

by Jordan Kelly www.bidstrategist.com

The 6 Key Practices of A Trusted Advisor

Over the past few years, the term “trusted advisor” has been gradually working its way to buzz phrase status. Such lightweight bandying around of this term is a great pity, because, unlike other corporate mumph, “trusted advisor” is a genuinely meaningful concept.

The business development or bid team that treats this concept as a verb rather than a currently fashionable noun, will find that - over time - the practice pays significant dividends both when pursuing new business and when endeavouring to satisfy existing customers and clients.

Interested in the origins of ‘trusted advisor’, and the tenets of the practice?

The term was coined by former Harvard Business School professor, American writer and expert on business management practices, David Maister, in his runaway best-selling business book of the same name - published in the year 2000. Before he retired recently, Maister was known as “the consultant’s consultant”. He commanded some of the highest fees paid to any business consultant anywhere, for his work with professional services firms.

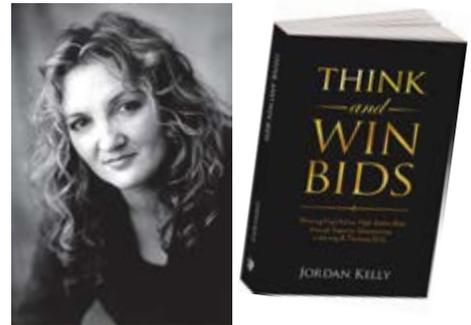
His advice holds so much relevance and potential power for bid teams, that I sought his written permission to excerpt certain of its key points and include them in my book, ‘Think and Win Bids: Winning High-Value, High-Stakes Bids through Superior Listening & Thinking Skills’.

Distilling his advice, in all its detail and richness, was a challenge - but here are what I considered the six most important tenets comprising his “trusted advisor” philosophy (and how they underpin successful bidding practices):

- 1) Ask the client to talk about what’s behind the issue.
Too many business development operatives think they understand the client deeply just because they’ve spoken about the central issue driving a procurement exercise. Rarely do they dig deeply enough . . . down, down, down into the political, historical and/or emotive picture beneath the surface of that issue.
- 2) Focus on defining the problem; not on guessing the solution.
A logical follow-on to the above, too many bidders are quick to rush in with their wonderful “solutions”, without genuinely and deeply understanding the problem.
- 3) Let the client or customer fill in the empty spaces.
He who speaks least listens loudest.
- 4) Use reflective listening to ensure you’ve heard and understood.
Don’t risk missing or misinterpreting the client’s key desire or pain point. Check your understanding.
- 5) Tell the client’s story before writing your own.
This is in line with my frequent admonition that the only interest the client has in you, is what’s immediately relevant and of value to them and their need. Thus, everything you tell them about you, needs to be in the context of them.
- 6) Listen to EVERYTHING.
You’ve got two ears and one mouth. Be guided by that fact.

It will frustrate the client tremendously if they’ve taken the time to explain their issues to you and, in your bid documentation, you demonstrate gaps in your understanding - gaps that, in their mind, have no right to exist, given the time they spent with you.

Worse, the piece of the picture you missed because you were distracted, were planning your next statement, or were thinking about how your intended proposition can be made to fit their need, may well have been the key insight into what they want or need most from this procurement.



About Jordan Kelly

Jordan Kelly is an Australasian bid strategist and writer with a strong specialisation in the infrastructure and construction sector. She is the author of an extensive range of books on the topic, most notably her flagship, ‘Think and Win Bids’. This is available - along with a free subscription to her publication, ‘The Bid Strategist’ - at: www.bidstrategist.com

- Void Forms
- Lost Formwork
- Sacrificial Void Forms
- Self-Collapsing Formwork



BildaVOID’s specialist range of void forming products provide easy-to-use, reliable, and sustainable solutions for concrete structures on reactive soils and in areas of subsidence.

Innovative products that deliver the ideal combination of weight and strength, making them easy to handle and ship, yet strong enough to withstand up to 10 tonnes of concrete per square metre.



Ph: 1300 369 253
Fax: 1300 768 272
Email: info@bildavoid.com.au

For further information, please visit:
www.bildavoid.com.au