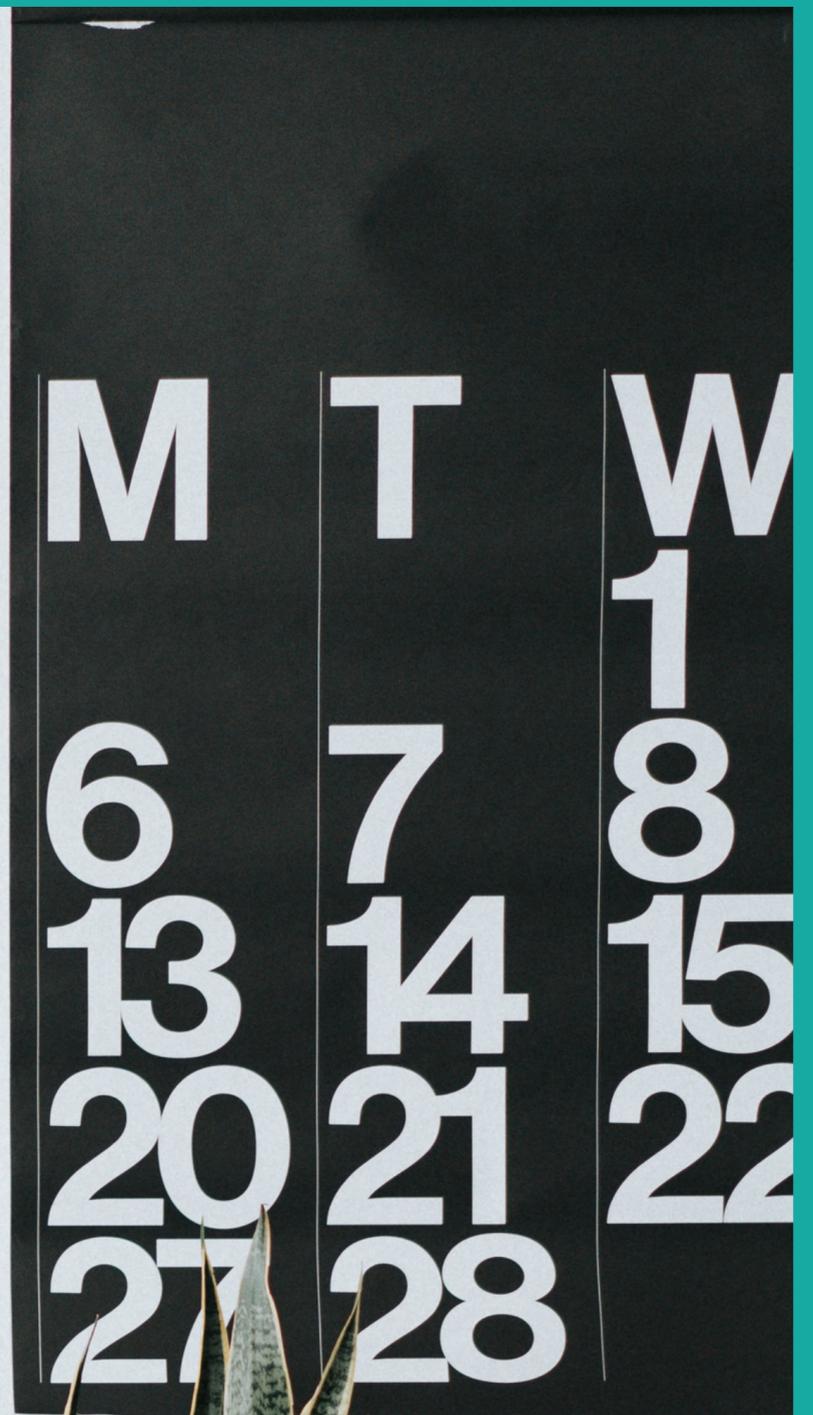


**5 mistakes  
businesses  
make when  
responding  
to requests for  
tender  
(and how *you* can  
avoid them)**



# 5 COMMON MISTAKES

01

THEY DON'T DO THEIR HOMEWORK

02

THEY MAKE IT ABOUT THEM NOT THE  
CLIENT

03

THEY DON'T REALLY ANSWER THE  
QUESTIONS

04

THEIR DOCUMENT DOESN'T READ  
WELL

05

THEY LEAVE IT TO THE LAST MINUTE

**H O W T O  
A V O I D  
M A K I N G  
T H E S A M E  
M I S T A K E S**



# DO YOUR HOMEWORK

**Before responding to any Request for Tender/Information (RFP/I) do your homework regarding the prospect and their needs.**

What do they do? This may seem obvious, but do you really know what the company does? Who their customers are? Who their competitors are and their industry challenges? Do you know what the company's business goals are, and what obstacles they may be facing?

