

Selling to Government

By Michael Asner



M Michael Asner
A CONSULTING

Suite 212
1450 Merklin St.
White Rock, BC
Canada V4B 4C3

Phone/fax: (604) 530-7881

asner@compuserve.com

www.proposalsthatwin.com

Learn How to Win More Often

There is no benefit in submitting a bid or a proposal which loses! This newsletter is intended to help you obtain government business more easily, in a more effective and efficient manner. It's intended to provide you with information, and advice on how to win more often. Or, just as importantly, when not to submit a bid or a proposal.

Selling to government is not difficult, but it does require a vendor to learn about the seemingly complex rules and procedures, and it often requires new skills.

Selling to government, whether it's our federal government or your local municipality is a 7-step process:

1. Make a firm commitment.

Recognize the large amount of learning needed to win, that new skills such as

proposal writing may be required, as well as detailed information about the competition.

2. Identify and target the market.

Some firms start locally; others target only major cities, or specific federal departments.

3. Learn about the market.

Obtain as much information as you can about your targeted entities, their procurement policies, existing contracts, and plans, and how they do business.

4. Make contact.

Attend briefings; contact the buyers and end users to discuss their needs; register as a potential supplier.

5. Develop a relationship.

The time to become

known is before the solicitation documents are released.

6. Submit a bid or a proposal.

Obtain feedback about why you didn't win; attend a debriefing; obtain information under access to information laws.

7. Evaluate your efforts and revise your plans.

There is a lot of valuable information available great web sites dealing with this topic, as well as books, workshops, articles, associations and solid advice and assistance from experienced people.

This newsletter will focus on providing you with sources of information which will increase the number of "wins" you obtain.

Other Sources of Valuable Information

Web Sites, Associations, Videos, Books & Magazines



The **Procurement Branch, Government of Nova Scotia**, has developed *A Guide to the RFP Process* a good tutorial for vendors on some of the rules and the reasons we use an RFP. This 24-page document provides an easy-to-read explanation of the process.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/tran/tour/policy/rfpguide1003.pdf>

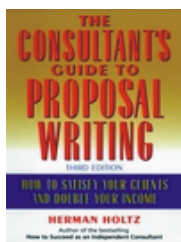


The **Association of Proposal Management Professionals**, a U.S.-based association, is dedicated to enhancing the skills and status of proposal writing. It has 25 members in Canada, primarily in Southern Ontario. For more information: contact: mike.newton@bellnexxia.com

<http://www.apmp.org/AboutAPMP.asp>



Summit magazine explores Canada's \$100 billion public sector procurement marketplace. Read this magazine to learn about emerging issues and to identify potential contacts. From contracting policy to trends in electronic tendering and beyond, Summit contains valuable information for suppliers at three levels of government as well as hospitals, school boards and universities. <http://www.summitconnects.com>



The Consultant's Guide to Proposal Writing: How to Satisfy Your Clients and Double Your Income, 3rd Edition. Herman Holtz wrote more than 70 books for consultants. This book (still in print and first published in 1986) deals with the entire proposal-writing process. It's a great introduction to the topic and deals with many critical issues including skills needed to write winning proposals, strategy, bid/no-bid decision, the executive summary, and proposal libraries. <http://www.wiley.com/>



ProposalWorks is a resource centre for proposal writers and evaluators. The major feature of this site is a fully searchable, indexed library of several hundred articles dealing with best practices. www.proposalworks.com

What is the legal framework for procurement?

The purchasing process for the federal, provincial, and municipal governments is specified, controlled and organized by statutes, regulations, policy directives, bylaws and guidelines.

Generally, the framework imposed by statutes and policies contains three essential elements:

- (i) Procurement is to be accomplished using a competitive bidding process;
- (ii) Selection is based on lowest price or best value;
- (iii) Bidders must be treated equally and fairly.

Unsuccessful bidders, believing they have a cause, can bring an action in private law,

usually under the law of contracts or tendering.

