



A A R D M A A N

A guide: to adding the WOW
factor to your strategic bids,
tenders & pitchbooks

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Are your products and services were streets ahead of the competition? Yet you still fail to get short-listed for the bid or tender – or make the right impression when you do a customer pitch? Want to know why?

Obviously, your tender needs to stand out from the crowd – but how do you do it? Clarity of presentation, ease of use and the visual impact are critical. You also need to look at your process. It needs to be structured and straightforward to ensure consistent quality, regardless of timescales.

We can help. We create bespoke solutions to support a total bid strategy, from copywriting, through to project managing design and packaging. Our smart approach to bids, tenders and pitchbooks has had a measurable impact on our clients' success rates.

Our strategic bids make a big impression. They make hearts race. They wow your high-level customer. They open doors. They help to win mega-deals. Lead to contracts worth tens, if not hundreds of millions. If you have a major bid, you don't want to leave the "WOW" to chance.

Aiming for success? Here are some points to consider:

Strategy Definition

Decide early on what your winning strategy is and stick to it ...

You need to fundamentally understand your client's requirements, and not only in terms of the tender in front of you. Try to and get under their skin and identify the issues that affect their business or sector. You need to pay particular attention to: your customer's strategy, your own business model, and your competitor's strategies. Ignore any one of these at your peril. If you can line up your business model with the clients needs in an easy and effective way and can prove it - then you stand an excellent chance of being short-listed.

Executive summary

Focus on your customers needs and benefits of your offer ...

The executive summary is one of the most important ways of getting your messages across – particularly to the decision makers in the buyer's organisation. Good executive summaries should focus on the reader's issues not the writer's issues. Think about the impact of the offer on the customer's business, how it will benefit them, the risks involved, the long term gain, and how both parties would benefit. Contrary to popular opinion, the executive summary should to be written first – forming a template for the rest of the document. It should echo the win themes you establish as part of your bid strategy.

Planning

Failure to plan – more often than not ends in disaster ...

Needless to say – without planning, your bid will fail. Understand the bigger picture: your offer, sales strategy, the bid structure (unless defined by the customer), the look and feel, timescales, who needs to be involved, information you need to source, and who needs to do what.

Planning saves money and can save you the embarrassment of an incomplete or poor-quality bid. Structured planning, like in any project, is insurance against failure. Many bids are put together at the last minute and can often be a terrible drain on resources and are often lost because of inaccuracies or poor quality control. This can often affect the morale and motivation of the bid team.

Direction

Use third parties to help give your bid real-world value and a vital edge...

Identify the key people who will influence the way the bid is developed: the approvers, and the content generators. They may not be your employees - they could be industry experts, the client's employees, business partners or consultants. An independent view will help you understand how your offer fits. This consultation process will provide direction, help identify any competitive edges you can exploit, and help you understand your own knowledge of the client.

Communication

Keep your team happy, informed and motivated ...

Most bids involve managing a team to produce the final output: a bid document that presents your offer in a way that appeals to your customer. You need to get the most out of your team. Involve them and keep them informed throughout the process to ensure the bid achieves the desired result. And remember you win as a team - so make sure everyone is rewarded when you win the bid.

Tell the story

Don't just start writing - outline the story first ...

This is your top line overview of the bid. Whatever format you use – it is an important tool to paint a broad-brush picture that summarises your strategy and your proposed solution. Use the storyboard as an aid to writing the bid, the project plan and a guide for all involved. The storyboard should highlight areas of concern, missing content, actions on key staff, creative required and production issues.

The Process

Define your process and make sure everyone buys into the process ...

Process is important. No matter how large or small the bid – you need a defined process to make sure your bid gets out of the door in time. It is about project managing your bid through all the steps. Companies that succeed in bidding often extend their processes: starting before the bid/ no-bid decision takes place, with the sales process. And it ends after the customer's decision is made - with a "lessons learnt" review. It is vital to have the right tools at your disposal to be able to produce a great looking, easy to use bid document.

We produce modular solutions that help to define the physical structure of the bid, and make it easy for people to know what elements to use when.



Add the WOW factor

Bids are competitive. To win you need to stand out from the crowd. Consider submitting certain content in other more interesting formats: dynamic media, cd-based elements can enhance your overall presentation. This could include video or audio of key people presenting the solutions or company overview. An investment of this sort will pay itself back as it can be generic and used in any bid or tender situation.

Add individuality to your bid by setting up some branding specific to the bid, use of custom imagery, enhanced diagrams, bespoke graphics and even a supporting micro web site. We are often asked to enhance important parts of the bid, such as the executive summary and conclusions, by laying them out in a more interesting and dynamic way.

Think of the reader by using branded dividers and section-headers. We have produced bid packs that included highlighters, pens and post-it notes to enable the bid evaluator to make notes and identify key areas of the bid quickly and easily.

Your brand should be prominent and related imagery used throughout to give the bid appeal and make people want to look through it. Ultimately this is not about weight, it is about user friendliness. If all the bids are on the same table - you want yours to stand out from the crowd, and be the first to be picked up.



Bespoke bid pack designed to make as easy as possible to read the bid, included pen, highlighter and post-its.

Review

Almost done. But before you submit your strategic bid - do a final review ...

Traditionally called a red review. This is where people who have not worked directly on the bid evaluate whether the bid meets your customers' needs and expectations, and complies with bid requirements. They need to look at the bid from your customer's point of view: does it have clear win themes, will it appeal to and persuade the customer. It is also an opportunity to assess how well the sales messages are articulated, and whether the bid fits with your original strategy and storyboard. It is a great idea to get some third party input here.

Packaging

Don't compromise at the last minute...

Ensure your bid looks professional and is designed to make an impact, It is essential that you make it easy for the people reviewing it to use and navigate through the content and find the key areas that are relevant to them. Packaging is important: it should advertise what is included and must protect your bid documentation in transit. You should never compromise on the method of delivery. All your hard work can be quickly undone if your bid is being kicked around the floor of the local sorting office!

You should be proud of your bid - the value invested here is a direct reflection of your perception of the people in the bid team. Make it count.

What we can do: for you

Consultancy Services

- Copywriting
- Process development
- Definition of strategy and winning messages
- Executive summary formulation
- Develop tone of voice that is relevant and appropriate to audience
- Create a bid that "talks to your customer"
- Facilitate workshops to develop strategy & storyboard
- Drive consistency in content and message
- Competitive and customer research
- Review and compliance
- Training

Project Management Services

- Project management
- Creative design
- Design development
- Branding
- Print production
- Dynamic media production
- Visualise storyboards
- Internal communications
- Website support

Clients say ...

"I knew when I worked with Gillian that I was working with a really impressive marketing professional who looked at the bigger picture rather than just copy. Gillian was extremely flexible and met our very tight timescales and kept on delivering, time and time again."

"The new tender packs have gone down brilliantly, they have not only helped to focus the team on the way they construct and produce the bids but they have real stand-out-from-the crowd value when submitted to prospects and clients. The user friendly nature of them helps position us as a thinking company who care about our clients."

"Just a short note to thank everyone involved in getting what was a very impressive proposal out of the door. I oversaw the final collation yesterday, and the finished product was impressive and professional. We're in a good position and we can be very confident going into the tender process. Many thanks once again"

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