

Focusing on what's new in your rebid

How to ensure you emphasise what's new about your solution in your rebid submission





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One of the dangers for incumbents is they focus too much on their existing solution in their rebid. Too often the feedback from the customer to a losing incumbent is that their rebid submission didn't contain enough that was new or innovative, and just rehashed what they were already delivering.

Ideally as you approach your rebid (during what we call the Recapture process) you will take a completely fresh view of your potential solution for the new contract. You will build it from the ground up (creating a Green Field solution as we encourage our customers to do) based on what your intelligence from the customer, and latest best practice tells you they need for the next contract – without being held back by the 'inertia' of your existing solution, no matter how well it might be delivering now.

By taking this route, when you come to write your rebid submission you will have a fresh, future oriented and focused solution to write about that is focussed on the customer's future needs as expressed in their specification and rebid questions.

That's the ideal.

But as a bidder, bid writer or reviewer working on a rebid you often, unfortunately, won't find yourself in that position. Instead you will find yourself with a solution that is at its core still based on the existing contract and solution, but with some new or changed elements that to a greater or lesser extent reflect changes in the customer's expressed requirements.

How customers evaluate your submission

When you find yourself in this situation you need to be aware that the customer won't thank you for this type of submission. Look at the evaluation criteria for how your submission will be marked. Increasingly customers, if they are using Best value, or Most Economically Acceptable Tender (MEAT) evaluations will only give the highest score for those solutions they see as offering real and significant added value. We recently reviewed 60 evaluation matrices from customers. Below is a summary of what we found to be the most common criteria that customers scored submission answers against, and what they expected in order to achieve the highest scores;

Scores	Confidence	Understanding	Evidence	Added Value
Highest	High confidence will deliver	Thorough understanding of requirement	Comprehensive and robust evidence	Exceptional added value above requirements
Middle	Good confidence / minor concerns	Reasonable Understanding	Adequate evidence	Meets requirements
Lowest	Major concerns	Lack of understanding	No credible evidence	Fails to meet requirements

Obviously this will vary from customer to customer, and there will be a varying number of intermediate scores between highest, middle and lowest (we've seen as few as 4 options for scores and as many as 11). Not all matrices include wording that covers all four areas of confidence, understanding, evidence and added value. Some might only cover one. But in



general these should be familiar types of marking options many bidders face. In most cases the higher scores you can obtain will usually require you to deliver over and above what the customer has specified, unless you are bidding to a Lowest Price Technically Acceptable (LPTA) procurement.

For an incumbent, being able to give the customer confidence in your ability to deliver the contract should be easier for you than it will be for the competition, as should demonstrating your understanding of the customer and their needs, and providing evidence to support your proposals. Whilst many incumbents can get this wrong (the subject of another paper in the Rebid Centre) it is usually the area of added value that causes incumbents the biggest problem in getting top marks in evaluations.

Your existing solution is not added value

Unfortunately for incumbents, repeating your existing solution is unlikely to get you the higher end marks in customer evaluations. Some in your organisation might think that demonstrating the clear competence you (hopefully) have from your experience of the existing contract should obtain top marks from the customer vs competitors who 'obviously' don't know the details. Too often they are wrong.

Your existing delivery will usually be achieving the customer's specification, meeting the KPIs and SLAs set. It is compliant. Even if the customer's new specification is (and it rarely is) a repeat of the existing requirements, simply demonstrating that you can deliver it will only get you the middle, or 'acceptable' score in the above marking scheme. If you add more detail you will simply be more robustly acceptable. Competence in delivering the basic specification, even clearly demonstrated, is not the same as added value for most customers.

Even if you have exceeded the customer's KPIs and SLAs in the previous contract, it most likely means you have simply set a new baseline to the customer's expectations of what any supplier should be delivering. The customer will probably have included these higher performance levels as now being the required standard in the new specification. Showing in your rebid that you have and can deliver these higher levels of performance is a necessary part of getting a higher score, but alone it is not sufficient.

To get the highest marks and win you need to show that you have reacted to the customer's changing needs and used your experience to identify new and innovative methods to meet these needs. Methods that add significant value to the customer's area of work being contracted out, and ideally to the customer's organisation as a whole.

The earlier you start, the more value you can add into your solution

As we mentioned in the introduction, if you start your rebid preparations early and don't get pulled back by the inertia your existing delivery methods and processes create, you have a real chance to put together a new, fresh solution. A solution based on the customer's future needs and objectives, not what has been asked for in the past and to date. A solution incorporating all that you have learned about the customer, their stakeholders and the contract environment during the existing contract but freshened by looking at new innovations, best practice from the market and your own business, and enabled by you not being afraid to challenge and overturn how you are delivering the contract now in favour of something better for the future.



Bid teams who come 'late' to the process

Unfortunately the reality for many rebid teams, bid writers, or those reviewing rebids is that they have not been able to start early enough to have time to go through this process properly before the ITT / RFP is out. Too often they only get involved once the focus has moved from solution development to submission writing.

Or perhaps the inertia of the existing delivery methods, the voices in the business insisting that the customer loves our solution and doesn't want to change, or just a lack of communication or traction between the bid team and the team operating the contract have meant that the solution being put forward is essentially the same as that being delivered in the existing contract, with some small areas of change, improvement or innovation.

How, when you find yourself in this situation, do you make the most of what you have and put in answers to the customer's ITT questions that will get marked as highly as possible?

