

## **RFP: Seven Skills of a High-Performing Team**

Recently I had the opportunity to work with a client team, a small business team that went after **and WON** a multi-million dollar, multi-year government contract through an RFP process. I have worked on more than 100 major proposals, most of which involved (or should have involved) a team. This particular team embodied all the qualities of the most successful. Here are the seven skills that enable your team to succeed:

### **1. Commitment to Leadership**

Who is in charge? Whose job is it to see that the proposal is completed successfully, meeting all requirements, and delivered on time with all required documents? Who mediates differences of opinion? Who controls the final draft? A team needs to know that someone is its leader for the project at hand. And that leader needs to accept the responsibility and assert leadership as required. The team in question had two leaders, working together with clearly defined responsibilities. One was the process leader and another was the document leader.

### **2. Commitment to Process**

The company has a replicable Whale Hunting process for responding to RFPs. They complete a series of activities to determine whether or not to respond to the RFP and, if so, to convene their capture team. These activities include assessing the opportunity through their *Target Filter* and then completing *The RFP Bet*, *The RFP Theme*, and *The RFP Story*. The resulting documents are presented to the CEO and, when approved, form the basis of the "win points" that the team will follow. They are prominently displayed in an RFP war room until the project is complete.

### **3. Commitment to Schedule**

This particular RFP had an especially tight time schedule-less than two weeks from release of the RFP to the due date. The team scheduled a Stand Up meeting every morning at 8 a.m. from the date of project inception until the due date for delivery. Team members were present in the office or on an incoming call, every morning, for a briefing on project process. On most days the meeting was less than 30 minutes, but the schedule commitment kept everyone on board and kept the team moving forward.

### **4. Commitment to Teamwork**

Like most RFPs, this one required a very complex response with expertise from a variety of internal sources plus an external partner that also had many contributors. The team used multiple methods to gain the required input: telephone interviews, onsite meetings, conference calls, and exchange/review of documents. There was a content team and a pricing team, working independently, but touching base every morning.

### **5. Commitment to Winning**

RFPs are extremely difficult to design and complete. Often they require that in a very short time frame you design a program of services and commit to a pricing structure that may take place over three to five years. It takes a huge effort just to get the bare bones in place. Translating the program design and services into a compelling case for support calls for a much higher level of input and revision. Unless the team is committed to review and revision, the final document will

suffer. This team actively solicited reactions and responses to the work in progress and was willing to incorporate good revision suggestions regardless of timeframe constraints.

**6. Commitment to Expertise**

Closely related to the Winning commitment is a commitment to engaging whatever expertise is required. Whether this means team leadership, project or program development, financial planning, strategic allies and partners, an RFP writer, or a deal coach, high performing teams commit to the resources they need to win once they have determined to go for the opportunity.

**7. Commitment to Learning**

Finally, a high performing team is devoted to debriefing and lessons learned immediately after the performance is complete. Honest assessment of the process and honest feedback from participants should precede your feedback from the procuring organization. What have you learned about process, about teamwork, about your company's ability to compete in the arena for which you answered the RFP?

Do your teams have the skills to be successful in winning big business and serving big customers? Your sales team, presentation team, statement of work team etc.? If not, now is the time to help them learn. For more information on the processes and tools described above, check out [Winning Whales with an RFP](#) (download version) also available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) for your Kindle.

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