

Tenderer's Common Mistakes

As delivered at Procurex Scotland by John Clark, PASS Consultant, Nov 2016

- Don't turn up to supplier meetings
- Don't read the tender instructions
- Don't keep a database of the basic information likely to be requested during the tender process
- Don't answer all questions / leave blanks – if something is not applicable then say so
- Don't quantify questionnaire answers
- Fail to understand or comply with the specification – if something is unclear or doesn't make sense then ask, and continue to ask until you fully understand what's being asked of you
- Don't show experience of similar work – any previous experience demonstrated should be relevant to the contract being tendered
- Lack sufficient capacity to deliver – small organisation bidding for large contract
- Don't pay attention to weightings – these indicate the most important criteria and those you should spend most time and effort on
- Don't verify acceptability of variations – if your bid varies from the specification then make sure this will be acceptable before bidding
- Rarely ask about budget – do your very best to get an understanding of how much the buyer is likely to spend, either by asking directly or looking at previous contracts, even a ball-park figure
- Fail to ask questions and make incorrect assumptions – don't assume, ask and verify until you are entirely certain what is being asked
- Fail to set up a tender team or involve the relevant people
- Don't take consideration of local policies or initiatives – find out the key priorities of the buying organisation and reflect these in your tender
- Complete tender documents online rather than working offline – download the documents, separate out the key questions and ensure you're entirely happy before uploading
- Do the most important work close to the deadline – tackle the key issues head-on and prioritise these areas rather than leaving until the last minute
- Late submission or delivery of tender – even a few minutes late is likely to disqualify your bid
- Fail to bring specialists to presentation meetings – if personnel with important skills/knowledge are crucial to delivery then ensure they attend when presenting to the buyer

Winning Tenders tend to have the following characteristics:

- Are customer-focused and encapsulate the needs of the buying organisation
- Provide added-value at no extra cost – go above and beyond the tender specification
- Are innovative
- Identify and address the risk – being meticulous about the potential risks shows you know what you're talking about. Having a detailed strategy for managing risk gives reassurance to the buyer of your competency and can put you ahead of competing bids
- Show methodology for continuous improvement and development throughout the life of the contract – a means of measuring and enhancing performance

- Demonstrate they are the Most Economically Advantageous Tender – this is not about price but being able to show the highest quality of bid that’s still affordable to the buyer
- Identify problems early – flag up potential issues and risks of the tender specification with the buying organisation and look for solutions
- Always demonstrate how and why they represent good value for money
- Try to add value through the lifetime of the contract
- Actively manage relations with the buying authority throughout the life of the contract
- Are positive and professional throughout the process