

"Go, make your mark on the world!"
That's what we wish for our children as they turn 21 and that's what we wish for this magazine.



THE ADOLESCENT ADVANTAGE:

SIMON WELLSTEAD

In the realm of bids, tenders, and business winning, we often hear the call for maturity and professionalism. The aptly named 'Coming of Age' theme raises an intriguing question: As our profession transitions from 'adolescence' to 'adulthood', are we inadvertently discarding valuable traits that could give us a competitive edge?

The business world typically views adolescence and immaturity negatively, favouring the perceived stability of adulthood. We must challenge this assumption. Is maturity always beneficial in a rapidly evolving business landscape or are the very characteristics we associate with youth – creativity, risk-taking, and unconventional thinking – precisely what we need to thrive?

The Power of "Why"

Remember when every other word out of your mouth was "Why"? Insatiable curiosity is a goldmine for innovation. Dropbox was born from Drew Houston's frustration at forgetting his USB flash drive. His adolescent-like questioning of "Why can't files be accessible everywhere?" led to a revolutionary cloud storage solution. By constantly challenging the status quo, we can open doors to groundbreaking ideas.

Fearless Communication

Adolescents are notorious for their unfiltered communication. Tact is crucial in business but there's immense value in direct, straightforward messaging. Steve Jobs was famous for his blunt communication style, leaving no room for misinterpretation and driving Apple to create world-changing products. In your next pitch or team meeting, try channelling that adolescent directness – you might be surprised at the results.

Embracing "Foolish" Ideas

Remember the "crazy" ideas you had as a teenager? In business, those seemingly outlandish concepts can be the seeds of innovation. Take Airbnb. It was an absurd idea at first (letting strangers sleep in your home) but it's now a multi-billion dollar company. Don't be quick to dismiss ideas that seem foolish at first glance; they might just be the next big thing.

REKINDLING CREATIVITY IN BUSINESS

The 7-Day Adolescent Mindset Challenge

Ready to recapture your adolescent creativity? Take on my 7-Day Challenge: (I do most on a daily basis already but will join you on this challenge):

- **Ask "why" five times a day**
- **Propose one "crazy" idea in a meeting**
- **Communicate one message as directly as possible**
- **Spend 10 minutes daydreaming about impossible solutions**
- **Break a "rule" (legal caveat: safely and ethically) in your work process**
- **Mentor someone younger, and ask them to teach you something**
- **Approach a familiar task as if you've never done it before**

Embracing these adolescent traits can help us break free from outdated thinking patterns and inject fresh creativity into our professional lives. As we journey to "adulthood" in our profession, let's harness the vibrant, innovative spirit of our "adolescence" to drive progress and innovation. The future belongs to those who can blend the wisdom of experience with the fearless creativity of youth.





FROM AWKWARD ADOLESCENCE TO PROFESSIONAL MATURITY

LARISSA CORNELIUS

BENCHMARK

INVEST

MEASURE



GROWING PAINS WAS A CLASSIC COMING-OF-AGE SITCOM ABOUT NAVIGATING LIFE'S UPS AND DOWNS. THE BID AND PROPOSAL PROFESSION IS IN ITS OWN "TEENAGE YEARS" – FULL OF PROMISE, AMBITION, AND OCCASIONAL AWKWARD MISSTEPS. LIKE ANY TEENAGER FIGURING OUT THEIR PLACE IN THE WORLD, WE'RE EXPERIENCING GROWING PAINS.

But we've come a long way. Thanks to professional associations like APMP, companies and passionate volunteers, we're gaining recognition, setting standards, and proving our value in business development.

The Awkward Stage: A profession finding its identity

APMP is the leading global body but not all bid and proposal professionals subscribe. Remaining outside any professional association can create a fragmented landscape with inconsistent standards – like a teenager ignoring advice because they think they know best.

Awareness of our profession is still lacking, even in mature markets. To fix this, we must encompass the entire Business Development Lifecycle (BDM) and create opportunities for professionals to master both proposals and procurement.

High School Lessons: Maturity means investing in the right things

Industry "seniors" know that winning work requires investment across the BDM lifecycle. Proposals are like high school assignments – except now they matter. Last-minute, slapped-together efforts no longer get a passing grade, yet too many proposals still look rushed rather than polished and persuasive.

Graduation Plan: Three ways to grow up and win more

1. Benchmark your proposals: Get a report card

Every student (or professional) needs feedback. Use a proposal consultancy (preferably one that understands your market) to assess your function. A global and local perspective helps you improve and map out maturity.

2. Invest in skills development: Take advanced classes

APMP certification is like your high school diploma – proof you know the basics. But real success comes from continuous learning. Pair APMP certification with micro-certifications, masterclasses, and hands-on training from experienced proposal consultancies actively winning tenders. Think of it as majoring in Proposal Mastery while minoring in Sales, Design, Writing, and Pricing. **Pro Tip:** Train all stakeholders in the Business Development Lifecycle for best results.

3. Measure what matters: Don't just chase trophies

Winning bids is exciting (like acing a test), but if that's your only metric, you're missing the bigger picture. The best companies set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to drive strategic thinking, efficiency, and proposal quality – not just wins. **Fun fact:** If you

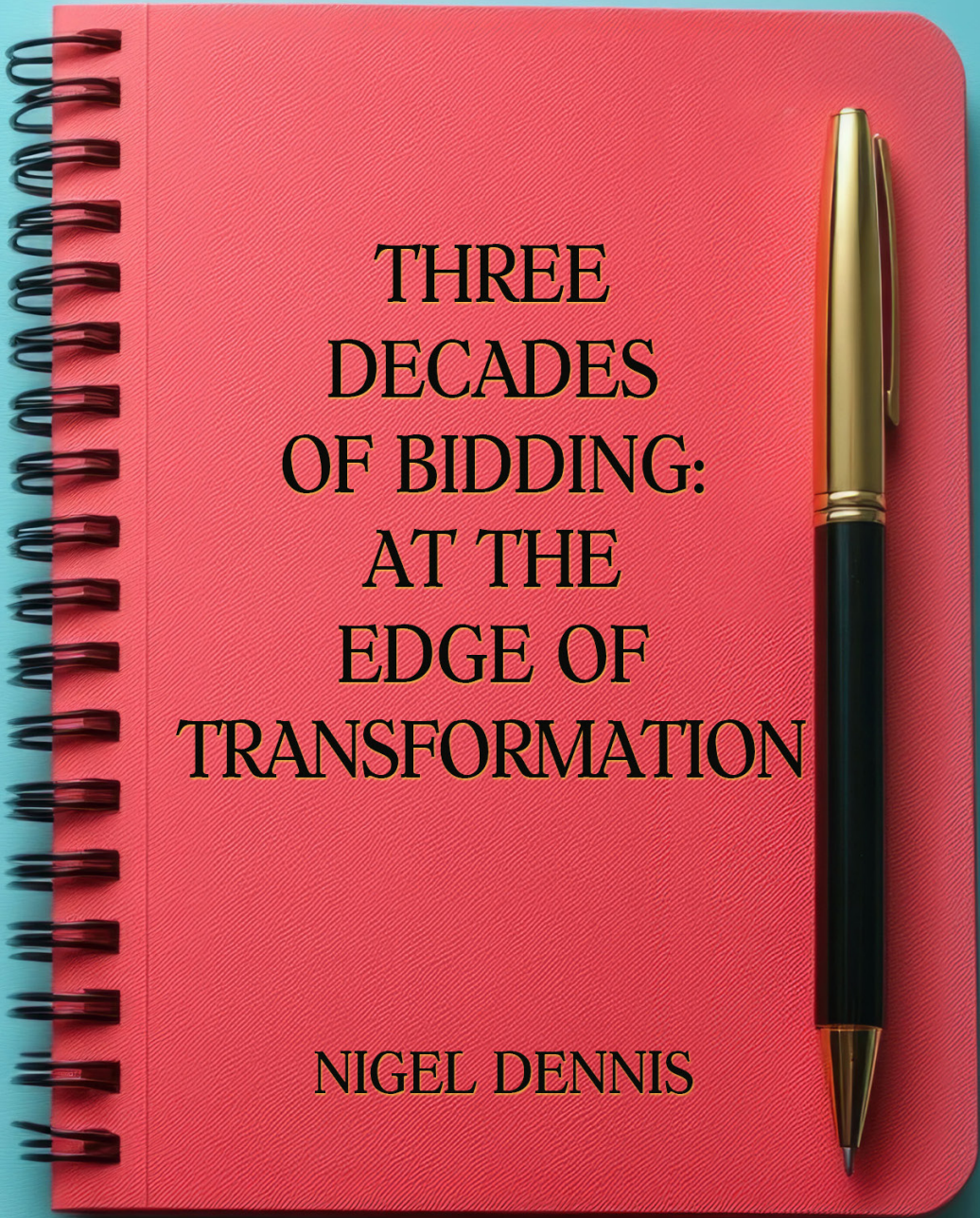
focus on the right processes and measures, the wins will follow, just like a student who studies consistently doesn't need to cram for exams.

The Bid and Proposal Profession: Ready to adult?

We're at a turning point. Do we stay stuck in our teenage years, talented but disorganised? Or do we step up, bridge the knowledge gap, and professionalise?

Growing up isn't easy, but it's worth it. The challenge is real, but so is the opportunity.





