



TENDERS | BIDS | PROPOSALS | SUBMISSIONS

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SECTOR

CAPABILITY STATEMENT





Contents

Projects that power society.....	1
Professional Services: Unique Complexities.....	2
A fiercely competitive sector.....	3
Lessons learnt from our major projects research.....	4
Takeaways for writing professional services tender responses.....	9
Factors for success in professional services bids.....	10
Get the edge with Aurora Marketing.....	11
Deep understanding of the professional services sector.....	12
A track record of winning landmark deals.....	13
Trusted by the leaders in professional services.....	14
Delivering exceptional results.....	15



Projects that power society

With dynamic diversity at its core, the Professional Services sector is the steppingstone to collaborative success. By harnessing this diverse expertise, companies reduce the burden on their own resources and unlock the potential for increased profitability and streamlined operations. Whether information and technology mega projects that transform the way we communicate, management programs that drive innovation and change, highly specialised legal, technical, and financial products, the engineering and architectural services which keep manufacture and infrastructure running, or the acquisition of resources: the professional services sector is fast becoming the oil that lubricates the whole economy.

In Australia, the market size of the professional services industry has increased at a greater rate than its primary sector overall, with the biggest growth prevalent in Design, Research, Promotional and Consulting Services segments. The redemption of business operations and a change in perception of handling new workloads following the impact of an economic downturn, has caused professional services to become the most sought-after external implementation for organisations.

The scope of any professional service organisation can cover an incredible range of industries and projects. It might involve preliminary design, research or risk assessment, a surgical intervention to the heart of performance or communication, after-the-fact audit or evaluation, or it may span the entire project lifecycle from concept to implementation, and beyond.

Whatever the destination, the professional services sector gets us there.

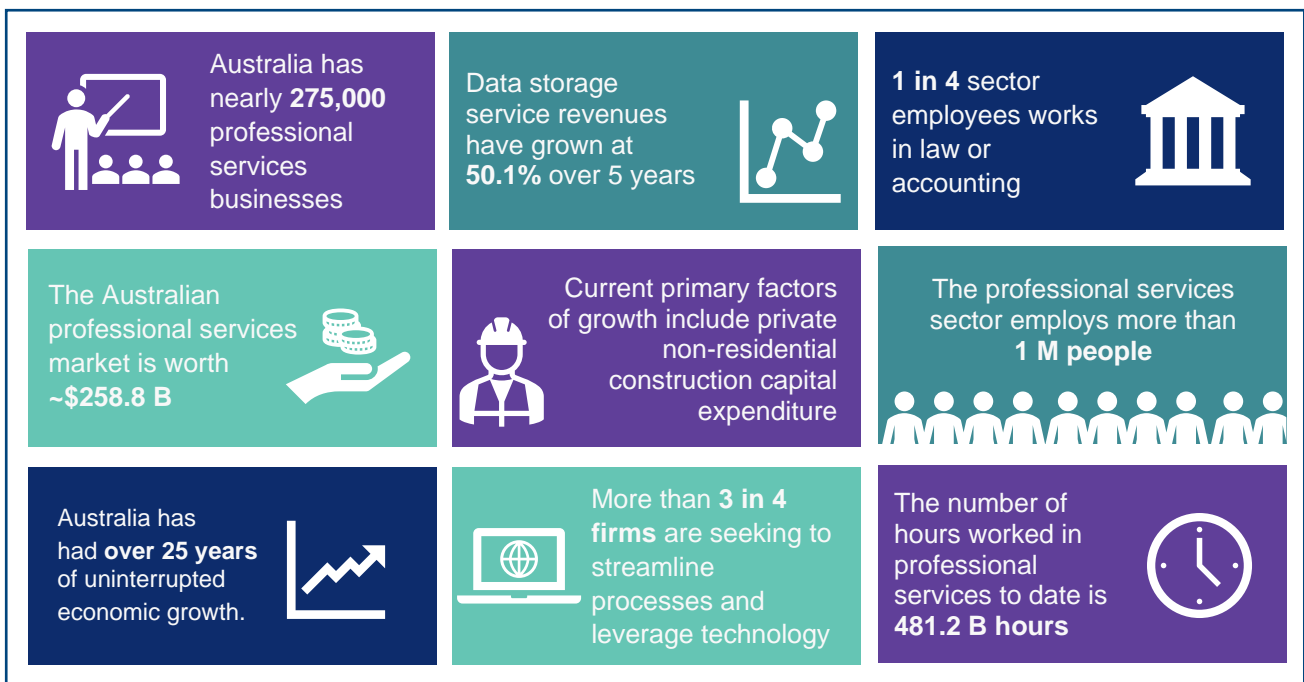


Figure 1: Growth and development within the professional services industry is occurring at an impressive rate.



