



Are you Pitch Perfect?

Professional firms spend an ever-increasing amount of time working on bids, pitches or tenders: some times in ways that are productive and successful... and other times that are not.

The downside of not getting it right can be costly, both in terms of the time, money and resources expended and the reputation of your name or brand. The aim of "pitch perfection" may be an ideal one, but it has to be every firm's goal.

Here are three more ways in which firms can sharpen their act and achieve a higher success rate, based upon experience of past perfect and imperfect practice.

Get it and them together

Some pitches suffer from what can be termed a fatal lack of organisation and perspective.

The opportunity arrives with Partner A or Director B who take it upon themselves as a piece of pure DIY ("I know this client personally and very well, so leave it all to me"). Two months later, having lost the bid, the client feedback is damning: needs not met, an unconvincing team, a poor document and presentation etc...

Any pitch of significant size must be treated seriously. This means assembling a bid team, getting that team together early, and working through the steps thoroughly as if it were an important fee-paid client project (because if successful, it probably will be one!).

To enable this best practice, firms have developed bid processes to help ensure that all this happens. Yet still the same sins can be committed. Here, the onus is on business development and bid professionals to be proactive and win the argument for better organisation, supported by training, coaching and other developmental inputs.

Get your client dialogue in (before)

Here's a realistic scenario. The tender document arrives, a pitch team is organised and a schedule agreed. Much good work conducted internally results in a well-produced, good-looking proposal.....that gets no further. Why?

Because the team missed out on one of the most important but neglected parts of the process: engaging with the client prior to submission.

By engineering and maximising contact before submitting their proposal, the smart firms get a real handle on what the client is looking for (and not looking for), building relationships and a positive impression of the firm that often means the difference between success and failure.

In our experience, some professionals shy away from such contact out of fear, ignorance of its importance, or inability. The good ones (are encouraged to) do it, with the confidence to 'push the envelope' - even when the client's process doesn't appear to include pre-pitch liaison. They are brave enough to ask and, often, they get their just reward.



The neglected art of rehearsal

This is the last deadly sin. Having put phenomenal effort into producing a highly impressive pitch document, the team relaxes...as they see it their main job done. Such a superb submission will surely speak for itself? Except that it ain't necessarily so.

If all other things are equal (as they often can be), then the final leg of the process, the pitch presentation, becomes all-important. Sad then that some teams can put so little effort into making their presentation 'sing'.

As a minimum, any bid presentation should be rehearsed at least three times - including in front of a non-partisan audience (members of another team perhaps?) that is empowered to ask questions and test assertions. They will really tell you whether it is interesting and professionally done, and what needs to change to make it....Pitch Perfect.