

Advancing the arts, sciences, and technology of new business acquisition and promoting the professionalism of those engaged in those pursuits.



Conference to Highlight Why New Business Bids Fail

‘Why new business bids fail’ – a topic close to the hearts of sales directors and bid teams everywhere – will come under the spotlight at a conference taking place in Johannesburg in October. Organised by the South African chapter of the international Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP), the conference line-up includes two overseas speakers as well as a slew of local experts.

“On 20 October, APMP hosts the first annual conference for proposal writers in South Africa and we’re excited to announce that international guest speakers from the US and the UK have accepted our invitation to speak,” says Sandy Pullinger, APMP Chairperson.

“The theme of the conference will be ‘Making a Splash’ and it will focus on fresh ideas to inspire better proposals. For example, studies conducted over many years to establish why bids and proposals fail have provided these gems: the bid was illegible, the bid was poorly written or amateurish and the bidder failed to follow instructions.

“Other reasons given were lack of capacity to deliver, limited track record & experience, unsuitability for the job, and unaffordability, which prompt the question: what went wrong?

“Our speakers will provide the answers and help delegates understand how to follow the basic housekeeping rules, read the instructions carefully, pick a strong theme and make their businesses look attractive to the customer. This should result in upping their chances of winning their next bid or tender,” she said.

Confirmed speakers at this year’s conference include:

- Jon Williams from Strategic Proposals in the UK is a fellow of the APMP and was the first chairperson of the APMP in the UK.
- Colleen Jolly from 24 Hour Company in the US is a graphic design wiz. She will be playing Proposal Pictionary with us and will give us DIY tips on creating graphics in Powerpoint.
- Chris Rademeyer from Deloitte, our very own home-grown, black-belt bid manager will also share secrets on how to avoid bid burnout. He is the first person in South Africa to gain the professional level of accreditation from the APMP.
- A panel of procurement specialists will also share their insights on why bids are unsuccessful.

The international Association of Proposal Management Professionals was founded more than 21 years ago and has thousands of members world-wide. Our mission is to advance the arts, sciences, and technology of new business acquisition and promoting the professionalism of people engaged in those pursuits.

APMP South Africa is a non-profit organisation registered under section 21. We look forward to growing our local chapter with members from not only the Proposal and Bid Management profession, but also welcome specialists in sales, new business development, procurement, training, industry and others interested in promoting the proposal profession.

Anyone interested in attending the 20 October conference should contact events@apmp.org.za.

5 major reasons why your bid was unsuccessful:

1. You didn't follow the instructions

Sound's obvious but it happens. Bids fail for administrative reasons which can be prevented. They are submitted late, they are grammatically poor and have spelling mistakes and are too wordy.

Where the customer specifies a certain document structure and layout, there is a reason: it is so that bids can be compared quickly. Do not be creative here.

2. You didn't answer the questions

Maybe you misunderstood what the bid was asking or you left out answers to key questions. If you are not clear, ask for clarification. Most companies publish all bidders' questions and answers to show fairness. Study the questions and the answers; you may gain insights into what the client is really looking for. If essential information or attachments are missing from your submission, your quality control process may be defective.

3. Your solution did not solve their problem

Is it possible that you cannot deliver what's required in the time allowed and that came through in your offer? If you cannot supply the full requirements, your bid may be side-lined. If you have inadequate experience and skills, and challenges or deficiencies in equipment or location, maybe you should have decided not to bid. Only submit tenders for services that you are able to demonstrate that you can deliver.

4. Your presentation did not 'wow' them

What makes your business stand out from others is its distinct personality. The client wants to know how you will add value to his business. Pick a theme and build it into your proposal. It should be clear and consistent in both content and presentation, based upon either your special capabilities or your competitors' weaknesses. Use the many tools available to improve the bid visually. Sloppily presented or rushed proposals give a bad impression of your company which can be lasting.

5. Your price was not competitive or was over their budget

Price is not everything but the offer must provide value for money. Don't assume the company offering the cheapest price will win the tender. Evaluation criteria include technical capability, quality of product or service, maintenance and support and other factors. Price usually accounts for less than 50% of the decision. If your solution is unaffordable for the client, you will be overlooked.