Professional Services: Unique Complexities

From a bidding perspective, the professional services sector presents its own particular challenges:

Table 1: Challenges in the professional services industry.



COMMUNICATING SHARED VALUES

Evaluators want to engage firms that align with their values and complement their team. They need to be confident that a partnership will prove to be an effective and beneficial meeting of minds. To convey synergy, bid teams need to identify and skilfully communicate shared values, attitudes and ethics throughout the bid.



MEANINGFUL COMPARISONS

Time in business, specialisation, size of team, annual turnover, number of clients – how do you measure the worth of each firm? And how do you accurately compare several firms to choose which is the best fit for a bid opportunity? Bids need to be packed with meaningful value metrics to ensure that evaluators are comparing apples with apples.



TECHNICAL JARGON

Due to focused areas of specialisation, a professional services bid is sometimes at risk of being overloaded by niche technical jargon and TLAs (three letter acronyms). The bid team needs Olympic-level linguistic dexterity to synthesise, translate and communicate complex information to ensure it's accessible to all, without losing its potency.



DIFFERENTIATING THE FIRM

Professional services firms need to demonstrate their credibility, professionalism, expertise, and experience in a clear and compelling manner. Key win themes such as depth of experience or specialisation need to be balanced between what individuals offer and what value the firm itself represents. Bid teams need to convey your unique value proposition.



SHOWCASING TALENT

Many professional services projects put a blazing spotlight on the human aspect of a bid. Your success can come down to your team members, their expertise, level of experience and the leadership team that will drive the project. Showcasing your talent in a way that is not boastful but still cuts through to the evaluator takes finesse.



RELENTLESS PRICE PRESSURE

Professional services projects are faced with relentless pressure to provide more value at a lower cost. Evaluators are seeking fresh solutions that improve productivity, drive whole-of-life value and deliver impactful outcomes, all the while expecting competitive rates and free add-ons. Bid teams need to address the emphasis on price with creative packaging and value based messaging.



A fiercely competitive sector

With incredible growth in the professional services sector in Australia, New Zealand and globally, the bidding world is always evolving and ever competitive. Combining this with the economic complexities of recent years, many professional services have implemented new processes and technological advancements to modify business strategies to meet the rapidly changing market. **Client expectations of service standards are also transforming**, with success factors becoming heavily reliant on the ability to tailor responses to bids that reflect the client’s individuality, speak to their people, and meet their professional values. All of this while needing to set yourself apart from competitors that offer specialised and international experience.

If you’re about to embark on a professional services tender, you’ll need every possible advantage to win.

As a rule of thumb, you can expect a typical professional services bid to follow a process similar to this:

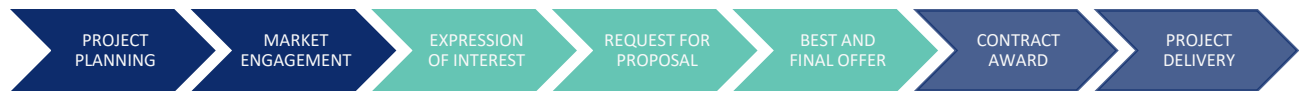


Figure 2: A typical bid process will follow these seven steps.

The bidding phase is shown in teal. Depending on the procurement process being followed, the process might include all three bidding steps (or more) or might concentrate on just one bidding step (usually the Request for Proposal).

Bid timing can vary enormously, depending on the size and complexity of the project:

An Expression of Interest will typically take between 2–4 weeks, but sometimes up to 12-15 weeks

A Request for Proposal could vary from 4 weeks to as many as 20 or 26 weeks for a mega project

A Best and Final Offer might take a week or several months (one recent project took 11 months).

