



# HOW TO WIN TENDERS

## 10 steps to the perfect pitch

In the construction industry you don't start building without a blueprint, detailed specifications and drawings. It would be foolish to start without such things and it's the same when it comes to constructing a response to a request for tender. These 10 questions are those that are top-of-mind for purchasers when they are evaluating tender submissions. Pretty much all of them are common sense, yet time after time I hear purchasers say that it's not paying attention to the simple requests that stop a submission from making the shortlist. Before you even start looking at a tender request, you need to have a clear understanding of the marketplace; i.e. how well do you know the purchaser and your competition? The more you know in advance, the easier it will be to pitch your submission and show why you are a better choice than your competitors.



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ment. He has also spent time working in the Middle East. Throughout his career, Philip has written and won tenders in construction, advertising, and government consulting. Philip's practical experience is backed up by a postgraduate Diploma in Business Marketing and a Masters Degree in Management.



**Do you understand what is being requested?**

The purchaser usually has a picture in their mind about the ideal tenderer. From reading the tender request carefully, build up your own picture — does this describe your company? Look beyond the questions that you are asked to answer and put yourself in the purchaser's shoes. By focusing on just the questions you will miss

many cues in the document itself.

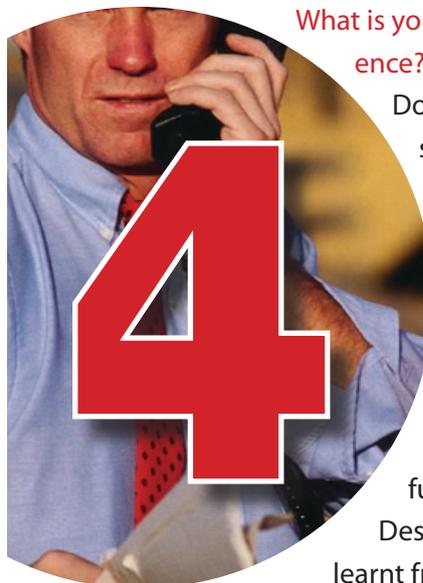
Do your answers to questions demonstrate your understanding or are they just a collection of individual comments? Have you answered all required sections of the tender document? Are all components requiring

a signature completed (i.e. statutory declaration)? You don't want to lose a tender by failing to complete the required information outlined. Don't 'over answer' questions; make sure anything you write — or any documents you append — are relevant and add necessary proof. Pay particular attention to requests for certificates and insurance. Without evidence of the required information it is unlikely that a provider will be successful.

# 2

**Did you tell me how you propose to tackle the project?**

Make sure you go beyond just confirming that you can do the job and then tell the purchaser how you will go about it (methodology). Show them that you know how to put a project plan together.



**What is your relevant experience?**

Don't just trot out the same references every time you respond to a tender. Make sure your references / testimonials / case studies show proof of your ability to be successful in this type of work.

Describe what you have learnt from the experience you've gained. Do you propose to utilise sub-contractors or consultants in respect of the work to be undertaken? If so, you should list them, along with comprehensive details of their qualifications and specific experience.

# 3

**What are your capabilities?**  
Show that, as an organisation, you are capable of delivering what the client wants.

# 5

**What resources and skills do you have?**

What resources and skills do you have at your disposal and how will they add value to this project?

**What management systems do you have (safety, quality, environment)?**

Systems and processes show

that you are organised and pay attention to detail. Don't just throw copies of policies into your submission — explain how each one adds value or is relevant to a specific question. Formal certification is not always required. However, ensure all work processes are documented and provide evidence of regular audits and updates.

# 6

**Have you given me references from people I can talk to?**

Purchasers take written references with a grain of salt. Give them names and phone numbers to follow up. Make sure you prime your references on what to say or things you want them to verify.

# 7

# 8

What are the credentials of your senior- management team? People work with people so make sure you introduce your key staff, who will be working on the project. Build a customised profile of each person that proves they bring the right set of skills and experience to the job. Never just throw in a bunch of CVs!

# 9

**Do you have the financial resources necessary for this project?**

Often you will be asked to include a balance sheet. If yours doesn't prove that you have existing financial resources adequate for the project, explain how you will source them.

**Is your price competitive?**

The only way to know this is to know your market.

Public-sector organisations will often publish the winning tenderer and amount – make sure you find this information out about previous contracts for similar projects. Ask other customers you work with for feedback on prices.

...And don't forget to ask yourself some serious question before you put pen to paper: are you happy to work with the purchaser? How stable are they? What sort of reputation do they have in the industry? Can you work with their key people?

# 10