Since 1981, the Supreme Court of Canada and lower courts have established a number of duties and responsibilities which the issuer of a tender (or any type of competitive procurement, regardless of what it's called) has.

Some of these duties, established by the courts, include the duty to:

- (i) disclose all the requirements in the tender document;
- (ii) treat all bidders equally and fairly;
- (iii) publish the basis for evaluating the bids in the tender

document;
 (iv) award the contract based only on the factors described in the bid document;
 (v) award the contract only to bids which meet all of the mandatory requirements.

If a supplier is successful in proving its claim, often the courts will award the supplier the profits which it would have made on the contract.

This article is taken from An Elected Officials Guide to Public Procurement in Canada.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.proposalsthatwin.com/newproducts.html>

In Canada, it's the Courts that have defined the procurement rules; not the politicians or bureaucrats.

I know it's English, but what do all those strange terms mean?

Procurement has its own vocabulary. Many of these terms are frequently overheard when procurement people gather, but not widely understood by the rest of society. Many vendors don't know the difference between a bid, a tender, and a Request

For Proposals. Or what NAFTA means and how it influences the procurement process.

To understand the procurement process, we have to understand the government's language.

Summit magazine has established a Canadian procurement dictionary: http://www.summitconnects.com/Tool_Kit/glossary_A_M.htm

This glossary provides both definitions of key terms and hotlinks to related sites.

There is a Canadian dictionary of procurement terms.

Proposal-Writing Investments Pay Big Dividends

By Michael Asner

Imagine the impact on your bottom line of winning six more contracts!

Imagine the impact on your bottom line if you won six more contracts! Suppose you could do this for under \$50,000. Would this be a good investment? Many of the most successful firms in the government market think so.

Here is the story. There are two types of firms when it comes to proposal writing. The first, let's call them Type A, only dabbles at proposal writing. But does it with a lot of energy. The Second, Type B, treats proposal writing as a strategic investment.

Type A firms make no investment in proposal writing. It is not recognized as an important sales tool. Proposals result from individual effort with little training, support or help. In these companies, proposal writing is expensive, inefficient, frustrating and difficult. It is done in an environment without access to resources and with little encouragement. And, because proposal writing in Type A firms relies on individual experience, it only can be done by senior people.

Indeed, the Type A approach introduces a

costly level of chaos throughout the organization. First, because ad hoc proposal writing generally consumes all available time. Typically, a valuable senior sales or marketing person spends five to 10 days on the task. During this time, no sales or marketing is being done, and if this senior person usually sells \$100,000 per month, then the opportunity cost for half a month is \$50,000!

Second, the senior person needs help in developing the proposal, but there is no formal process for getting any. So informal demands are made on others throughout the organization, forcing people to interrupt their usual work to respond immediately to the critical deadline. For instance, there are demands made on engineering staff for product information; on legal staff for review and approval of terms; and on administration and sales for references, case histories and assistance in producing the document itself.

A Better Approach

On the other hand, Type B firms regard proposal writing as an important corporate skill. In these firms, production of a

proposal is cost-effective, disciplined and well-managed. It is done in an environment that provides access to senior people and to adequate resources.

In reviewing the proposal-writing process, I have found that Type B companies invariably answer yes to the following questions:

- Do we have a checklist for reviewing each RFP we receive to determine whether or not to bid?
- Do we regard the production of a proposal as a project?
- Do we provide training in proposal writing?
- Do we have an up-to-date database of corporate and product information?
- Do we have a proposal resource centre which includes guidelines, sample proposals, books, case histories and references?
- Do we use proposal teams rather than relying on individual efforts?
- Do we analyze our competition and know their strengths and weaknesses?
- Is there a process for providing the proposal team with access to technical and legal resources in a timely manner?

Type A firms only dabble at proposal writing.

Proposal-Writing Investments (continued)

There are many other questions which could be asked and are asked in conducting a review of the proposal-writing process. However, the provision of a complete checklist is beyond the scope of this article.

A Simple Transition

The bottom line: Moving from a Type A firm to Type B firm is neither expensive nor complex. Your organization simply needs to provide some direction and

resources. It needs to provide training, data and tools. It needs to standardize the process.