Despite the variation in bid process and timing, typical bid budgets are quite consistent, particularly for the top tier and major players. **A comprehensive bid budget, including allocation of internal costs, typically runs to around 2% of project value.**

From our experience, we consistently see that the winning professional services bids are those that have been developed and prepared by teams that have a clear partnership between the ‘project team’ and the ‘bid team’. Success comes when the project team can focus on developing a smart solution while the bid team takes responsibility for selling the solution through a persuasive submission. The important point here is that both elements are needed – a smart solution and a persuasive submission.

In terms of bid team resources, the winning bidders are typically scaling up their bid team with:

- Performance coaches and teaming experts (like Alliance Coaches)
- Industry experts and people with client insight (like our Shadow Catalysts)
- Bid strategists and innovation experts (what we call Bid Catalysts)
- Bid managers and team leaders (like our Bid Whips)
- Bid writers and content developers (our Bid Writers)
- Formatters and production experts (our Production Managers)
- Graphic designers (our Design Team).

A strong bid team frees the bid director to focus their effort on leading the team, driving the solution and negotiating the commercial arrangements, knowing that the submission is under control.



Lessons learnt from our major projects research

Since 2019, we have regularly conducted an on-going major research program with industry leading evaluators from major projects. The purpose of our **Behind Closed Doors** research is to collect confidential, non-identified and non-specific feedback from evaluators that would provide open, honest and helpful direction to bidders.

Key findings

Evaluators are looking for five key factors when choosing a winning bid

We asked evaluators to tell us how important various factors were when assessing a bidder’s submission, such as previous experience, technical capability, an innovative solution, clarity of communication and so on. The results show that evaluators have high expectations across a wide range of factors, but a clear top 5 emerged. **Note the even spread across these 5 factors: this is the formula for success.**