THREE DECADES OF BIDDING: AT THE EDGE OF TRANSFORMATION

NIGEL DENNIS

Dear Bidding,

When We First Met

I vividly remember when we first crossed paths in 1995. You were immature, disorganised and stressful to be around. Few understood your role or what you could achieve. Many mistakenly believed anyone could fill your shoes.

But something about you intrigued me – the competition, persuasion, and high stakes. Though still in your infancy in my corner of the world, I knew you were something special. What I didn't know was that our journey would shape my career and the way businesses win work and grow.

How Far We've Come

In the early days, many saw you as just paperwork – a tedious administrative process. But those who understood your power knew better. Over time, you matured. Best practices emerged and methodologies became refined. You are now recognised as a strategic function, a critical driver of success. When I look at you, I see a profession with a strong sense of identity.

But your evolution hasn't come without challenges. The relentless pace, increasing competition, and the growing complexity of client demands have tested those who dedicate themselves to you. Yet, despite the pressures, the thrill of winning hasn't changed.

The Road Ahead

As you turn 30, you stand at the edge of transformation. The future of bidding will be defined by speed, intelligence, and strategy. Data-driven insights will become the backbone of decision-making.

Bidders must therefore move beyond just compliance and pricing; they must craft proposals that anticipate client needs, offer innovation, and demonstrate real value.

Let's also not forget AI's arrival. It has brought us to the cusp of a professional revolution, augmenting the painstaking writing process. These developments are continuing at a mind-blowing pace and it's going to be a fascinating ride.

A Call to Elevate

Although now recognised as a specialised profession with defined career paths, practices, and standards, it's crucial to continue advocating for our value. Make your case with strength, logic, and persistence. Get comfortable with numbers, turning your evidence and ROI-based approach inwards.

Those of us inside the tent understand our value, but we're not our audience. Keep proving it to those who rely on your skills and your influence will grow. Organisations must invest in bid professionals. So aim for the top table to elevate our influence, shape strategy and drive growth. We are not just responding to opportunities; we are creating them.

The Next Chapter

The deadlines will remain relentless, the pressure will always be high, but the impact we create is undeniable. Integrity, perseverance and a passion to succeed have carried us far. Keep these qualities close as we embrace the future together with confidence.

Happy 30th, Bidding. Here's to our mateship and the incredible journey ahead.



TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

AS WE TRANSITION FROM CHILDHOOD, WE'RE EXPECTED (WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT!) TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR LIVES. IF WE'RE HEALTHY, INTELLIGENT ADULTS, BLAMING OTHERS FOR OUR SITUATION BECOMES LESS TENABLE BECAUSE NOW WE'RE ABLE TO CHANGE OUR OWN LIVES, IMPROVE OUR PROSPECTS, AND SHAPE OUR HAPPINESS.

NIGEL THACKER

After all, if we don't take responsibility, who else is expected to do it for us?

Taking responsibility can be a challenging, daunting prospect. It can take courage to address difficult issues. We don't always succeed first time. But that's part of taking responsibility – not giving up. Not accepting the status quo as inevitable.

So how does this relate to the bidding profession, and our journey into adulthood? Well, as I read research on bidding, see posts on LinkedIn, listen to conversations at conferences, and work with bidders and bid teams, I see many opportunities. But we're also facing some challenges.

One example is stress and mental health issues amongst bidders. Back in 2020 **Mairi Morrison's research** showed 88% of bidders suffered from work-related mental health issues. I've seen little indication that number has improved.

I also see LinkedIn posts featuring memes highlighting the difficulties bidders face – such as bid-no bid decisions pushing through bids we're unlikely to win, last minute bids, poor support from SMEs, governance issues, lack of resources, or difficult procurements.

And while these memes often raise a knowing smile, perhaps they illustrate an underlying issue: we often see our problems being the result of others' decisions – senior management, sales, SMEs, procurements teams. Outside influences we can do nothing about other than put our heads down and work harder.

But as bidding moves into adulthood, we need to take responsibility to change these things ourselves.

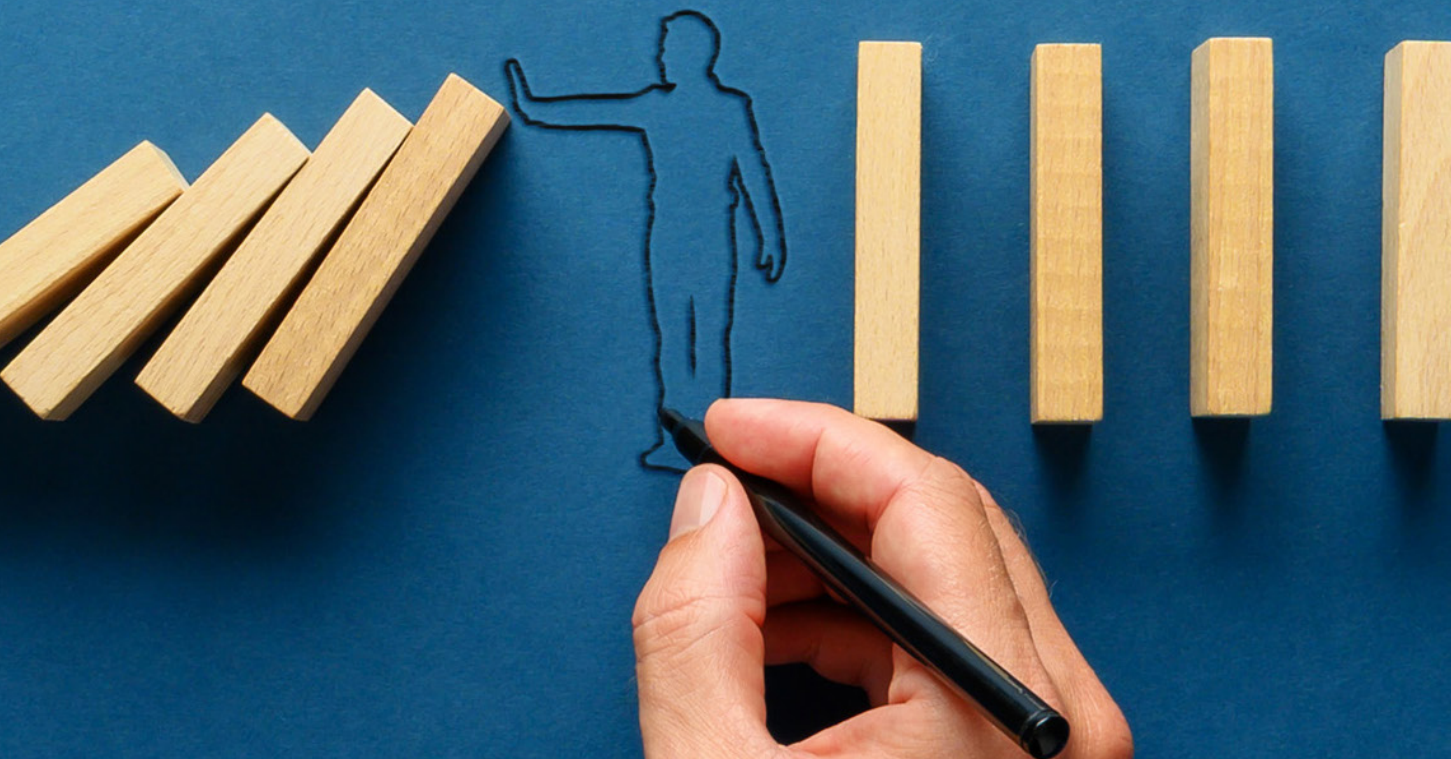
We have the tools. We're experts at influencing and advocating for change – it's what we do in every bid. We use our understanding of stakeholders, their underlying needs, views and opinions to persuade them towards our view of what will help them succeed.

As an industry, and as individuals in roles such as Bid Managers, Heads of Bidding or Bid Directors, surely our role is to take these skills, and apply them to our own circumstances. We must have the courage to fight for and deliver the changes which will make our teams' lives less stressful and more rewarding.

We already know the issues. Now, we need to lift our heads up from focusing on the current bid and start to address the underlying issues we and our teams face.

It might seem challenging, daunting even. We might not succeed first time. But we should keep trying. And not accept the status quo, where it isn't working.

Because that's the responsible thing to do.



LISA READMAN

ACCOUNTABILITY COUNTS

WE ALL KNOW WORKING ON BIDS AND PROPOSALS IS LIKE BEING INSIDE A PRESSURE COOKER. A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME RELIES ON SEAMLESS COLLABORATION AND THE COLLECTIVE EFFORT OF A TEAM THAT VALUES RESPONSIBILITY AND TRANSPARENCY AT EVERY STAGE OF THE PROCESS. ACCOUNTABILITY IS ESSENTIAL.

To me, accountability means owning your role and delivering on your commitments – especially deadlines! Do you (personally or as a team) agree that no one's time is more important than anyone else's? Each task, no matter how small, is part of a larger chain of events. An entire submission might be at risk if one person misses a deadline and either doesn't communicate their challenges or assumes someone else will compensate and/or do their work for them. Even minor delays can result in a domino effect leading to rushed final reviews, overlooked errors and, ultimately, a submission that falls short of its potential.

Meeting deadlines is a cornerstone of accountability. Everyone (and that includes senior team members or decision makers) should be adhering to agreed timelines. They should also be able to proactively communicate, raising any issues as soon as possible to allow more time for resolutions to be implemented. Because guess what? Silence will ensure nothing gets resolved.

