



PEOPLE SCOPE

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Must-Do Tips No 8: Avoiding Tender Traps

"Companies send out requests for proposals that, under penalties of dismemberment and death, refuse to allow any human being to talk to any other human beings. They ask us to fill out hundreds of questions, whether they seem relevant or not. Their problems have been developing over years, and they want you to respond in two weeks. Don't do anything different from what they tell you to do or you will be disqualified.."

Yes, it can be a tough business competing for tender or bid work. Sometimes hardly or not at all a treat. But it is an increasingly prevalent and thus important factor for many professional service providers. Whether we like it or not, it is here to stay. Unfortunately, in our experience, some professional firms make the likelihood of success even more remote by behaving just as dysfunctionally as some tendering organisations. This month we offer three things you can do to make tenders less of a trap for your firm or practice area.

Tip 1 - Monitor and Control

Dealing with tenders to maximise your chances of success means having a firm and constant grip on what is coming in and who is dealing with it. In some firms, there is no or inadequate monitoring or control of this type. As a result, partners pursue opportunities that they have no chance of winning, pouring days of valuable time down the drain and then complaining (or blaming) when success proves elusive. The firm's Marketing or Business Development professionals have little handle on what is happening, nor how successful these efforts are because they are not told about them - until the 11th hour and 59 minutes when panic-stricken partners have been known to dump the load.

Tip 2 - Just Say "No" (or at least consider it!)

When was the last time you refused the opportunity to tender? If it was in the fairly recent past, well done! If you can't remember ever having done so, then think again. Just because you have been asked doesn't mean you should (in this respect, it's a bit like dating). Every tender opportunity needs to be evaluated using a set of more or less objective criteria to ascertain whether the firm can and should pursue it. Otherwise, your chances of success fall dramatically (like dating too).

Tip 3 - Differentiate, Differentiate, Differentiate

Lack of perceived difference between professional service providers is prevalent enough. The tendering process can flatten this out to the nth degree. Real differentiation is primarily achieved by getting into the mind of the decision-maker. So identify them and talk to them. If you are good at it, you will be able to see what parts of your firm's offer need to be stressed (rather than all of them, brochure-style). And by the way, even organisations who say that you cannot do this, have been known to allow it! If you don't ask...



People Scope helps professional firms to work smarter and more successfully at tendering, through tailored consulting and development programmes. For information on these programmes hit 'Reply' and type '*Better Tendering*'. For more general information about People Scope and what we do, go to www.peoplescope.com.

Need a stimulating contribution to your in-house publication or newsletter on Business Development, Client Relationship Management, or Professional Leadership from an expert? Call or email us and we will do our very best!

We welcome feedback from you on what you think about "Must-Do Tips". If you like it, hit 'Reply' and tell us specifically what you like. If there is a topic or issue that you would like us to cover, what is it? And if there is something that annoys you, tell us too! We want to get better.

If you think someone else in your organisation or network might be interested in receiving "Must-Do Tips" tell them about us.

If you wish to receive past issues of "Must-Do Tips" (covering topics like Professional Leadership, Networking, Achieving CRM Success, New Business Meetings, Developing Contacts, Presenting With Power, and Better Client Reviews), hit 'Reply' and type 'Past Issues' along with the name of the particular topic.

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Best regards.

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