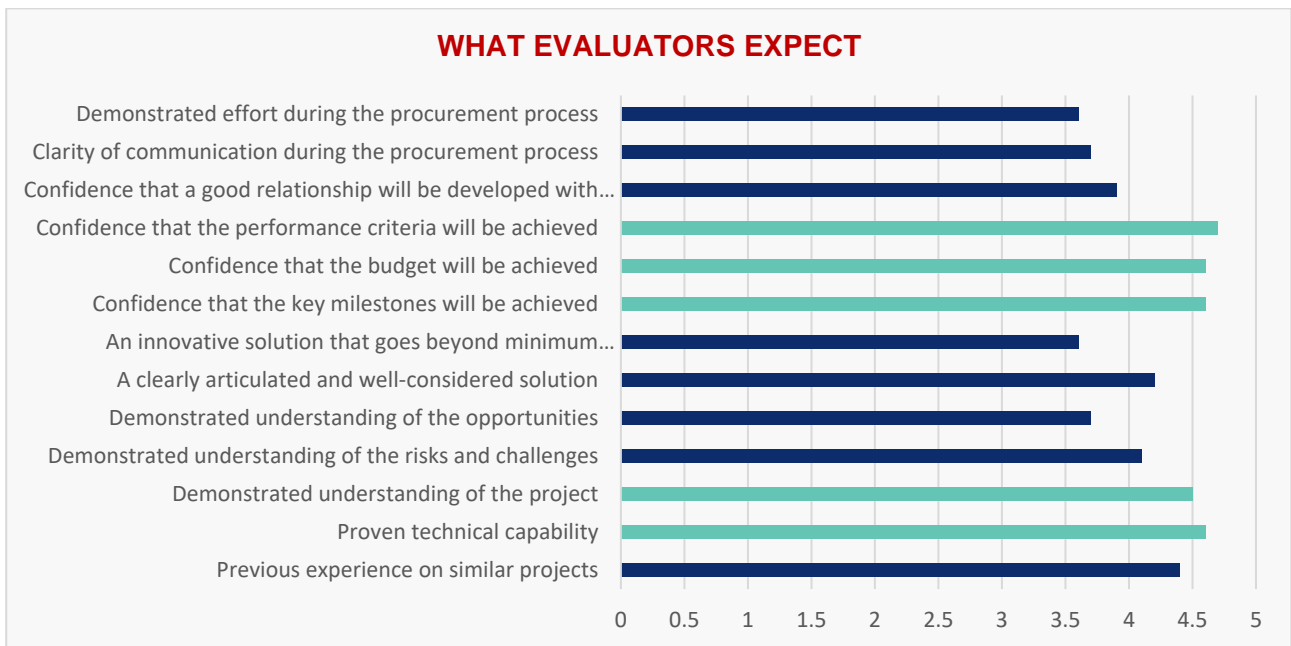


Figure 3: Evaluators were clear about what made a strong submission, with 7 stand-out characteristics.



Evaluators are looking for seven key elements in submissions

Evaluators cited almost 20 characteristics common to the best submissions, with 7 characteristics standing out as the most important. Readers may jump to the conclusion that ‘concise’ justifies keeping their submissions short and sweet, but ‘comprehensive’ and ‘thorough’ also rated strongly. The key is to include information that is both **relevant and pertinent**.

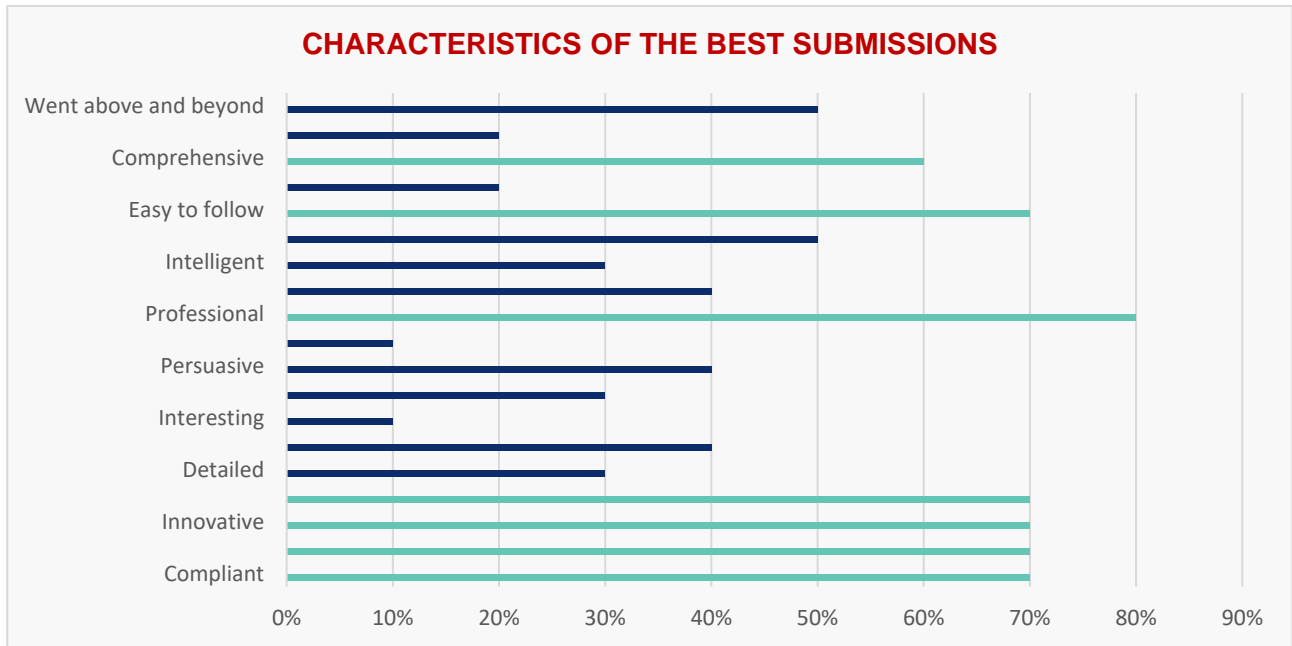


Figure 4: Evaluators were clear about what made a strong submission, with 7 stand-out characteristics.



Bidders are most frequently let down by simple – and avoidable – failings

Evaluators cited almost 20 common failings in the submissions they reviewed, but 7 deadly sins stood out as the most common failings, all referenced by **at least 50%** of evaluators.

