

Tender Tip – Getting Ready to Bid

Ever wish you had more time when bidding? The standard rule of thumb when tendering is “**bid activities always take up the available time**” no matter how long you have! And bid times seem to be getting shorter. So if you have a bid target on the horizon, the more you can do prior to the bid coming out, the better placed you will be during the bid window to win. Here are **12 tips for getting your organisation ready** so that you can start actual bid activities from the first day the Request for Tender (RFT) documents hit your desk. In fact, some of these can *only* be done prior to the RFT being issued!

1. **Meet the Decision Makers.** Do you know who will be the key decision makers for the bid? Are you able to organise a meeting or even lunch/dinner/drinks with any of these key influencers prior to the RFT being issued (ie. before the "no informal dialogue" phase begins) to ask them about key aspects of the work that may bother them or ask their view on how your company can best position itself for the contract? Any buyer worth his or her salt should expect and welcome this.
2. **Influence Specifications.** Are you able to influence any of the technical specifications of the work in your favour prior to the RFT being issued?
3. **Provide Ideas/Improvement Suggestions.** Once you have an idea of the work scope, are you able to provide some good ideas/improvement suggestions to the key decision makers? It is always pleasing for a buyer to see that the suppliers understand the buyer's problems and is thinking about ways to help the buyer's business before even entering the formality of the tender process.
4. **Invite the Suppliers.** Are you able to invite buyers to inspect your premises/systems prior to the RFT being issued? Even though it is often part of a short listing process during the bid phase anyway, it is always encouraging to signal to a supplier that you are open for business, are ready for his/her contract and welcome being reviewed.
5. **Previous Information.** Did you bid for this contract last time? If so, can you get access to as much information as you can from that bid, even if it was some years ago, to see if anything might be of use?
6. **The Incumbent.** Who is the incumbent and do you know for sure what type of job they are doing? If they are doing a good job and are liked, can you successfully manoeuvre into a potentially winning position?
7. **Your Competition.** Do you know all your competition and their likely win strategies? Never underestimate what others can do and how they might knock you off your perch if you are the incumbent.
8. **Key Partner(s).** Do you need to team with any potential partner(s) to give your competitive strategy a stronger punch and to overcome any potential winning strategies from your competitors?
9. **Key Subcontractors/Suppliers.** Do you need to develop relationships and lock in the support of any key subcontractors or suppliers before your competition does? Can you get any contractual paperwork underway?
10. **Tender Guidelines.** Are you able to familiarise yourself with the tendering guidelines of the organisation you are bidding to? If this is a government supplier, this is readily done through the relevant website.
11. **Standard Contract.** Are you able to familiarise yourself with the standard terms and conditions of contract of the organisation you are bidding to? Again, if this is a government supplier, this is readily done through the relevant website and can relieve pressure of clarifications during the bid phase, when time is often tight.
12. **Other Information.** Is there any other information that you can start to gather or update now prior to the bid coming out? This might include technical data/specs, updated client testimonial letters from your other contracts/projects (always good to include) and personnel CV updates.