The first step occurs when senior management recognizes proposal writing as an important task and focuses its attention on this area. This is often followed by a review or operational audit of the existing practices. This review doesn't require a lot of effort. Typically, it involves an outside facilitator interviewing senior management and sales and marketing staff, and a

brief review of some typical proposals. Following this, an action plan can be developed to improve the proposal-writing process.

A small investment in this area providing some coordination and leadership, a little training and some standardized material can increase the number of wins dramatically.

Type B firms regard these activities as strategic.

Using FOI Strategically

Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation establishes the right of the public to access government information. The federal government and most of the provinces and territories have passed similar laws. Using these laws, any person can request procurement documents. In many cases, all procurement information will be released unless it is judged potentially harmful to the business interests of one of the parties. All of the following procurement documents could be made public

after the award of a contract:

- The evaluators' notes
 - The scores of each proponent
 - The memo recommending the winner
 - Copies of each proposal
 - The contract.

In some jurisdictions, information is automatically released once a contract is signed. In other places, information is guarded and not released until a formal request is made.

More Information

1. This web site contains a bibliography of 20 publications dealing with Freedom of Information and Access to Information Acts in Canada:

http://www.foi.law.utas.edu.au/can_bib.html

2. This web site provides links to Access and Privacy Laws and Commissions for each Canadian province and territory:

[Http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/atip/provte.html](http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/atip/provte.html)

Imagine seeing your competitor's proposal!

Creating Winning Proposals

Attend This exciting, valuable full-day workshop

Oct. 1 - Toronto

Oct. 4 - Ottawa

Since 1999, more than 600 firms have attended Michael's workshops on Creating Winning Proposals. HAVING WORKED ON MAJOR RFPs AS WELL AS MAJOR PROPOSALS, MICHAEL HAS A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON THIS TOPIC. Here's what some of the participants said:

"Very worthwhile. Although I've been writing proposals for many years, Michael provided many excellent tips and made me aware of new issues."

"Facilitator gracefully handled participant questions and issues."

"Great and very informative. Thank you for offering it."

"As someone seeking new opportunities for further business, I found this to be of GREAT help."

"An outstanding presentation."

Our "Creating Winning Proposals" seminar teaches managers and proposal writers how to write and manage proposals in response to federal, provincial, and local government public bidding opportunities. Our speaker will provide proven methods to keep your proposal writing process cost-effective through intelligent "no bid" decisions and effective proposal management..

Attendees will gain practical knowledge on:

1. Making "No Bid" decisions and identifying which bid opportunities are worthwhile.
2. Managing proposal writing to improve the quality of your proposals.
3. Keeping your investment in proposal writing at a reasonable level and your proposal costs down. The criticality of understanding customer needs in writing winning proposals.
4. The keys to successful proposal writing. How proposals are evaluated by the customer.

Secure Your Seat Today - Simply fill out the short Registration Form at:

http://www.proposalsthatwin.com/asner_brochure/index.html

About Michael Asner:

The seminar will be conducted by Michael Asner, an author, consultant and acknowledged expert on proposal writing. Michael Asner has over 20 years experience in proposal writing, primarily in the information technology industry. Since 1995, his workshops have been presented in U.S., Hong Kong, Singapore, and major cities in Canada. Participants have included major IT companies such as AT& T, IBM, Oracle, DMR and Sierra Systems as well as firms from most sectors including engineering firms, owner-operated printing companies, advertising firms, and personnel agencies

Price:

- \$400 per person. \$50 discount for each additional person from your company.
- At your company (call 604/530-7881 for quote.)

Who Should Attend?

Those involved in the proposal writing process; proposal writers, coordinators and company managers.

Why Should You Attend?

"Creating Winning Proposals" will provide participants with the knowledge to effectively respond to an RFP. By attending, participants will learn proven methods necessary to prepare, manage and develop a winning proposal.

For more information and to register: http://www.proposalsthatwin.com/asner_brochure/index.html