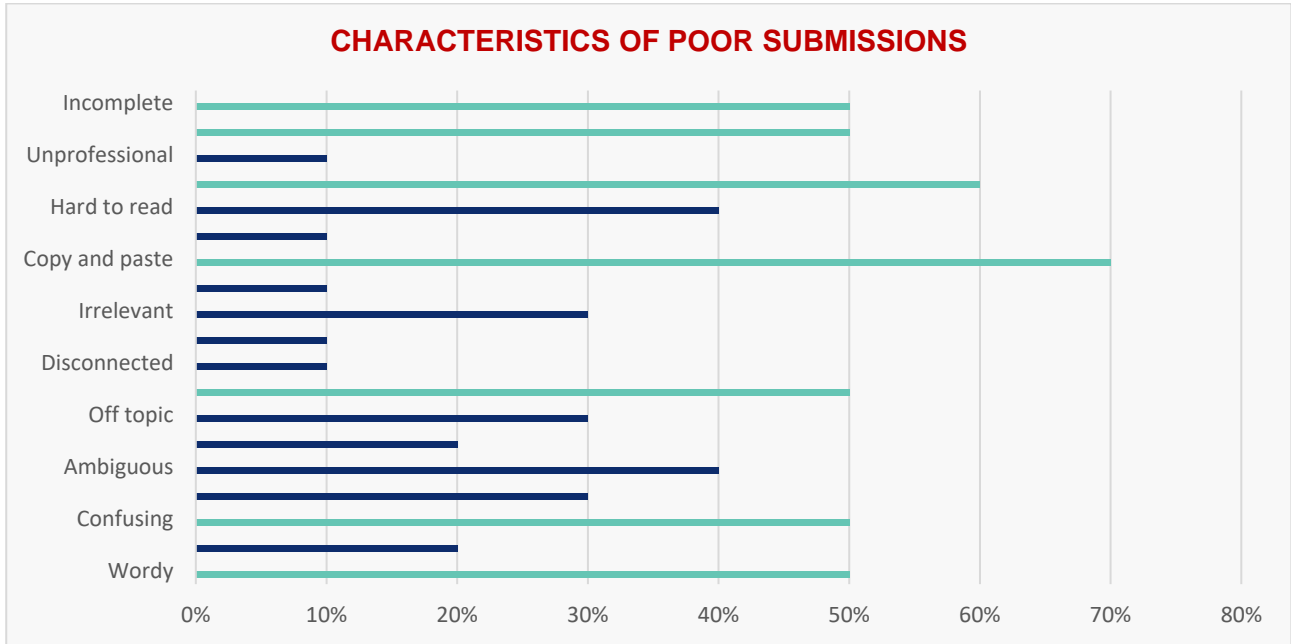


Figure 5: Evaluators saw consistent themes in poor submissions, with 7 deadly sins occurring frequently.

Further to this, when asked where bidders dropped the ball, evaluators referenced a wide range of issues, from not addressing criteria, to demonstrating poor attitudes and behaviours, through to missing the mark on project objectives and risks.



How well are bidders currently performing?

The good news is that 80% of evaluators report that the bids received are ‘fine – adequate and compliant’. The even better news for bidders is that there is a tremendous opportunity to up their game **as only 10% of bids are considered ‘excellent – very thorough and compelling’**.