Admitting to mistakes is equally important. Yes, everyone makes mistakes – but not everyone handles them the same way. Please be the person who acknowledges a mistake quickly and openly – not the person who sweeps things under the rug and hopes no one notices. Denying or hiding an error erodes trust and wastes valuable time. Teams that foster a culture of accountability encourage honesty and focus on solutions rather than blame.

So how can you establish or maintain accountability for yourself or your team? You'll need to reflect on your behaviours and ask:

- **Are you consistently meeting deadlines, or are you relying on others to adjust around you?**

- **Do you communicate effectively, or do you assume people will wait for your work without question?**
- **Are you acting ethically?**

Accountability and ethics are deeply intertwined. Accountability is a mindset that sets the foundation for consistent, high-quality results in every bid and proposal. Ethics ensure you act with integrity and do what's right even when it's inconvenient. Ethical accountability ensures fairness, transparency, and respect for the collective effort, especially in a world where cutting corners and prioritising personal gain is becoming the norm.

Together, accountability and ethics build trust, maintain professionalism, contribute to higher quality outcomes and achieve greater success.



WHEN I GROW UP I WANT TO BE A BID WRITER!

JIM CARLEY



I'D LIKE TO SEE A GREATER STANDARD OF TRANSPARENCY FOR SUCCESS (BECAUSE WE ALL SAY WE ARE GREAT AT PROPOSAL WRITING, EVEN THOUGH MOST BIDS STATISTICALLY LOSE)."

THE ORIGINS OF PROCUREMENT DATE TO AROUND 3,000 BC WHEN EGYPTIANS WERE SCRIBING ORDERS FOR THE TWO MILLION LIMESTONE AND GRANITE BLOCKS NEEDED TO BUILD THE GREAT PYRAMID. BY THE 15TH CENTURY, THE FIRST PRINTING PRESSES WERE PUBLISHING THE FIRST RUDIMENTARY SALES CATALOGUES AND PRICE LISTS. THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS OF 1775, COMMISSIONING MILITARY SUPPLIES IN NEW JERSEY, WAS THE FIRST RECORDED USE OF ADVERTISING TO SOLICIT PROPOSALS. NAPOLEON INTRODUCED THE WORLD'S FIRST FORMAL LEGAL PROCUREMENT FRAMEWORK. THEN IN 1980 MARGARET THATCHER INTRODUCED COMPULSORY COMPETITIVE TENDERING ACROSS UK CIVIL CONSTRUCTION. IN SHORT, THE PRACTICE OF WRITING PROPOSALS TO WIN CONTRACTS IS HARDLY VERY NEW.

Despite this history, proposal writing is perceived as a vocation still in its relative infancy. Compared to accountancy giant Deloitte, about to enjoy its 180th birthday, our nearest equivalents like Shipley (founded in 1972) or Strategic Proposals (1987) are relative whippersnappers. British universities offer over 2000 different courses in accountancy, yet none offer a course in bid writing. The first pre-schooler to earnestly say that "When I grow up, I want to be a bid writer" has most likely not been born. And unlike accountants, we invariably have to fully explain to close friends and family what our job title means.

It's hard to say exactly why bid writers are such late developers. APMP has made steady headway in establishing itself as a recognised membership body (though it arguably still only counts the minority of practitioners within its number). Our profession has progressively swelled its ranks, the number of UK registered companies offering proposal writing has mushroomed and, let's be honest, our career remuneration potential is far from shabby.

Perhaps we just need more time to fully mature. Writing is, after all, a highly subjective discipline. It is difficult to truly bottle what good writing practice is, let alone clone it into some sort of career blueprint for future generations. So what does maturity look like?

Personally, I'd like to see an improvement in our collective ability to constructively lobby commissioners and be seen as critical contributors to procurement design. I'd like to see stronger career paths for young people (there are still only three UK providers offering the Level 3 Bid & Proposal Co-ordinator Apprenticeship). I'd like to see a greater standard of transparency for success (because we all say we are great at proposal writing, even though most bids statistically lose). I could go on, but it's a wish list that is way too long for the permitted word count of this post.

So, what do you think? It's surely a topic that warrants healthy debate. What do we need to do as a profession to fully fill out and blossom? Over to you!



IS CAPTURE PLANNING STILL A STROPPY TEENAGER?

**VIRGINIA
AINSCOUGH**

CAPTURE PLANNING IS LIKE A STROPPY TEENAGER. IT IS ESTRANGED FROM THE (WORK WINNING) FAMILY AND TOO OFTEN STAYS IN ITS ROOM!

I was an early adopter of capture planning (c.2000). It is no longer in nappies and has done some growing up but I think it is fair to say its growth and integration into the broader business development family has been somewhat stunted.

Many organisations now recognise capture planning is crucial to successful work winning. The fragmentation between marketing, sales, capture, and bidding functions has hindered its potential to become a fully grown adult. Like many teenagers, capture planning hasn't quite worked out its place in the family – does it sit in sales or bidding or is it a separate function?

I have often argued that you need to have both sales and bidding experience to be a successful capture manager. You need the creative and empathetic skills of sales and the rigour and discipline of bid management. It requires the maturity to recognise the role each skillset plays in being the 'glue' in the business development process.

Early in my career, I was sent on a SPIN selling course (**SPIN Selling: Complete Guide to Sales Success | Huthwaite International**), which I can recommend it's simple, effective approach to anyone who works in business development. If everyone in business development saw

themselves as a salesperson and received sales training, it would go a long way to delivering cohesive and effective capture planning.

Capture shouldn't be seen only as a tool for large deals, or as a separate activity lurking in its bedroom (that the rest of the business development family is too afraid to go into!). To transition into a mature and indispensable part of the family, capture should be a seamless, second-nature component throughout the business development lifecycle.

It will take hard work and a fresh mindset to foster a holistic approach to work winning. We have to move away from sales throwing an opportunity over the fence to bidding and walking away thinking their work is done. Equally, the bidding and delivery functions mustn't lose sight of what the client really wants and fall into the trap of just going through the motions to deliver a tender.

By working in harmony with other elements of business development, effective and mature capture planning can ensure all parts of the organisation are aligned towards the common goal of winning business. Only then can capture planning truly outgrow its teenage years and become a fully-fledged member of the business development family.



LEADERS – WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE

IZANE CLOETE-HAMILTON

Exposing the undervaluation crisis

The bid and proposal profession is in crisis. Not because it lacks expertise, but because it remains widely misunderstood. Too often, proposal professionals are treated as sales admin, sales support or “ambulance chasers” – scrambling to assemble last-minute bids with minimal strategic input.

In reality, the bid and proposal function directly influence win rates, revenue growth, and competitive positioning. Yet, despite its impact, it rarely sits at the executive table. Why? Because too many leaders fail to recognise the role of proposal management in driving business success.

Compelling leadership to take notice

It's time for executives to rethink where proposal teams fit. Sales teams chase opportunities but the proposal function turns them into bankable contracts. Even the best sales pitch can fall flat without a high-performing proposal team. Leaders who embed proposal teams into the fibre of business development see higher win rates, stronger deals, and better customer engagement. Those that don't? They rely on luck, not strategy.

To change the narrative, proposal professionals must drive the conversation. Stop waiting for recognition – demand it. Speak the language of business outcomes, not just compliance. Position yourself as a revenue enabler, not a form-filler.

Proving the power of data

Data shifts perceptions. When proposal teams track and communicate their impact – win rates, deal sizes, competitive positioning – the numbers tell a compelling story. This is evidenced in the 2025 Loopio & APMP RFP Response Trends & Benchmark Report:

- **Organisations with a dedicated proposal team win an average of 51% of their bids, compared to the overall average win rate of 43%**
- **Teams implementing a go/no-go process are more selective, leading to higher success rates. 85% of top-performing teams use such a process**
- **High-performing teams involve an average of 10 contributors per proposal, leveraging diverse expertise to enhance proposal quality**

If executives are unaware of these figures, that's on us. Make metrics visible, use dashboards that track performance, and tie every win to the proposal team's contribution. When leadership sees the numbers, the conversation shifts from “nice to have” to “critical to success.”

The wake-up call

The bid and proposal profession is at a crossroads.

Executives: the time to recognise proposal management as a growth driver is now. Proposal professionals: continue operating in the shadows, and you'll remain undervalued. Step up, claim your strategic role, and let data do the talking. This is how we redefine the future of business development.





HEY BID PILOTS: REFUSING TO GROW UP?

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN AVIATION, YOU’LL KNOW THIS: THE RIGOROUS SAFETY REQUIREMENTS AND STAGGERING NUMBER OF PASSENGERS HAS LED TO AN UNPARALLELED LEVEL OF PROFESSIONALISM AND MATURITY IN HOW ALL PLAYERS COLLABORATE. ON THE FLIGHT DECK, THE CREW ALWAYS KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT TO DO: EVERY MOVEMENT OR GESTURE, EVERY TASK, EVERY COMMAND IS WELL-DEFINED AND HAS BEEN PRACTISED A THOUSAND TIMES.



The teamwork between the two pilots (Pilot Flying and Pilot Monitoring), Air Traffic Control, and Ground Control operates like a Swiss watch, with every cogwheel interlocking in perfect harmony.

Oh, how wonderful it would be if bid managers, sales teams, SMEs (Subject Matter Experts), and procurement agents could collaborate as seamlessly as pilots and air traffic controllers in the tower.