Don't rely solely on the information provided in the bid document, do additional research; look at the company's website, media articles, industry news, annual reports, and most importantly, first-hand information from those key stakeholder relationships you've nurtured.

If you know the tender is coming up (if they're an existing customer or a prospect you should), prepare in advance. Build relationships with key stakeholders. Get to understand their business needs, pain points and objectives. Delve into the challenges they face - what can your company do to resolve these for them? What can you do to help them meet their goals faster, more easily or more economically? Why do they need *your* product or service?

Who will be on the evaluation team?  
What are their needs and aspirations?

Be prepared and work on your value proposition before the bid document comes out.

# MAKE IT ABOUT THEM - NOT YOU

Your response document should be all about the prospect and how you can help them. They don't want 10 pages about your business and the awards you've won; they want to know how your business will help their business and solve their problem. Not what you do, but what you can do for *them*.



The company has gone out to tender to meet a need, pinpoint what that need is and highlight how you will address it throughout the document. Wherever possible start with an executive summary that clearly articulates how choosing your business or product will help them and how they can't live without you, then back it up with facts and case studies throughout the document. Your business value proposition should talk specifically to what is of value to them.

This ties back to the first point - you need to understand the company and how you can help them.

And if you don't know how you can help them? Go back and run them through your qualifying process again - maybe it's not worth bidding this time around.



# ANSWER THE QUESTION

Seems obvious. But have you ever watched a politician respond to a question without actually answering it? Frustrating right?

Be sure each response provides what they're after. Have you fully understood it and why they're asking it?

Re-read the question and your response from their point of view, not your own. Does it make sense? Is the message clear? Does it give them what they need? Is it concise and to the point? Have you used jargon that not everyone reading the response document may understand? Could anyone in their company pick it up and understand what you mean?

Use their words and terminology. For example, if your company uses the term "booking engine" and their document talks about a "booking tool", use that term.

Be factual and provide proof points. If your product will save the customer 20% in the first year, say that and explain how. Provide proof, for example case studies or customer testimonials. If you say your product can save a client up to 20%, is that 1% or 19.99%? If you have benchmarking data or other statistics that prove your case, provide the references. If you say you're the only company that does XYZ, be sure that's true - if the customer knows it's not, your credibility is on the line.

# MAKE IT EASY TO READ

Read through your response document multiple times to ensure there are no spelling mistakes, incorrect grammar, missing responses or errors. Ideally, have more than one person read through the response before you submit it.

Have you answered every question correctly and covered all aspects? Have you hit on all their key requirements? Are the page numbers and references correct? Is the font consistent? Where more than one person has provided answers, do they read consistently in one voice? Do the answers switch from singular to plural? Are product names consistent throughout?

Don't use wishy washy language. If your product or service will do something, say that; avoid using non-decisive words such as would, could, should be able to, may or might, instead use words such as will, can, does. Be confident when telling your story.

**proof read,  
proof read,  
proof read.**



If they've asked for the response in a specific format, follow those directions explicitly.

Have you spelt the prospect company's name correctly? Getting the company name, and the name of the issuer wrong, happens more than you'd think.

Where possible assign (or outsource) one person to 'own' the document, collating and rewriting the various responses to ensure a cohesive end document.

Whilst bad grammar alone is unlikely to be the cause of a lost bid, it may discourage people from reading further, and gives the impression you haven't taken the process seriously. Attention to detail highlights the professionalism of your company and the care taken to respond.



# START RIGHT AWAY

**Because, ask anyone, responding to a tender always takes longer than you think.**

Get started as soon as you receive it. Allocate resources and responsibilities, finalise research, modelling and pricing and get writing.

When it comes to timeframes, think about who you've allocated the work to, do they already have a heavy workload doing their day-to-day job? What will they have to drop while they're working on writing the response? If your team is lean, or inexperienced in responding to tenders, perhaps outsourcing the work to a copywriter makes sense.

Don't leave it to the last minute to submit your response. A lot of hard work goes into responding to a tender, so give yourself a good buffer between the deadline and sending your submission. There is nothing more stressful than trying to send a large file via email 30 minutes before the bid closes only to lose connection or have your server crash.

Every communication with a client or prospect reflects who you are as a business. Make a positive impression by investing the right amount of time and effort into a professional, easy to read, on-point response document that demonstrates why you're the best fit for them. Happy selling.

## Like to find out about outsourcing your copywriting?

As a copywriter I take the time to listen to what you do and who you are, and then I write copy that reflects you and your unique approach to business. Words that tell your story, in your voice, just as you would if you were face to face with the customer.

I have a sales background and almost a decade of experience writing tender responses and proposals.

If you'd like to discuss outsourcing your tender management process, responses, proposals, web pages, ebooks, newsletters or any other copywriting, contact me at [sharon@sharonstanleyconsulting.com](mailto:sharon@sharonstanleyconsulting.com) for a complimentary 20 minute initial discovery session and obligation free quote.

Regards

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