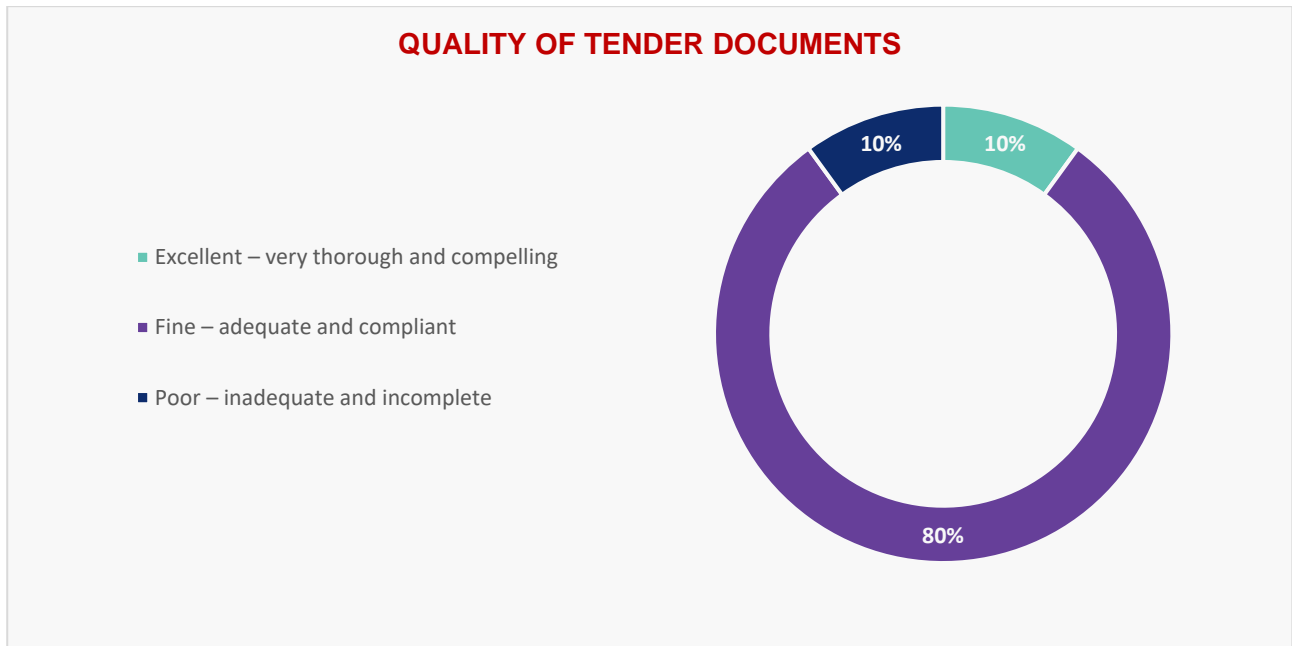


Figure 6: The typical quality of tender documents is ‘fine’ – meaning there is a great opportunity for bidders to step up and impress the evaluators.



Importance of price

As usual, questions about price produced an interesting mixed response.

Price was the most important consideration for 20% of evaluators. In contrast, a collective 30% of evaluators said that price was either the least important consideration or less important than all other elements. In addition, the majority of evaluators (50%) said that price was very important but other elements were also considered.