Clearly, the world of bid management is far less standardised: Try asking 100 bid managers what a red team review is, and you’ll likely get 257 different answers. It gets even more interesting when we ask the industry to define the difference between a bid manager and a proposal manager. Even APMP, our industry’s professional body, has yet to provide a clear answer. In general, the industry still lacks a widespread, accepted, easy-to-apply industry framework. You might think of APMP’s Body of Knowledge or the PAS360. From our point of view, while both can be helpful, they remain far from the desired level of maturity. For comparison, the PMI (Project Management Institute) provides an excellent example of a mature framework for project managers.

While the work in the cockpit has reached an unparalleled level of maturity, it sometimes feels like bid management has only just managed to ditch the nappies.

No, this is not about blaming anyone. We just have to accept that we still have a very, very long way to go.

And that’s no reason to complain, either—on the contrary! Growing up is exciting! And that’s precisely how we can stand out from the competition. Here is one recipe for success, to get just a little bit further ahead and learn how to perform better as a team:

- **What’s your plan to improve your own and your team’s performance?**
- **What’s your plan to optimise your processes?**
- **What’s your plan to enhance collaboration with adjacent functions?**

The runway is clear, the engines are running – now it’s up to you and your team to take off and soar to new heights.



FLYING THE NEST

PIPPA BIRCH



THIS THEME IS PARTICULARLY PERTINENT FOR ME AS THE MUM OF TWO TEENAGERS PREPARING FOR THE NEXT PART OF THEIR JOURNEY INTO ADULTHOOD, AND AS THE OWNER OF A THRIVING BUSINESS CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS.

The girls, my daughter and my niece, are currently studying hard for their A Levels. At the same time, they are desperate to cut the apron strings, surging into their new adult life at university without me breathing down their necks. They will be looking after themselves, meeting new people and creating a tribe, as well as making their own GP appointments (one of the scariest things apparently!). It will be a steep but exciting learning curve. I've instilled the basics – they can cook, wash clothes, and they have a great set of morals – but now it's up to them to embrace all the challenges thrown at them and seek their own way of doing things. I just have to deal with empty nest syndrome.

It's a bit like that with the bid profession. A bidding revolution is happening this very moment. AI and technology dominate thought leadership articles and processes, as do different ways of working flexibly, the imminent changes that will be brought about by the new procurement act, and ensuring wellbeing is at the heart of every employer's agenda. And of course we must not forget to win the work and run profitable businesses while the government throws more and more curveballs at us.

As an employer, I instil the bidding basics to winning work the right way into my team – know your customer, approach/benefits/evidence, values of integrity, trust, and collaboration, etc. I am also keeping my ear to the ground with bidding and business developments as the profession changes.

But I won't be left with an empty nest as the profession moves on. I want to encourage more young people into the profession to benefit from different ways of thinking. They are the future after all. Most important to me is that we don't lose the art of connection with our peers as the profession moves forward – humans are more important than ever. We should lean on the community as we learn and grow together.

The future will be exhilarating but can be scary for many. As a profession, we need to be curious and open to new technology and experiences but not forget the basics of bidding and winning work while making the effort to create and sustain meaningful connections with real people.



BUT I WON'T BE LEFT WITH AN EMPTY NEST AS THE PROFESSION MOVES ON. I WANT TO ENCOURAGE MORE YOUNG PEOPLE INTO THE PROFESSION TO BENEFIT FROM DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING."



ALANA MCCARTHY

SAVE ME A SPACE AT THE GROWN-UPS' TABLE

AS THE BIDDING PROFESSION MOVES FROM ADOLESCENCE INTO ADULthood, OUR LEADERS NEED A SEAT AT THE GROWN-UPS' TABLE.



When I speak to my peers, it seems we're not quite sitting at the top table yet. Bid function leaders don't always get a say when mum and dad are making decisions about strategy, budgets, targets, and the design and resourcing of bid teams. If we're not involved in the basics of sound management practice, how do we know we can deliver the strategy and convert the pipeline in a way that's good for the organisation and good for our teams?

Here's an example. Research tells us bid functions widely rely on our teams doing overtime (mostly uncompensated) as a resourcing strategy. A risky one at that, because we know resignations creep in when burnout rears its ugly head. When we reach crisis point, bid function leaders tend to go cap in hand to their executive team to see if there's any pocket money left in the budget for us. If we have a place at the table when the 'what' and 'how' is being set, we can be part of the decisions.

Here are seven tips for showing the adults we're mature enough to sit at that table and influence strategic decisions:

- 1. Don't be an 'accidental' leader. There is a continuing lack of investment in leadership training and development for bid professionals. Develop yourself and your team with leadership skills.**
- 2. Use data modelling to align bid function resource forecasting with your organisation's strategy, objectives, and revenue targets. Senior executives want data-driven insights to help them make decisions. Talk to them in a language they understand.**
- 3. Showcase the long-term value of a well-structured bid function in driving sustainable growth. Demonstrate your decision-making skills and show you've balanced risk and reward.**

- 4. Have sound business practices for making the decision to bid. Use a predictive model and data insights from your win and loss reports.**
- 5. Find out if AI data analytics can help with the decision to bid, research and capture planning, or blockers in your workflow.**
- 6. Establish KPIs that measure bid success and contribution to revenue growth. Provide clear, concise reports that highlight bid function performance. Use these insights to recommend strategic improvements and investment areas.**
- 7. Get yourself a mentor and executive sponsor so you can start influencing the decision-making processes.**

A place at the grown-ups' table is not always a given for bid function leaders, so let's show we've earned it.

HEAVEN LIES ABOUT US IN OUR INFANCY

JESSE MORGAN

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH WROTE “HEAVEN LIES ABOUT US IN OUR INFANCY,” EVOKING IMAGES OF YOUTHFUL CREATIVITY FADING WITH MATURITY. WHILE HE WASN’T THINKING ABOUT BIDDING, HIS DEPICTION OF YOUTHFUL VIGOUR CONSTRAINED BY “SHADES OF THE PRISON HOUSE” MIRRORS OUR INDUSTRY.

The innovations that birthed Magna Carta, double-entry bookkeeping, law and accountancy have since solidified into structured, institutionalised practices. While tradition ensures credibility and consistency, rigid adherence can stifle fresh thinking and dynamism amidst rapidly changing environments.

The bidding consultancy industry now stands at a crossroads. Rapidly growing and still youthful, it exudes the energy and flexibility necessary to adapt to shifting client needs. AI advancements, in particular, have turned traditional methods on their head. While bidding consultants naturally look to established frameworks to ensure predictable outcomes, there’s a danger in codifying best practices too soon.

The impulse to formalise best practice and thus better serve our clients is certainly the right one. Initiatives like PAS360 serve to drive the industry onwards by defining and recognising the methods and structures that

produce the best results. However, to rush toward rigid professionalisation – before fully grasping how AI and other disruptive forces promise to reshape our field – would be to risk baking in inefficiencies or, worse, stifling the very creativity that keeps us sharp. Our work centres upon meeting the requirements of procurement authorities, whilst understanding and articulating our clients’ strengths. We provide fresh perspectives, identify strengths and meet specific challenges with specific solutions.

Clients value consistency and clear standards; they want to see a logical approach rather than improvisation for its own sake. Maturing constructively calls for a balanced approach, producing a set of institutions and standards that are grounded in experience, but are flexible enough to interrogate, integrate, and embrace emerging technologies.

As with a child’s endless curiosity, our industry’s openness to new ideas can be a powerful asset. It allows us to spot

“RAPIDLY GROWING AND STILL YOUTHFUL, IT EXUDES THE ENERGY AND FLEXIBILITY NECESSARY TO ADAPT TO SHIFTING CLIENT NEEDS. AI ADVANCEMENTS, IN PARTICULAR, HAVE TURNED TRADITIONAL METHODS ON THEIR HEAD. WHILE BIDDING CONSULTANTS NATURALLY LOOK TO ESTABLISHED FRAMEWORKS TO ENSURE PREDICTABLE OUTCOMES.”

unconventional solutions and pivot quickly – qualities that mature sectors and established companies sometimes lack. Yet this same dynamism can be lost if we impose overly stringent structures too early. In Wordsworth’s words, those “Shades of the prison house begin to close, Upon the growing Boy”, confine our options and limit our ability to innovate.

True maturity in bidding will come when we combine the best of both worlds: the reliability and authority that foster client confidence alongside the inventiveness that drives meaningful change. Again to Wordsworth, by remembering that “the child is father of the man,”* we keep in mind the “heaven” of our infancy while evolving toward the clarity and accountability that befit a profession in its prime.

* <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45536/ode-intimations-of-immortality-from-recollections-of-early-childhood>



FUTUREPROOFING THE WORKFORCE



FOR BID TEAMS LOOKING TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE, THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR – GET YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER, GET DECENT PROCESSES IN PLACE, HAVE CLEAR LINES OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND EXPECTATIONS, AND SUPPORT YOUR TEAM PROPERLY.”



I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING INVOLVED IN THE DELIVERY OF THE BID AND PROPOSAL CO-ORDINATOR LEVEL THREE APPRENTICESHIP FOR THREE YEARS. IN THAT TIME I WORKED WITH A DIVERSE RANGE OF BID TEAMS – FROM BLUE CHIP TO SME – EACH WITH ITS OWN LEVEL OF MATURITY, STRUCTURE, AND APPROACH TO WINNING PUBLIC SECTOR CONTRACTS. IT BECAME ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT THE WAY A TEAM IS SET UP SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTS NEW STARTERS – FOR BETTER OR WORSE.