Our experience is that there are four methods you can use to mitigate the problem and get the most out of your position:

- **Highlight the new**
- **Identify added value in your existing contract**
- **Use your experience as incumbent to clarify the benefits of your offering**
- **Focus on the future in your writing**

Highlight the new

Reading through a draft answer that is predominantly focused on the existing delivery processes and assumptions, it can be easy to assume the whole solution is the same as the existing contract. That can make it easy to miss any new or improved areas of the solution, especially if they aren't highlighted. That's certainly the impression the evaluator can get.

One simple way to mitigate this when you have no opportunity to make changes to the actual solution is to make sure you highlight the elements that are actually new or improved.

Pull out all the new elements of the solution and put them in the introduction to your answer, and / or cover them first in your answer, putting more emphasis on them and making sure you explicitly highlight them as new or improved. The reader will then start with the impression of a new and improved solution even if the latter, and perhaps majority part of your answer is then focused on your existing delivery.

As a minimum any new elements of your solution won't be missed by the evaluator as they read through your answer.

Identify added value in your existing contract

Even given that your existing performance against SLAs or KPIs might have become the norm, and not seen as added value by the customer, there may be other aspects of your existing solution or how you deliver it that do add value. We often find that rebid teams haven't really understood in detail the existing delivery and history of the contract. Even if they do talk to the operations team, that team can sometimes overlook an added value aspect of what they deliver seeing it just as 'what we do'.

Even if you are in the bid writing or even reviewing stage it is still worth talking again to your operations team, and reviewing your data from contract performance, with a view on added value delivered.



Ask the team specifically about where they have added value on the contract. For example where the customer may have had a problem and they helped resolve it, or where there were unexpected variations in demand and they found a way to cope. Ask how the customer's needs have changed over the period of the contract and what they did to adapt to meet these. You might unearth some gems that the operations team forgot or didn't see as important that you could use.

Relook at the data you've got to see if there is anything you've missed. For example, the team might have hit delivery targets throughout the period of the previous contract, - but have you compared this with the volume data? Have these targets been met in an environment of significant growth in demand, or variation in demand? Could that show a flexibility or robustness to your solution that adds value?

Ask about what impact your performance has had on different customer stakeholders – for instance end users, or the wider customer organisation. What has what you have delivered enabled them to do or achieve? This is where the real value to your contract and performance is – in the outcomes you help the customer achieve.

Too often incumbents get caught up in a focus on what they are doing or have done. Being able to translate this into benefits to customer outcomes will make a significant difference to how your submission reads for the evaluator regarding added value.

Use your experience as incumbent to clarify the benefits of your offering

As we've said above, as the incumbent you should be in the best position to give the customer real confidence in your solution. This should include being clear on why you have made changes to your existing solution, and where you are retaining elements of the existing solution justifying this, rather than just stating it as a fact.

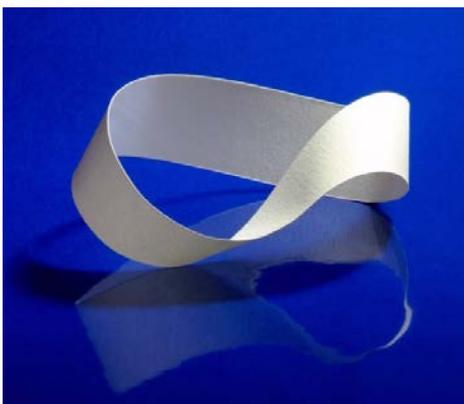
As you write or review your submission look at the different elements of your solution and ensure you are giving clear and persuasive justification for why each is either the same as before, improved, or new. For a summary of general reasons why, and justifications for each approach, see the table below:

Is this element..	What do you need to convince the customer about the element
The same as before	Robust, fit for purpose, proven – use examples, performance statistics, feedback to show why best. Ensure still meets the requirements (i.e. they haven't changed to invalidate existing solution)
Different or improved	Why is different or has been improved? (new /changed customer specification, customer needs, strategy? Best practice has moved on? Been piloted in existing contract? Being used in other contracts?) What is the change? Why will it improve the service and how? What will be the benefit? How can this be proven / measured (if appropriate?)
New	What is new about this element of the solution? What benefit will the new idea / element bring? Why has it been introduced (what change in customer need / spec does it meet? What has been the development process?) Why will this work – and what are the risks? How will this be measured? What are the implementation timescales, plans, and requirements?

As you review your submission, or write or storyboard it, pick out each element and put it into your own version of the table below, completing your own version of why it is the best



This paper is one of many you will find in the Rebid Centre. All the ideas we refer to in the paper are more fully described in the Rebid Guide and the Rebid Centre, together with step by step guidance of how to put them into action on your contract and rebid. You will also find papers and advice on all aspects of how to prepare for and run your rebid. To join the Rebid Centre, or buy the Guide go to www.rebidsolutions.co



Rebidding Solutions helps incumbents win their rebids. As well as providing articles, advice and processes for incumbents in the Rebid Centre we have also published the Rebid Guide which contains 60 ideas for incumbents to put into practice from day one of their contract to improve their chances of winning their rebid. We also provide consultancy and bespoke training for incumbent companies and contracts, helping them put together the processes and actions that lead to rebid success.

For an overview of all our services visit our website at www.rebidding.co.uk and sign up to our free newsletter giving hints and tips on what to do to win your rebid.

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