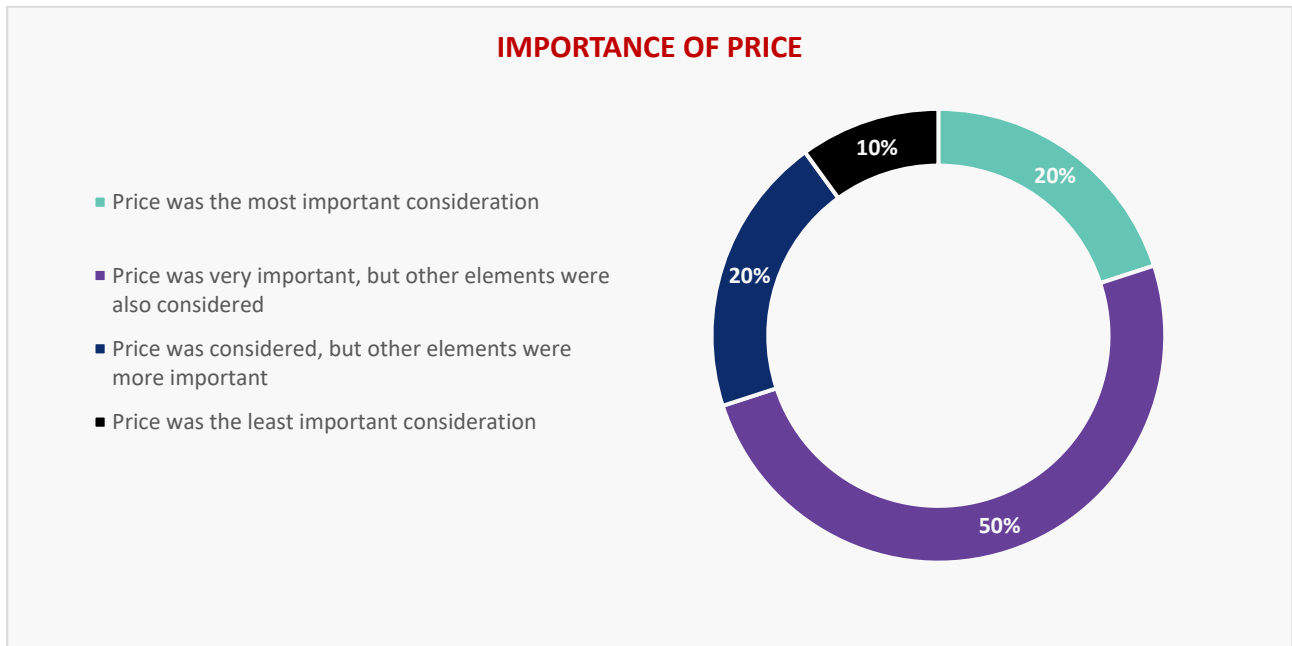


Figure 7: As we have come to expect, the importance of price prompted mixed responses.



Takeaways for writing professional services tender responses

Six simple ways to improve your success in professional services tenders:

1. Know and respect your audience

You should know everything you can about the buyer and their project. While a pre-existing relationship is not critical, it will improve your chances to have had effective preliminary discussions with the buyer prior to the bid period and will improve your understanding of the project's risks and challenges. On this point, evaluators commented that bidders often showed a lack of understanding of the project and the big picture, which resulted in generally poor submissions. It's also important to understand who the evaluators are so you can pitch your responses accordingly. Even in the rail sector, evaluation panels include a diverse cross-section of disciplines – they're not all engineers!

2. Bring your A-game to every question and presentation

Yes, price remains one of the most important sections of a tender but it's rarely the only factor evaluators consider. To win a tender, bidders need to bring their A-game to every question and every presentation they deliver. Evaluators will frequently read the entire submission so it's important that you tell a complete and consistent story that shows you understand the project and that you can give evaluators confidence in your ability to meet the performance criteria, achieve the key milestones and make budget. With only 10% of submissions and presentations deemed excellent and the remaining 90% deemed 'adequate' or 'poor' there is plenty of room for bidders to step up.

3. Pay attention to the 'soft stuff'

The so-called 'soft stuff' matters, with the majority of evaluators stating what we know to be instinctively true: well-presented submissions are easier to follow and make a good first impression. Neat formatting and presentation make it easier for evaluators to do their job and will engage them more easily, improving your chances of their understanding your solution and following your proposal. A clear structure and grammatical polish aren't just nice-to-haves – they demonstrate effort, professionalism and attention to detail.

4. Attach only pertinent information

Think carefully about what to include in your attachments. If you think you can just attach your capability statement or marketing brochure – think again. The key word here is 'pertinent': your attachments need to be pertinent and relevant to the bid. Generic information not only doesn't cut it, but it will also do your submission more harm than good with the vast majority of evaluators saying generic information is never welcome.

5. Stand out from the crowd

Evaluators noted that bidders are often clustered and that choosing the winning bidder is not always straightforward. This presents a fantastic opportunity to stand out from your competitors and create memorable differentiators for the evaluation panel to consider. Offer more than a compliant, business-as-usual response. Explore innovative solutions and be open to alternatives. Demonstrate your energy and enthusiasm for the buyer's project. Show your smarts and your professionalism, and your commitment to delivering a first-class submission.

6. Ask questions: don't be coy

A common request from evaluators is for bidders to ask more questions of the buyers. Engage with the Q&A process and ask searching questions that will help you understand the project and its inherent risks and challenges. If you're worried that your questions will reveal your solution, use the confidential question function for those types of questions; but it's in your best interests to join in the Q&A process and demonstrate your commitment and enthusiasm.



Factors for success in professional services bids

From our experience in professional services bids, there are a few key factors that enhance your likelihood of success:

Table 2: This is the winning formula for success.