Too often I saw bid teams take the old ‘baptism of fire’ / ‘learn as you go’ approach to introducing new talent to the sector. The worst examples relied on outdated working models: long hours, relentless deadlines, and bidding on crap because the Director said so. This traditional approach might have delivered results in the past but it is unsustainable and unnecessary. As Generation Alpha emerges into the workforce, we must rethink how we nurture and develop talent within bid teams – this gang sees behind the curtain and demands balance and rewarding work for the effort they put in.

One of the biggest challenges I observed is how new starters perceive the traditional bid team culture. Many come in eager to learn but are quickly disillusioned by the frenetic workload and unreasonable expectations around work/life balance. The expectation to work late nights, manage constant pressure, and push through at any cost is fundamentally at odds with the evolving expectations of the next generation (and us oldies too who have seen the light). Wellbeing has become a non-negotiable.

A solid foundation is critical. People of all ages stepping into the world of bidding need more than just on the fly technical training – they need structured support, a clear career pathway, and to feel valued. Bid teams that invest in this approach see better engagement, higher retention rates, and stronger long-term performance.

If bid teams want to attract and retain the best talent, they need to adapt. That means embracing technology, fostering a culture of collaboration, and ensuring that workloads are managed realistically.

Forward-thinking organisations are already making these shifts, integrating new starts into well-structured teams

that prioritise sustainability over short-term gains. They are reaping the benefits: innovative thinking, a more engaged workforce, and a stronger talent pipeline for the future.

For bid teams looking to remain competitive, the message is clear – get your house in order, get decent processes in place, have clear lines of accountability and expectations, and support your team properly, even if it means doing some of that wellbeing stuff you don’t think have time for. Times are changing. Change with them or be prepared to lose out in the talent war.

DEVELOPING A GROWN-UP RELATIONSHIP WITH TECHNOLOGY

RELATIONSHIPS ARE COMPLICATED. THEY CAN BE IDYLIC AND TEMPESTUOUS. THEY CAN BURN BRIGHT AND FIZZLE OUT OR THEY CAN LAST A LIFETIME. STARTING A NEW RELATIONSHIP CAN BE SCARY BUT, ONCE WE TAKE THE PLUNGE, THE BUTTERFLIES GIVE WAY TO EXCITEMENT AS WE MAKE A CONNECTION AND SOMETHING WONDERFUL BLOSSOMS.

**DARRELL
WOODWARD**

Technology has been part of the bidding ecosystem for many years and our relationship with it has often been the topic of passionate discussion between advocates and sceptics. Recently, generative AI threw a hand grenade into that relationship and reignited the debate.

I believe now is the time for us to develop a more grown-up relationship with technology in bids and proposals, removed from the hype and paranoia. We need to discover how to fall in love with genuinely useful technology but without all the drama. This means setting healthy expectations and blending technology with processes while keeping people firmly at the heart of everything we do.

Set Healthy Expectations

In my consulting work I often see two types of unhealthy expectations:

- **Blind Love is placing too much faith in a tool as the solution to all problems. The shiny new, fully integrated, AI-powered, everything automated platform is salvation itself.**

- **Toxic Partners are those stakeholders feeling vulnerable or threatened. They think it will fail and they'll make it fail to prove themselves right.**

Whether we expect technology to fix everything or nothing, we'll be disappointed. It's not a silver bullet. But it can bring enormous advantages when we use it well. That means defining clear and realistic goals: what problem needs solving? What measurable outcomes do we want? Not every tool is right for every team. And tools that don't solve problems are problems.

Blend Technology with Processes

Strong relationships thrive on openness, trust, and understanding. We work together, provide support, and bring out the best in each other.

Similarly, our technology and processes need to operate in a dynamic, two-way partnership. Technology must fit the way we work and our processes must evolve to take advantage of what the tech offers. Each enhances and refines the other.

Keep Humans at the Heart

In the best relationships, each side contributes their unique strengths. Our relationship with technology should augment human skills, not replace them. And we humans augment technology.

Keeping humans at the heart means focusing on the user experience and the wellbeing of our people. When they believe in the vision and understand the strategy, they will help deliver success.

A grown-up relationship with technology means using tools to make our work easier, more efficient, and more enjoyable. Quite simply, it's empowering brilliant people to do their best work.



A GROWN-UP RELATIONSHIP WITH TECHNOLOGY MEANS USING TOOLS TO MAKE OUR WORK EASIER, MORE EFFICIENT, AND MORE ENJOYABLE. QUITE SIMPLY, IT'S EMPOWERING BRILLIANT PEOPLE TO DO THEIR BEST WORK."



A MATURE INDUSTRY?

SARAH HINCHLIFFE

WHEN I SAW THE THEME 'COMING OF AGE', I IMMEDIATELY THOUGHT OF REACHING MATURITY AND ASKED MYSELF, "HAS THE BIDDING INDUSTRY REACHED MATURITY?" HERE'S MY TAKE.

USING A SIMPLE INDUSTRY LIFECYCLE OF INTRODUCTION, GROWTH, MATURITY AND DECLINE, LET'S TEST WHERE WE ARE AGAINST THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH STAGE.



Introduction



Characteristics: In the early days, an industry takes shape. Buyers learn about the goods and services on offer, which are available from a small and fragmented set of organisations.

How do we compare? Well, we've certainly introduced ourselves! The Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP) started in the US in 1989 and in the UK in 2001 - those dates could mark a formal start to our industry. From my side, bid management was unheard of when I started work in the 1980s; it came onto my radar in 2007. Even then, suppliers seemed to be few and far between, but that has definitely changed.

Growth



Characteristics: As the goods and services become better understood, demand increases. More suppliers emerge - through diversification and start-ups - and a handful become industry leaders. Geographic reach increases and processes become better and more standardised.

How do we compare? We are certainly better understood and there are many more of us around - from employed bid teams to consultancies to freelancers (some better known than others). We see bid professionals globally and we typically follow established best practices and processes.

Maturity



Characteristics: The industry settles into a 'business as usual' rhythm, and competition becomes rife among the established players, potentially driving prices down. The landscape is challenging for newcomers but there may be opportunities for mergers and acquisitions.

How do we compare? While bigger companies may regard bid teams as 'business as usual', many teams still have to fight for resources and recognition. Smaller businesses frequently struggle, not realising there's help at hand. Yes there's competition but the general feeling is there's enough business for all of us, and the industry remains collaborative. I can think of two acquisitions in recent years, so maybe that's a sign of things to come.

Decline



Characteristics: Eventually, an industry may fall away due to weakening demand caused by better alternatives. Growth becomes impossible, leading to casualties or the compelling need to innovate, reinvent or diversify.

How do we compare? I certainly don't see demand weakening. Tenders abound. Bid teams are as busy as ever. There are also specialisms emerging, such as social value. But what about AI? We are optimistic it will enable us rather than replace us but who knows? It may kill us!

My verdict? I believe we're still growing, but our 'Coming of Age' is probably within reach.



FROM BAD TO... WAY, WAY BETTER!

JON WILLIAMS

“STAND STILL? YOU LOSE. THE WINNERS – AS THEY’VE BEEN OVER ALL THESE YEARS – WILL BE THOSE WITH THE VISION, PASSION, DETERMINATION AND ENERGY TO GET EVEN BETTER. WILL YOU BE AT THE FRONT OF THE PACK OR LEFT TRAILING BEHIND, NOW OUR PROFESSION’S COME OF AGE?”

I had a shock at the APMP UK conference a couple of years ago. I was late to the coffee break after presenting a session and as I looked over the assembled horde, it hit me: I’m one of the old folks here! One recent survey tells me a third of our profession were still at school – or hadn’t been born – when I set up my first proposal centre in 1999!

Processes that seemed radical then are now mainstream: let’s ponder a couple of examples. Back then, why would you think about a proposal before the RFP landed? Now we’re in a world where capture, pre-proposal planning and renewal proposals are increasingly the norm.

Qualification was a novel concept. Now, according to a recent Loopio / APMP report, 83% of organisations have a “bid / no bid” process – even if far too many teams still pour resource into deals they aren’t confident they can win!

Proposal writing’s become far more professional and conversational. Design’s been revolutionised. Someone recently described a submission to me as a “magazine-style proposal”. No, my friend, it’s a “proposal-style proposal”.



We’re rarely in “war rooms” together now: our world’s become virtual or blended. We’re still looking at new tech – only now it’s AI as well as content management.

And now, there are SO MANY PEOPLE. Relatively few organisations had formal bid teams back in those days: these days, most do. Industry conferences draw hundreds (or thousands). We have apprentices, certification, endless babble about best practice on LinkedIn. Looks like a profession? Behaves like a profession? It’s probably a profession – no longer “glorified admin”.

Yet too few organisations really “get it”: proposals can too often feel like an uphill battle rather than being in the DNA of the business. I’ve long argued the proposal

function is the job protection and creation engine for most companies, driving revenue growth. As such, it should be visible to and sponsored from the C-suite. That needs to become more common.

And for high performers, the agenda moves on to creating a bid and proposal function that’s perfecting its engagement with the business and outwitting ever-tougher competition. That requires better alignment to the new business and renewal pipeline, sharper and more nimble processes, top-class training, sound tech. Most importantly, it demands great people. Perhaps the greatest challenge now is how to hire, develop and retain the very best.

