

THE BIG PICTURE: INFORMATIONAL SERIES

RESPONDING TO RFPS: DOING IT DIFFERENTLY

Over the last few quarters, many of our customers have seen an increase in slipped forecasts, even when highly qualified RFPs have been submitted. Since the economy is slowing, it's no surprise to hear this. But what is a surprise is that many sales teams still go through the same motions of responding to the RFP, when the likelihood of success is so low. In other words, they're spending time, resources, and money on a process that is yielding lower and lower returns. If there was ever a time to change the way you reply to RFPs, it's now! I'm not suggesting that all of the slipping RFP situations we are seeing are not funded. They are slipping, however, because of one or more of the following reasons:

ISSUE	SOLUTION
<p>Lack of connection An RFP that lacks a connection to an unresolved business issue gets lost among the more important priorities and initiatives of the actual decision makers.</p>	<p>Ask critical questions upfront to insure that the RFP answers the "unasked questions."</p>
<p>Undeveloped Value In other words, the impact of the new solution has not been quantified enough to convince the actual decision maker to spend the money or to de-prioritize it in comparison to other higher value initiatives.</p>	<p>Spell out exactly how the investment in your service will impact the bottom line in a business case analysis.</p>
<p>Lack of Power Many RFPs are delayed simply because the committee can't get access to the decision maker, or the "decision maker" they present it to doesn't have the authority to spend the money.</p>	<p>Identify the decision maker upfront and insure that they are reviewing your RFP.</p>
<p>Uncertain Risk The bigger the RFP, the bigger the risk of change. Many RFP responses do little to help the decision maker(s) understand what you can do to mitigate risk.</p>	<p>Spell out what they are risking by NOT using your service or not changing anything.</p>

In the ideal world, the best place to start with RFP responses is to help the prospect define their requirements. While this is less and less likely today, you must find ways to differentiate your response. Let the prospect know what they can expect in the few short weeks of the relationship post-award and share ways in which you will make the implementation of your solution painless for the prospect. They have less support than ever before - let them know that you won't be taxing their internal resources.