



Image from Fox 5 DC

WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING. IT'S THE ONLY THING.

Winning, according to Red Sanders, legendary football coach for the UCLA Bruins, IS the only thing. In the field of business and proposal development, isn't that true, too? Isn't the whole purpose of responding to the opportunity to win the business? If you're reading this, chances are you know RFPs like the back of your hand and spend more than your fair share of the day in front of your computer, responding to one or more - or more!

WINNING IS WHAT MATTERS

No company submits a proposal and hopes to come in second. It's all or nothing at all.

WINNER

Why would anyone do a proposal if not with the goal to win? All those hours analyzing the Request for Proposal, evaluating solutions, identifying and filling gaps, endless reviews, sleepless nights, gallons of caffeine: isn't winning the whole point? In the government business world, new business comes from winning. In many cases, there is only

one winner. And, with contract cycles that last three-five years, you may never have another chance at that line of business if you don't win this one NOW.

Second doesn't count. Not even a little.

WAIT, IS WINNING EVER BAD?



Yes. Winning with low-ball pricing; winning when you can't perform the work – these factors are indicators of bad wins.

Remember, the point of winning is not the win itself. Unlike sports, you don't win a government contract and go home with a check to get ready for the next game. You actually have to do the work. Remember those aggressive goals and commitments you made in the proposal? Now you have to meet them. With the people you named; at the price you submitted. And it matters how well or badly you perform. It matters a lot, and for a very long time. Poor references have a way of following companies around. They make barriers to new business and they can actually make existing clients question your ability to perform on their contracts as well. The bad win becomes a lose:lose situation very easily.

And that's the difference between business development and football.

The point is not to win the game and then get ready for another game next week – it's to grow your business and achieve year over year client retention.

OKAY...WHAT KIND OF WINNING IS, WELL, WINNING?



What does it feel like when your solution is compelling, your pricing is competitive, and you know you can do the work and satisfy the client?

It feels smart.

A smart win comes from a strategic process that generates good decisions, good proposals, and good wins.

And it's easier to get there from here than you might think. A strategic process uses proven methods such as these 5 steps:

1. Plan for the Opportunity

That means some research. Who's the client? Who's the competition? If there's an incumbent, how is the company's performance? When you plan, you can gain a sense of client needs on a deeper level than the RFP may reveal and identify key goals your solution needs to address. The take home: Understanding the opportunity leads to a *responsive* solution.

2. Read the RFP/RFQ/ITB/IDIQ/ETC

That means everyone who will participate in proposal development needs to read the opportunity, attachments, forms, and Q&A. It is tedious and time-consuming. But the benefit is no more wasted conference calls, no more clueless text, no more panicked rewrites at the last minute. The take home: Understanding the procurement leads to a *compliant* solution.

3. Make the Go/No-Go Decision

Should you really do this proposal? Make the right go/no-go decision by evaluating your solution and your ability to win against your competition. Can you do the business if you win? Close gaps with high-performing partners or plan on capacity development. The take home: Making the right decision to bid leads to a *strategic* solution.

4. Develop a Compelling Solution

Has a client ever told you that your proposal "hit the nail on the head"? That compelling solution is the unique way your benefits address client needs – which you present through a responsive, compliant, and strategic proposal that includes differentiating proof. The take home: Compelling solutions and realistic prices lead to smart wins and satisfied clients.

5. Review for Quality, not for Color

More reviews do not necessarily mean a better proposal. Make sure you include three essential reviews. Review your *solution* after the Q&A comes out and after pricing. Does it hold up? Do you need to address any new information? Review your *proposal* for its quality – is it responsive and compliant? Does it prove why your compelling solution is right for the client? And, review your *volumes*. More than one good proposal lost out because key elements did not make it into the final three-ring binder. The take home: Get the most out of your review by focusing on quality: of your solution, proposal, and submission.

WINNING: THE BOTTOM LINE.

A bad win can lead to a failed contract and cost you – money, time, reputation, future business. Anyone in the proposal development field sees bad wins every day: low technical scores and then astonishing awards based on rock bottom prices. These contracts can fail before the go-live date even arrives. When they do, they diminish the credibility of every business doing business with government agencies.

YOUR TAKE HOME: WIN SMART.

Following a smart process leads to smart wins. We've been helping companies win smart for over 30 years. To learn more, visit [Strategy Horizon: What We Do](#)

Like to do things yourself? Here's where you start smart: [Winning the Business](#)