Stand still? You lose. The winners – as they’ve been over all these years – will be those with the vision, passion, determination and energy to get even better. Will you be at the front of the pack or left trailing behind, now our profession’s come of age?

THIS IS WHY WE'RE BACK IN OUR TEENS

JAVIER
ESCARTIN

I BELIEVE TWO KEY MARKERS DEFINE AN INDUSTRY'S MATURITY: THE EXISTENCE OF WIDESPREAD STANDARDISED BEST PRACTICES AND GLOBAL SCALE COLLABORATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING ACROSS VERTICALS.

If we reflect on the state of bidding and proposals, the best practices are there and already well-known by most. That doesn't mean they're always applied consistently, but the foundation is there. I think the professional associations in our space have done a great job making that happen.

For the knowledge-sharing factor, though, the associations were always limited because of the very nature of the membership and sponsorship business – an issue across many industries, not just ours. Publications helped, and some (like this one) played a major role in pushing our profession forward.

However, the real shift came with professional social media and the rise of independent proposal content creators. Peers are sharing insights on an unprecedented scale. The collaboration and knowledge sharing across industries is now stronger than ever. Even procurement is hearing us more! Today, I consider that second maturity factor accomplished.

If this were pre-2022, I'd confidently say, "RFPs, bidding, and proposals is a full grown-up profession." But something happened in late 2022.

Yes, you guessed it, ChatGPT was released. The artificial intelligence technology wave has impacted every business area in many ways, from efficiency gains to whole rebuilds. AI has forced every profession – including ours – into a new adolescence. What we once considered best practices must now be questioned.

The fundamentals will likely stay, and the global knowledge sharing is already there, so it's not like we have to start over. But it's now a time to question every practice and update workflows when necessary.

For this to happen in a positive way, we all have a role to play – vendors, associations and, most importantly, every bidding and proposal professional. The temptation to keep the status quo is real, but only by participating in the change will we ensure this amazing technology works for (and not against) us.

We often look back at our early years with nostalgia, wondering what we'd do differently. Well, professionally, we now have that chance. We can be back in our teens and redesign our future.

Who wouldn't take that opportunity?





WITH ADULTHOOD COMES RESPONSIBILITY

MICHAEL BROWN

I REMEMBER MY YOUTH CLEARLY, THE SENSE OF CAREFREE POSSIBILITY AND INVINCIBILITY. THE ACTIONS I TOOK FELT WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE AS I THOUGHT THEY HAD NO BEARING ON THE FUTURE.

Fast forward to adulthood and now most decisions are based on an internal discussion on the impact on myself, my family and my career and the influence of my actions on others.

Bidding too has grown up. We face much better recognition of the skills and influence we bring to our employers. As a result we need to mature accordingly. For me this means that to be considered a serious professional, I need to accept increased responsibility by embracing ownership and accountability for the full sales cycle; the pursuit.

A New Mindset – From Proposals to Pursuits

My career has been marked by a constant tension: the external assumption that I simply create aesthetically pleasing documents, and my own internal fear that this may indeed be correct! Early on, this combination sometimes left me feeling like an insecure teenager navigating the complexities of the adult world.

To counter this external and internal perception, I have come to the conclusion that to succeed in this profession,

my role and those of my counterparts should be far more strategic.

The bidding professional then should embrace an all-encompassing approach that begins with strategy and flows into business development, capture planning, data analysis and onwards throughout the entire sales cycle. Throughout this holistic role we need to take ownership and accountability. The buck stops with us.

Embracing Accountability

This is a brave new world of myriad complexity that includes the managing of difficult internal and external stakeholders, pipeline analysis, commercial awareness and giving and receiving challenging feedback amongst much more. I embrace the impact this has on myself and the organisation.

The results behind such a holistic approach to pursuits are clear both personally and in the success of the organisation in increased win rates, career advancement, greater respect from colleagues and clients, and a sense of accomplishment.

Conclusion

The analogy behind a coming of age from childhood to adulthood and proposals to pursuits is apt. Adulthood in bidding requires a shift from single reactive tasks to a mindset of ownership and accountability across the organisation.

I encourage all bid and proposal professionals to embrace the challenges of responsibility and reap the rewards of professional maturity. This can be done by fighting your case to have a seat at the table. You deserve a strategic role in shaping the entire sales cycle and driving success both personally and for your employer.





PUSHING BEYOND THE STATUS QUO

JEREMY BRIM

DESPITE THE NOISE ABOUT AI, THINGS IN OUR PROFESSION FEEL MATERIALLY THE SAME AS WHEN I STARTED IN BIDDING 25 YEARS AGO, ESPECIALLY FOR BID TEAM MEMBERS.

I think we need to take a broader view and look back up the funnel to examine the earlier stages of the bid growth process. I conduct 24 maturity benchmarking sessions with client boards annually and survey UK businesses with the Department for Business and Trade and others to assess our maturity in growing our organisations.

Some large organisations with bid teams and budgets excel, but on average the picture isn't good, especially for organisations with less than 1,000 people.

Our recent survey of 500 UK companies (with 67% of those being SMEs), 25% reported having a win rate of 0-20%, with 56% having a win rate below 40%. This engaged audience noted they don't capture deals ahead of tender, qualify tenders or have a bid process.

Unsurprisingly, high performers with win rates of over 60% do more capture upstream, qualify opportunities robustly, and have a recognised and well-sponsored bid process. Only 10% of high performers are SMEs.

B2B/B2G companies typically make 80% of their margin from 20% of their clients. They have a next batch of rising or falling stars, but then a very long tail of smaller clients barely breaking even or losing money. B2B/B2G businesses expend significant energy pursuing unattainable contracts and often risk losing money even if they win them.

We've found that companies make the majority of their profits from clients who engage early, are collaborative, have a higher propensity to direct awards or negotiate work, and where our staff enjoy working with them. Conversely, they lose money on smaller clients who surprise them with cold tenders (including where we

haven't influenced the specification), are litigious, and our staff don't enjoy working with them.

As capture, bid and proposal professionals, we're best connected to the business and most attuned to its performance. The new procurement act and its associated policy statement offer an opportunity to use internal and external market research data to assess our maturity and drive performance.

In a rapidly automated world, the second half of this decade should focus on demonstrating our value as strategic advisers and how we can guide our organisations to growth. Perhaps in adulthood winning work becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, enabled by good market research and optimised client and opportunity selection.





THE ADULT IN THE ROOM: HOW THE PROPOSAL PROFESSION LEADS WHILE OTHERS LAG BEHIND

WITH PROPOSALS INFLUENCING OVER A THIRD OF COMPANY REVENUE*, OUR PROFESSION HAS FAR OUTGROWN THE “ADMINISTRATION” AND “SUPPORT” LABELS. WE’RE THOUGHT LEADERS, CHANGE AGENTS, STORYTELLERS. YET, OTHER TEAMS – LEADERSHIP, SALES, EVEN CLIENT PROCUREMENT – STRUGGLE TO KEEP PACE WITH HOW OUR PROFESSION HAS EVOLVED. IT’S TIME THESE STAKEHOLDERS RECOGNISE HOW FAR THE PROPOSAL PROFESSION HAS COME AND THE CRITICAL IMPACT WE HAVE ACROSS ORGANISATIONS.

How the proposal profession has matured

Despite growing pains, we’ve found our voice and honed our identity by building a global community. We have industry bodies, certifications and training, shared terminology, and established in-person and virtual networks. We take ownership of our continuous development, honing our technical and interpersonal skills. We celebrate our successes and see setbacks as learning opportunities.

We operate with an abundance mindset, sharing insights with our peers through magazines, books, blogs, webinars, whitepapers, podcasts, surveys, and reports. Within our own organisations, we act as stewards of institutional knowledge – trusted content curators as well as creators.

We’re aware of and addressing issues such as:

- **Burnout:** Raising awareness and offering practical support through articles, surveys, reports, and mental health affinity groups
- **Barriers to entry:** Expanding access through apprenticeships and collaboration with colleges
- **Career longevity:** Promoting growth through coaching and mentoring schemes
- **Conflict:** Managing challenging situations with emotional intelligence, persuasion, and versatile communication

How other teams can catch up

For proposal teams to thrive – and for organisations to win more – leadership, sales, and even client procurement must evolve with us.

Leadership should rebrand the proposal function to reflect its impact by incorporating terms like “growth,” “winning,” and “revenue” into our titles. Competitive salaries, bonus incentives, and leadership pathways – on par with sales and marketing – are essential to attracting and retaining top talent. Flexibility must be the norm, not the exception. All investments should enhance quality and alleviate workload pressures, not simply increase volume or reduce headcount. Protecting technical SMEs’ time while holding them accountable through bidding-related KPIs would improve collaboration. And it’s time we’re measured on more than just win rate.

Sales needs to move beyond last-minute handoffs. We need pipeline visibility and true collaboration on capture – for new business and retention efforts. A seat at the table for go/no-go decisions, backed by real data, enables smarter choices. And post-bid, working together to implement lessons learned should be standard practice.

Client procurement must do better. Realistic RFP timelines, avoiding holiday-adjacent deadlines, and making bidder briefings useful should be the baseline. And when decisions are made, meaningful win/loss feedback should be non-negotiable.

How much more could we all achieve if every team treated proposals as a strategic function, not an afterthought?



