

Tender Loving Care

# Developing your content for tenders and proposals



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## Should you respond?

Tender or proposal opportunities arise in many ways. But before you rush off and start writing your tender, there are a few things to think about.

### Read the Request For Tender (RFT) TWICE.

Read the RFT straight through from beginning to end. Then read it again, highlighting the key points, especially:

- Closing date and time
- How the tender is to be submitted: online upload, USB, email, by mail?
- Format of the document: using template supplied? Word, Excel or PDF?

### Then, ask yourself:

- Does the client, their industry, or the service they are outsourcing, match your business development strategy?
- Can you meet their essential criteria – do you have the skills or experience they are seeking?
- If successful, will you have people available to undertake the project or deliver the service?
- Who will be responsible for driving the tender process?
- How much time, resources and admin support will it cost to prepare the proposal?
- How much do you know about the client organisation, and how much do they know about you? Do your competitors have the inside running?
- Do you have a realistic chance of success?

## Going ahead

If you decide to submit a proposal, be kind to yourself and allow plenty of **time**. You may find it helpful to draw up a **simple work** plan that identifies the steps that need to be achieved to complete the tender, allocates tasks and sets deadlines.

## Developing your tender content

To help you to prepare a tender response, you need to develop a strategy for its content. A strategy is simply a path to leads you from A to B:

### WHERE IS THE CLIENT ORGANISATION RIGHT NOW?

That is, what do we know about them?



### WHERE DO THEY WANT TO GO?

That is, what do they want to achieve from outsourcing this tender, project or service?



### HOW WILL WE HELP THEM TO GET THERE?

That is, what can we do or offer to help them achieve their objectives?



### HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN WE'VE ACHIEVED THIS?

This is, what measurements or KPIs can we offer them?



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## Where is the client organisation right now?

To convince the client that you are the right people for the job, you need to show that you **understand** their business and industry – what social, political, economic and environmental issues are impacting them now, or will do shortly? Do your research – check the web, press cuttings and annual reports.

A SWOT analysis may help you to bring together the issues the client is facing so you can address these in your tender:

### STRENGTHS

Internal to the client

### WEAKNESSES

Internal to the client

### OPPORTUNITIES

External to the client

### THREATS

External to the client

Why they are issuing this tender now? For example, are they unhappy with their current suppliers, or are they benchmarking fees?

Try to meet or speak to someone at the client who is close to the decision making process. This is a very useful way to get information about their objectives, show your enthusiasm and present your credentials.

## Where does the client want to go?

What are their objectives in seeking this tender, or what do they want to achieve from outsourcing this project or service? They may state these in their RFT, but read between the lines – are there other, less explicit objectives? What has your research indicated? Does anyone in your business know this potential client? What does the press say? Perhaps this will become apparent at your meeting, or through your research.

## How will you help them to achieve their objectives?

It is crucial that throughout your tender you describe how you will help the client to meet their objectives and fulfil their needs. Use the Executive Summary to summarise this.

**Describe your understanding of their objectives and needs.**

**Describe your project or service delivery** - What is your plan of action or methodology? Describe the resources you will need, the costs, people required, timeframe and milestones. How will your approach or methodology help the client organisation to achieve their goals?

There may be one than one way to achieve their objectives and fulfil their needs. For example, you may be able to offer:

- Faster service
- Lower costs
- Technological superiority
- Outstanding industry knowledge and experience
- A unique, effective methodology or approach

Wherever possible, use diagrams, charts and timelines to demonstrate your service and project delivery approach.

**Demonstrate why your business can deliver the project or service better than any other** by including hard evidence for your track record. For example:

- Facts and figures about your organisation, such as the number of staff, IT services.
- Case studies describing time or cost savings for clients.
- Previous experience with this client.
- Examples of where you have gone beyond a client's expectations.
- Involvement in unique, demanding or very large, high profile or first-time projects.
- Independent evidence – references from clients, press cuttings or awards.
- Profiles of the people who will undertake the project or provide the service.

**Describe what will you bring to the client** - Every statement you make about your business and how you will provide the service or project must have an associated What's In It For Me factor. The WIIFM factor is what the client will gain by using your organisation, and how this will meet their objectives.

What you are offering is either an **output** (*feature*) or an **outcome** (*benefit*) both of which will help you to deliver the client's objectives, plus give them something 'extra', or added value. Outputs and outcomes are of great interest to clients. It is important to understand the subtle difference between them.

**Outputs are tangible features**, for example, IT resources you will provide, such as an online service, or an event you will organise, such as an open day or seminar. It is important to be tangible, rather than vague when describing these:

**VAGUE:**

This will enable us to provide you with online access to your files.

**TANGIBLE:**

This will enable us to provide you with 24-hour online access to your files.

**Outcomes are benefits:** *Outcomes* are the effects, or benefits, that your project delivery or service will have on your client. To turn an output into an outcome, apply the **'this means that'** test. For example:

**OUTPUT:**

This will enable us to provide you with 24-hour online access to your files.

**...Which means that:**

**OUTCOME/BENEFIT:**

You will have 24-hour secure, online access to your files so that you can personally monitor progress of claims at any time.

## How will you know what you've achieved?

If you win, how will you measure success with the client? Perhaps by seeking feedback through interviews or questionnaires? How can you use the insights and information gleaned to help you improve the ongoing service or project management? Tell them what you will do, and then do it!

## About Proof Communications

For almost two decades, we've been helping our clients to win millions of dollars in new business from successful tenders and proposals.

With more than 400 tenders and proposals behind us, we'll help you win more business with professional, polished and more successful submissions.



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