

In A 'Too-Tight' Timeframe, Use Individuals' Strengths to Your Advantage

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When you're under the pump with a short submission timeframe, your best default strategy for getting a top-notch bid out the door in good time and with the least stress possible is to "go with the current" in terms of people's natural talents.

You can coach people in their areas of weakness to a reasonable degree, but rarely will they be great in those particular aspects of bid production. The fact is, people generally gravitate back to the aspects in which they naturally excel and endeavour to avoid those in which they don't. And when a bid manager is under the pump, the cold, hard fact of the matter is that he or she simply doesn't have the time to coach or cajole.

IDENTIFY PRIORITY SKILLS NEEDED

The first step is to accurately identify the priority skills required for each part of the submission and the process, giving careful consideration to which individuals possess these. It's also smart to consider personality traits or work habits that stand to either propel or impede progress towards the finish line.

Really think about each person and who (rather than what) they are. 'Day job' position titles can be misleading in the context of a bid. Often, the strengths and weaknesses you'd assume of an individual in a particular role just don't import across into a bid team environment in the way you'd expect them to.

I'll cite as a case study, a small, component operation of a larger organisation with which I had been working. One of the operation's few 'white

collar' staff members (aside from the GM) was assigned as bid manager.

It was a pressure cooker timeframe and, a few days after kick-off, the schedule was already floundering. In short, this assumedly 'natural' bid manager appointment was a disastrous choice.

As it happened, fate graciously stepped in and saw that individual suddenly pulled off onto another contract elsewhere. Because I was working with the team by remote control, there was little choice but for the Construction Manager to take over the bid management role.

'HUMBLE HAMMER SWINGER' SAVES THE DAY

Fate dealt the bid a lucky hand that day. The previous appointee's weakness was the Construction Manager's strength. This 'humble hammer swinger' (his own words) made a brilliant bid manager. He was organised, efficient, exercised total diligence in keeping his own commitments, and had an affable but effective way of holding others to theirs. His humility came in handy, too: if he could see anything going off the rails, he was quick to pick up the phone for advice.

The fact that he couldn't string two coherent sentences together on paper turned out to be inconsequential. When the now-former bid manager returned to the team, he gravitated directly towards - and excelled at - the bid's writing tasks, taking on those that had, in fact, been assigned to the Construction Manager.

So, by complete accident, we ended up with a highly functional bid team and a top-notch bid out the door in what, for

that particular operation, was apparently record time.

To re-emphasise the moral of the story: *When time is unavoidably tight, ensure the highest quality and the least stress by getting to know your 'human resources' and letting each wear the cap that most comfortably fits him or her.*



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