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THE ROLE OF AI IN THE MATURING PROFESSION OF BIDDING

KATE CUMMINS

AS BIDDING PROFESSIONALS, WE FIND OURSELVES AT A PIVOTAL MOMENT. 2025 HAS ALREADY BROUGHT A SURGE IN AI STARTUPS AND TOOLS, EACH CLAIMING TO REVOLUTIONISE OUR INDUSTRY. PROMISES OF “ONE-CLICK” WINNING PROPOSALS AND AUTOMATED TENDER RESPONSES DOMINATE THE DISCOURSE. BUT BEFORE WE EMBRACE THESE ADVANCEMENTS, WE SHOULD PAUSE TO CONSIDER WHETHER WE RISK SLIPPING BACK INTO OUR “CHILDHOOD” WAYS - MAKING IMPULSIVE DECISIONS BASED ON UNTESTED CLAIMS.

At Bid Performance we have experimented with various AI tools, from secure chatbots to bespoke industry-specific solutions. Their potential is undeniable, but their true value lies in their proper application.

AI: A New Team Member, Not a Magic Wand

Imagine hiring a new Bid Writer and expecting them to craft a winning proposal with no onboarding, no context, and no strategy. The result, at best, would be generic and compliant. AI operates in much the same way. It can process data, identify patterns, and generate content, but only when directed by knowledgeable professionals who provide context, clarity, and strategic insight.

Failing to provide these foundations reduces AI to an underutilised – and potentially harmful – tool, stalling the very progress it promises to accelerate.

Building on Strong Foundations

The success of AI in bidding is directly proportional to the strength of the foundations it supports. Strategic direction, skilled subject matter experts (SMEs), and robust processes remain the cornerstones of high-quality submissions. These are lessons we learned in the “adolescent” phase of our profession – lessons that must not be forgotten as we transition into this era of advanced technology.

AI can enhance our capabilities by accelerating routine tasks, providing insights and saving time. However, AI is not a substitute for strategic thinking or human expertise.

It strengthens our processes but it cannot independently create winning bids.

Avoiding Childhood Tendencies

The allure of technology can sometimes lead to over-reliance or unrealistic expectations. As professionals, we must resist the temptation to adopt AI based solely on its promises. Instead, we should approach its implementation with the reasoned judgment of an experienced bid professional.

This means:

- **Evaluating AI tools critically, focusing on their applicability to our unique needs**
- **Incorporating AI in a way that complements - not replaces - human talent**
- **Setting clear expectations for how AI fits into the bidding lifecycle**

Proceeding Thoughtfully and Vocally

As our profession comes of age, our role extends beyond adopting AI tools; it includes guiding our teams, stakeholders, and customers in their use. In writing this article, I used AI – but the ideas, structure, and strategy came from my experience and research. Had I simply asked, “How can AI produce bids?”, the outcome would have been very different and rather generic. Let’s hope we proceed this way when bidding with AI as a valued team member.





THERE'S NO 'I' IN TEAM

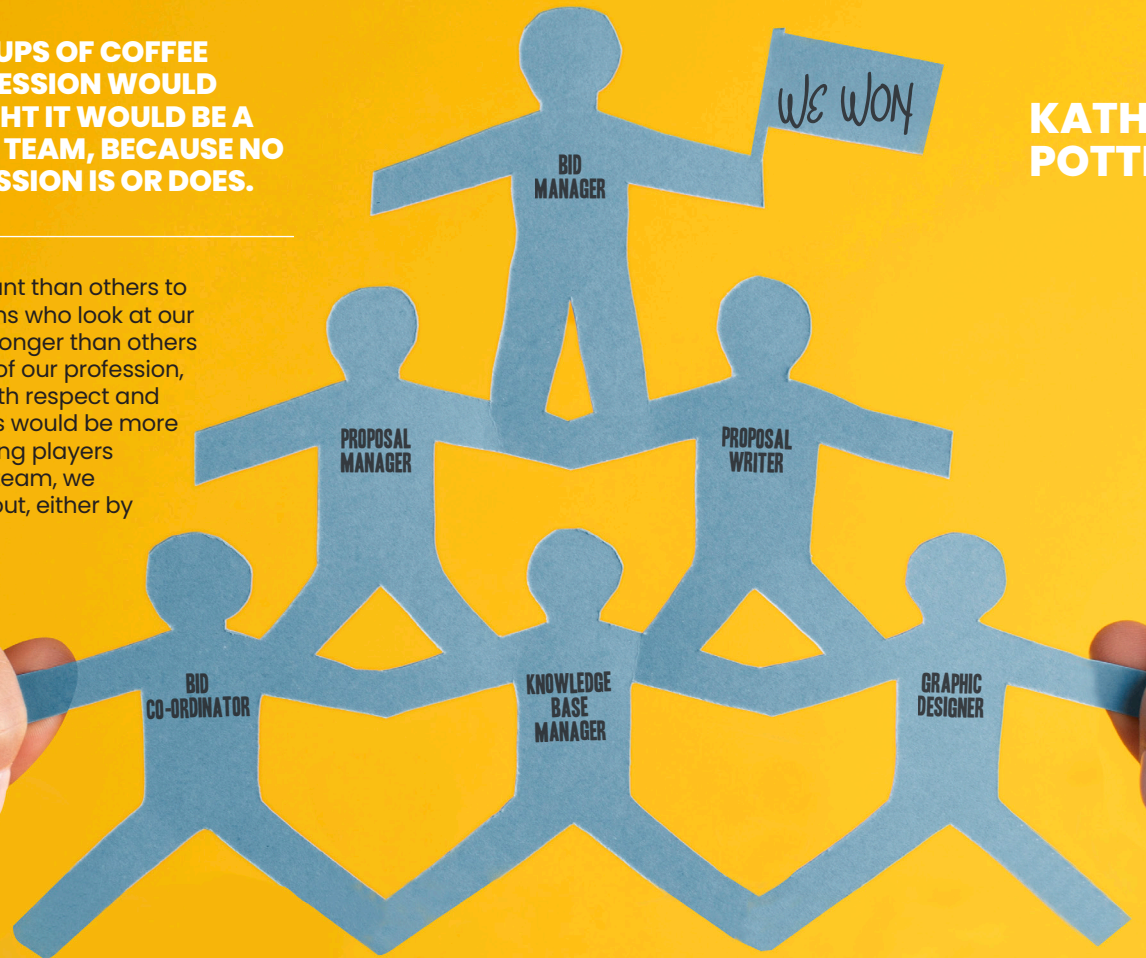
THERE'S BEEN LOTS OF PONDERING OVER LOTS OF CUPS OF COFFEE ABOUT WHAT A GROWN-UP VERSION OF OUR PROFESSION WOULD LOOK LIKE AND HOW I'D DESCRIBE IT. I FIRST THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A SINGLE PERSON THEN REALISED IT WAS MORE LIKE A TEAM, BECAUSE NO SINGLE PERSON CAN EMBODY ALL THAT OUR PROFESSION IS OR DOES.

KATHRYN POTTER

The problem is (as in any team) some players seem more important than others to the spectators (people in our organisations and client organisations who look at our teams and interact with them). In some ways those players are stronger than others now because they're given more attention. In a grown-up version of our profession, I'd like to see balance across the team with each player treated with respect and their role in the team fully understood. With this, I believe our teams would be more successful. The onus is on the star players to promote the supporting players and make sure the spectators understand that without the whole team, we don't win. I'd also like to see more organisations build their teams out, either by hiring a 'whole' person for a role or providing someone else in the organisation with extra skills, allowing them to fill a gap.

I tried to find a sport I could use as an analogy but realised there isn't one. Whether it's a tennis pro or a football team, it takes more than one person to score the winning points.

There are support teams, including coaches, physios, tacticians, reserve benches – many, many moving parts. The best players, the ones we look up to and respect in any sport, acknowledge that without their team they wouldn't be where they are today.



Let's see more acknowledgement of the team as a whole. Let's see the parts of the team (knowledge managers, proposal support and coordinators) that don't seem important to outsiders being fought for and supported with training and skills development. They are integral to success!

Let's also grow and see an across-the-board commitment to continuing professional development in communication skills, project/programme management and mentoring. Let's find a way of communicating what we need from our organisations to do our job properly, and let's do it in a way that makes them want to support us instead of forgetting about us until they need us.

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

ISABELLA STEVENSON

IN THE BID PROFESSION, LANGUAGE MATTERS. AS BID PROFESSIONALS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO FOCUS ON WRITING, THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE; TAKING THE TIME TO CRAFT CLIENT-FOCUSED SUBMISSIONS THAT HAVE THE RIGHT TONE OF VOICE, MESSAGING AND PROPOSITION.

However, thinking beyond any formal submission writing, how does language within the sector act as a marker for its maturity level? How do we know if we are moving from adolescence to adulthood?

One indicator could be the growing recognition of the profession when asked by someone what you do for a living. It used to go along the lines of:

Person x: 'What do you do for a living?'

Me: 'I am a Bid Manager.'

Person x: 'Sorry, a 'Big' Manager?'

Me: 'Yes, let's just go with that...' [end of conversation].

When I tell people what I do for a living now, most of them respond with something like 'Ah, yes, business development...' This in itself shows the profession is reaching a certain maturity level, highlighting bids are much more than a standalone writing activity. They are, in fact, a crucial part of a lifecycle that helps to cement long-standing client relationships.

