

TOP 10 TIPS FOR TENDERING



Writing a tender for the first time can be a daunting prospect. Our top tips will help keep you on track and make sure your bid is relevant and sets you apart from the crowd.

- 1. Don't bid for everything.** If you don't have the capacity or capability to supply the goods or provide the service or if the potential customers are insisting on qualifications or experience that you don't have, save your time and effort for a tender that would be a better fit for your business.
- 2. Read the 'Invitation to Tender'.** Tendering is a bit like an exam – it is important that you answer the questions asked and don't simply describe your capabilities. Read the Invitation to Tender carefully, highlight the key points and plan a response based exactly on what they are asking for.
- 3. Research the potential client.** What excites the client? What will turn them off? Look at their website for a mission statement. Are they keen on local-ism? Equal opportunities? Innovation? Your bid needs to demonstrate that you are sympathetic to their concerns. Also, if possible, research the individuals that will be evaluating your tenders – if you identify their background and interests, you can create a tender that talks to them.
- 4. Study the evaluation criteria.** Look at the weighting percentages allocated to each criterion and put a proportionate amount of effort and space in the tender to address each one.
- 5. Identify a strategy and "win themes".** Decide what is going to be the thing that separates your bid from the competitors and make a clear statement of why the client should select you. Provide evidence of your capabilities to deliver against these statements throughout the tender. Address areas of interest and concern to the client repeatedly throughout the document.
- 6. Think about the competition.** Is there an incumbent/preferred supplier? If you can, find out who it is. Sometimes the client will tell you who the competition is, sometimes you will meet them at bidders' conferences and sometimes you just know who will be bidding. Use this information to demonstrate in the tender why you are better than the competition (without directly mentioning them by name).
- 7. Submit a sensible price.** Look at the weighting of price in the evaluation criteria to help you decide how big a margin is appropriate for this contract. Remember that the lowest price does not necessarily win so don't submit a cutthroat price just to win the business unless this is a carefully calculated strategic business decision to build a track record.

8. Create a professional looking document. Whether on paper or electronically, the document should be professional looking, be written using a professional looking font (not jokey ones), include pictures, charts and tables as appropriate. Avoid spelling mistakes and errant apostrophes.

9. Follow the rules regarding communication and bid submission.

Precise details will be given about when and how the document should be submitted and how questions may be asked. Follow them - particularly in relation to deadlines or all the time you have spent on the tender will be wasted.

10. Ask for a debrief. Always ask for a debrief – even if you win.

If you don't win, you need to know what you need to do better next time, so find out which elements of the bid scored badly in the evaluation. If you won, you still need to identify areas of relative weakness and if you won by a considerable distance, maybe you could increase the prices next time.

11. Do more than they expect!

Number 11 in a top ten? People will not complain if you give them more than they expect - so what can you provide free of charge above and beyond what they have asked for in the tender? If all the bidders could provide the "extra" but you are the only one that mentions it - you will be the only one that gets the credit.

With special thanks to Trevor Kitching for sharing his experience and guidance on tender writing.

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TalkToUs@cranfieldtrust.org



01794 830338

