



Linea Insights

**Would You Pass Your
Driving Test Tomorrow?
Effective Tender Bidding**

Managing a Competent Bid Process

Passing the Test

Although you may have been driving safely for years; as we all know, 'passing the driving test is another matter'. Your instructor doesn't teach you to drive – he teaches you to pass the test. The learning to drive bit comes after you've passed and are let loose on the roads without the instructor sitting beside you.

There is no doubt that you can deliver. You've probably been in the business for years and have many successful projects under your belt or you wouldn't have been invited to tender in the first place. However, to win the work, first you have to pass the test!

The tender process is far from perfect, but the client has to base their decision on something. They may go to tender because they have no choice due to European regulations, it may be a matter of internal organisation governance or just because they need to feel that they are getting best value for money. Either way, the company that is going to win the work may not be the best driver, but they will be the one that can **"pass the test"**.

Deciding to Bid

So - you have received the Invitation to Tender. Do you want to bid? That may sound like a silly question, but assuming you have read and re-read the Invitation to Tender, are you sure that you have resource available to submit a successful bid? If your tender submission is second rate, you risk giving a negative impression which may well be remembered the next time this (potential) client has a requirement for your particular category of services. Also, if you do succeed, is the project commercially viable? It is not compulsory to bid for every job and the client's procurement team would rather you were up-front about it and stated that you don't have sufficient available resource to submit a quality bid, than spend their valuable time evaluating a half hearted effort.

Having decided that you are going to submit a tender, don't fall in to the trap of not reading the tender documentation properly. You would be surprised at the amount of times a team reach the end of a very large tender exercise, only to realise that a fundamental assumption they made at the beginning was wrong; simply because no one read the tender documents properly.



Understanding the Clients Requirement

Make sure you are 100% sure of exactly what the client requires and that your submission leaves them in no doubt that you are the right organisation to supply it. If in doubt – ask. Remember though, no matter how impersonal your communication (telephone, email, e-tendering portal etc), you will be making an impression, good or bad, on someone. That someone is probably part of the tender evaluation team, so make sure the impression you leave is a positive one! This includes being certain that your request for further information or clarification is made through the correct process as defined in the tender documentation. (If they say “no phone calls” they mean no phone calls.)

Collating the Bid Team

In a perfect world you would have a full-time bid team working together on every tender you submit. The reality however, is often somewhat different and lots of individuals will have had an input to the final submission. Also, they’ll probably be supporting your bid in addition to their full time “day job”. This may be unavoidable, but you should maintain a level of continuity throughout, or risk your submission being perceived as disjointed. Often you’ll rely on your sub-contractors / delivery partners to supply the responses to the questions relating to their speciality. Don’t let them jeopardise your bid by providing their responses so late that you’re unable to read them properly and make any necessary changes prior to the submission deadline. They should fit seamlessly in to the rest of your submission.

Compiling the Bid

Your responses to the questionnaire should complement each other. I have lost count of the number of bids I have seen where one response totally contradicts another! Your bid should give the client confidence in your ability to deliver the project. This is not going to happen if you make fundamental mistakes at this stage.

You should evaluate all the risks in detail. Not just a cursory once-over, but to be certain that you’ve covered every angle and priced every risk. If you haven’t, not only could you end up in the red, it is likely that the client will perceive this as sloppy and unprofessional when they evaluate your submission.

The Project Team you are proposing should have the experience and gravitas to impress the client and their CV’s should be presented in a professional, corporate format. I could go on, but I’m sure you get the picture.

Your final document must be formatted exactly as defined in the Invitation to Tender with everything laid out in a logical, easy to navigate fashion. Give the responses meaningful names and put them in a logical, well defined folder structure that makes things easy to find.

Example Q&A

Every response should be proof read to ensure it actually answers the question that's been asked. Failing to answer the actual question that's been asked, is probably one of the most common mistakes bidders make. A prime example could be:

Question

Give three examples of lessons learned from previous similar projects, what the issues were and how you will ensure the same mistakes are not made again.

Response

Ensure detailed surveys are carried out to limit risk.

Ensure early dialogue takes place with the Local Planning Authority to successfully submit and discharge the planning conditions.

Ensure early dialogue takes place with other relevant regulatory bodies and stakeholders.

Ensure planning conditions are dealt with promptly.

This response simply does not answer the question!

There are four examples when three were asked for. How is the evaluator to know if the projects were similar if he is not given any details? What were the problems to which the examples refer? There is a very good chance that these responses would score 0.

Proof Read

Also, take time to ensure the accuracy of the grammar and to iron out those last few spelling mistakes and don't try to proof read your own work. I think humans are programmed to be blind to own mistakes. If someone says it doesn't read correctly or doesn't answer the question, don't try to explain your logic to them. They are not making it up. Change it!

Passing your Test

Finally – you have passed your test, you are awarded the project and it is down the pub for celebrations all round! Don't go and spoil it all by crashing out on the first bend and failing to deliver. You have been awarded the work because, having evaluated your bid, the client feels that you are the best company to deliver the project. Make sure you provide the quality and timescales upon which you have been awarded the contract.

Our team have extensive knowledge of procurement across a wide range of industries in the public and private sectors from both a tendering and bidding perspective . Our services comprise specialist advice through to bespoke end-to-end management, contact use to see how we can assist you.



About the Author



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Previously Executive Consultant at Linea Partners, and subsequently Head of Procurement East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust. He has over 25 years experience managing and leading a wide variety of procurement programmes for clients in both the public and private sectors.

Glyn has successfully supported programmes within the UK and worldwide for such clients as: The NHS, Willmott Dixon, The Ministry of Justice, Network Rail (Channel Tunnel Rail Link), National Policing Improvements Agency, NAAFI, Galliford Try, The Ministry of Defence, Kier, Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick and The UK Border Agency.

He has experience in Public Sector Procurement, Financial Transformation, Programme Management, Estates & Facilities Management, Supplier Relationship Management, Procurement Transformation and Bid Management.

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