Beyond the greater understanding of what a bid professional does, I believe there are two further indicators of development into adulthood within the bidding community itself. Firstly, the development of 'colloquial' bid language, which mainly comes with humour, affection and love for the industry attached to it (e.g., watching out for a 'seagull reviewer' swooping in too late in the bid process). The light-heartedness of such terms helps to emphasise familiarity and comradeship within the sector, showcasing that processes are evolving and, in turn, challenges will also arise.

The other indicator for me is the more 'formal' or 'best practice' language that has emerged from the world of bids. This could include terms such as 'proof points' – something that is naturally considered when working on a bid, but certainly wasn't something I was familiar with when I started my career. I like to think the adolescent nature of bids back then did not develop the concept of proof points, or highlight the importance of this in a competitive tender process.

In parallel, this best practice language also has terminology that accentuates the maturity of this evolving sector. This is demonstrated with the growth of newer processes and job roles, such as Capture Management / Capture Manager.

I am excited to see how the language around bids changes, evolves and supports new developments while highlighting a well-established and respected sector that can weather any challenge through the wisdom that comes with age.



KEEPING QUALITY HIGH AND BURNOUT LEVELS LOW

CHARLOTTE REES

AS A PROFESSION WE HAVE SPENT YEARS PROVING WE'RE SPECIALISTS IN WINNING WORK AND THAT WE BRING THE EXPERTISE OUR ORGANISATIONS NEED IN ORDER TO WIN MORE. WE'VE MADE INCREDIBLE PROGRESS, EVEN IN THE SMALL WINS WHERE WE CRAFT A WIN STRATEGY THAT DIDN'T EXIST, OR WE'RE ASKED TO BE INVOLVED BECAUSE THEY NEED OUR HELP. IT'S FANTASTIC TO SEE OUR ROLES BECOME SO CRITICAL.

But at what cost?

With long hours and stakeholders who expect "above and beyond", it's no wonder that in a recent APMP survey, 82% of respondents said they felt overworked and burnt out.

It's also not a surprise that with hybrid working, the lines between work and home have continued to blur. In the UK, 91% of UK adults reported that they experienced high or extreme levels of pressure or stress in the past year*. Many of us have become accustomed to working overtime to produce outstanding proposals and pitches.

There are unfortunately downsides of being incredibly passionate about the work we do – we don't realise when we're burnt out! We forget to give ourselves down-time to fully switch off as we're excited to deliver excellence and continue proving ourselves.

In 2025, it's time we prioritise wellbeing and mental health within our industry more than ever before. Without finding better balance we'll lose outstanding current and future talent.

So how could we start moving the dial from working tirelessly to prove ourselves, to proving ourselves whilst thinking about wellness?

- Recognise burnout symptoms such as feeling exhausted for long periods of time, struggling to sleep, frequent headaches, feeling overwhelmed or demotivated, having persistent trouble concentrating or procrastinating more than usual
- Improve working hours by blocking time in your calendar to take a breaks during the day or ensuring you don't look at your emails before work
- Set and hold boundaries with your key stakeholders as much as possible, for both delivery of deadlines and hours you're available
- Assess tasks creating high pressure, to address approach, workload and agree realistic deadlines to reduce immediate pressure

- Speak to someone about how you're feeling – they might be able to help, and as always, a problem shared is a problem halved!
- Create a safe space to discuss challenges, work-life imbalance or times of high pressure, and encourage asking for help
- Ask for professional help when you need it

As much as we focus on wellbeing and burnout in the bid and proposal world, it's likely we'll all experience ebbs and flows as we navigate change, internal pressures and the trials and tribulations of client deadlines! A 'healthy balance' is different for everyone but it's vitally important we individually find the balance that's right for us.

* Mental Health UK 2025 Burnout Report

** A full list written by Mental Health UK can be found [here](#).



THE ART OF INTERVIEWING YOUR NEXT EMPLOYER – FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK

COMING OF AGE IN YOUR CAREER MEANS ACKNOWLEDGING YOU BRING IMMENSE VALUE TO THE TABLE. PROFESSIONAL MATURITY MEANS UNDERSTANDING YOU'RE CHOOSING A COMPANY AS MUCH AS THEY'RE CHOOSING YOU. YOU ARE STEPPING INTO THE DRIVER'S SEAT OF YOUR CAREER.

MERYL ANGELICOLA

This realisation is critical. We work in high-stakes, high-pressure environments and the wrong job – no structure, no support, unsustainable workloads – can quickly lead to burnout. Due diligence is required during the interview process. Asking the right questions is vital. My top five are:

1. Who is currently managing your proposals?

If the answer is vague or “we all pitch in,” brace yourself. You may be stepping into a job with little structure, where you’ll be building everything from the ground up. If that excites you, great! But make sure you’re being compensated fairly and that your title reflects not just managing proposals, but establishing a proposal department. This isn’t just a job; it’s a leadership role, and it should be treated (and paid) as such.

2. Will those people continue managing proposals?

Just because others are handling proposals now doesn’t mean they’ll continue once you’re on board. It’s one thing to join a team with shared responsibilities. It’s another to think you’ll have support, only to find yourself running everything solo. If you don’t ask upfront, you lose all your negotiating power once you’re in the role.

3. What happens when the proposal manager is on vacation?

The answer to this determines if you’ll ever be able to take a real break. A vague “we make it work” isn’t good enough. A company that values you will have a plan, ensuring you can take time off without your inbox exploding. If there’s no backup plan, be ready for burnout.

4. How does your company decide what to bid on?

A structured bid/no-bid process separates strategic companies from chaotic ones. Without clear decision-making, you’ll be stuck in last-minute bids, impossible deadlines, and wasted effort. Knowing how opportunities are qualified tells you if the company is strategic or just throwing spaghetti at the wall.

5. What does growth look like for this role?

Proposal management is demanding. Maybe you love it and want to do it forever. Maybe you don’t. The best companies create paths for growth, so you don’t have to leave just to advance. Before you invest your time and talent, make sure there’s a future for you there.

Ask the hard questions so you don’t end up in an unhealthy work environment. The right company will respect your due diligence. When you find the right fit, where your work, boundaries and future are valued, respected and considered, you’ll be building a career on your own terms.

ABOUT OUR EXPERTS



MARTIN SMITH

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



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.



PROFESSOR NIGEL HUDSON

As Adjunct Professor at Liverpool Business School, Nigel is the world's first bid professor. He's been writing for BQ since Issue 2 and is our resident professional development expert. He holds a doctorate in experiential learning with bidding, has coached more than 5,000 people, and as a Consultant Bid Director has won more than £5bn of business for his clients.



NIGEL THACKER

Nigel has been a leader in our profession for over two decades and now runs Rebidding Solutions. He has published two books on rebidding and has presented at APMP events and conferences in the UK and USA. He has trained managers in bidding and wider management skills across the globe, created the online course 'Management and Leadership Skills for Bidders' under the mybidcareer branding and is a mentor on the APMP UK Rapport mentoring programme.



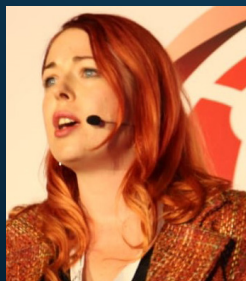
SIMON WELLSTEAD

Simon is the Managing Director of SMSW Media, a creative and marketing agency with one focus – maximising revenue for its clients. Simon's early years working in blue-chip sales means he understands what it takes to grow. His dogged determination to simplify and challenge at all levels means that he can cut through the crap and unearth true value propositions.



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.



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.



JIM CARLEY

Jim Carley is the Business Development Director for Shaw Trust, a national charity providing employability, education, and independence support primarily for people with disabilities and limiting health conditions. He was formerly the Founder and Managing Director of Carley Consult, an award-winning bid consultancy, which he subsequently sold, and has over 25 years' experience in proposal writing and bid management.



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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.



ALANA MCCARTHY

Alana is Head of Bids and Marketing for a tier one construction company. She has 20 years' experience in public sector bidding within the construction, facilities management, and transactional banking industries. With a passion for lifelong learning, Alana recently completed a Level 7 Apprenticeship in Senior Leadership and has embarked on a MSc with a focus on the bidding function to drive research into our profession.



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.



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.



CHRIS KÄLIN

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



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.



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.



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.



ABOUT OUR EXPERTS



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.



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.



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.



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).



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.



KATE CUMMINS

Kate Cummins is a highly experienced Bid Consultant with a proven track record of success in the ICT, Software, Telecoms and Fintech sectors. With over 20 years of experience as a Bid Author, Bid Manager, Head of Content Management, Assistant Vice President – Customer Business Development, and Head of Bid Management, Kate has developed a broad range of skills that enable her to provide significant value to her clients.



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.



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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.



CHARLOTTE REES

Charlotte has worked in the bidding profession for nearly a decade across several industries including IT services, facilities management and construction. She is currently an Associate Director Bid Manager, working within professional services. In 2018, Charlotte founded the Wellbeing and Inclusion in Bids and Proposals (WIBAP) community to target gender inequality within the profession and provide a space to share experiences and overcome the challenges we all face on a regular basis.



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.



MERYL ANGELICOLA

Meryl Angelicola has 20+ years in GovCon, focusing on innovation and accessibility in the industry. As VP of Industry Solutions at GovDash, she designs AI-driven tools that simplify workflows, enhance collaboration, and increase PWIN. She also founded ProposalTeam, a nonprofit dedicated to training professionals entering GovCon. Meryl leads a team of former Proposal Managers, helping GovCon teams rethink business development by integrating emerging technology and optimizing workflows for a competitive advantage.



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