BID MINDSET

Embrace the bid mindset to win the competition and go beyond business as usual. Submitting a compliant tender is the starting point; submitting a winning tender requires a completely different attitude.



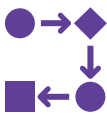
EARLY AND BROAD ENGAGEMENT

Engage early to position and prepare for the tender. Don't wait for the bid documents – get your project and bid team up and running, aligned and focused. It's also crucial to engage early with your project partners, and potentially also with stakeholders, community groups and local industry.



OUTSTANDING SOLUTION

Develop an outstanding approach or solution that differentiates you and provides real and genuine value to your client. Pack your proposal full of smart initiatives that minimise risks, maximise opportunities and create value.



DISCIPLINED PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Follow a disciplined bid management process including detailed content analysis, iterative content development and collaborative document review. Did you know: a first draft usually scores only 40%? If your process is to gather it all together three days before the deadline, you may be in trouble...



CONTENT THAT SCORES

Develop compelling and persuasive content that goes beyond a compliant answer to maximise your score through the formal evaluation process. Remember: a compliant answer usually scores only 4 out of 10. To elevate your submission, you need to create more potent and comprehensive content.



Get the edge with Aurora Marketing

Over the last 20 years, Aurora Marketing has pioneered the submission management space in Australia.

At the pointy end of our expertise is the work we do in tenders, bids, proposals, and submissions. In many sectors, a submission like this is where all the effort our clients invest in marketing, promotion, sales and business development culminates in an all-or-nothing competitive offer. It is an opportunity to really showcase their unique offering and close the deal.

This is the space where we thrive.

We're experts at developing **pragmatic business growth programs**. These programs help position companies as market leaders across selected industry sectors and give guidance on how to actively pursue a targeted list of clients and prospects. Our expertise covers all aspects of marketing, promotion, sales and business development, but always with the crystal-clear focus of driving revenue through more or bigger clients, and more or bigger contracts.

We can help you to **assemble the team** for your tender using your own internal resources and preferred suppliers, or we can assemble a full team of our own resources. We work with teams of all sizes, shapes and skills. Some of our clients are very well resourced with high calibre, experienced tender experts, a strong internal bid culture, and well-honed bid systems. Others are at the opposite end of the spectrum, with limited resources and processes. Depending on what your team needs and the scale of your tender, we can provide **extra resources** to fill gaps or an **entire holistic solution**.

And while this is what we are best known for, our expertise goes beyond tenders, bids, proposals, and submissions. We excel in preparing **any kind of highly technical document** that needs to be clear and compelling for its target audience. Think capability statements, white papers, research reports, grant applications, award submissions, information memoranda and annual reports.

Importantly, the size and scale of our team enables us to ramp up **resources when you need them**. Whether you need a team dedicated to a key project for three months, a tender coach in-house for three weeks, a team of writers working around the clock for three days, or a document formatter for a few hours, we have the solution you need.



Deep understanding of the professional services sector

Aurora Marketing is deeply and passionately engaged in the professional services sector, after all, we work in this space too!

Since cutting our teeth on back-to-back mega projects around Australia over 20 years ago, we've embraced this exciting, challenging, and dynamic sector. We're active participants in industry conferences, seminars and events around Australia and New Zealand, and are proud members of many industry bodies including the Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP), Australian Marketing Institute (AMI), Committee for Brisbane, and ICON. Furthermore, we're recognised Industry Experts with Queensland Leaders and provide valuable education and mentoring for members across numerous sectors.

In November 2019 we partnered with QMCA to conduct a behind-the-scenes investigation of the tender evaluation process. We wanted to understand how evaluation panels score major tenders, what they're really looking for, and what the common shortfalls are. The result is *Behind Closed Doors*, an indispensable resource for companies who want insights into what it takes to get that bid-winning edge. You can read or download the report from our website.

Our bidding experience reflects the full diversity and complexity of the professional services sector including:

Table 3: Aurora Marketing has experience that spans the full breadth of the professional services industry.



LEGAL SERVICES



IT SOLUTIONS



HUMAN RESOURCES



CHANGE MANAGEMENT



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



INSURANCE



AUDITS



BIDS AND TENDERS



GOVERNANCE



GRANTS AND AWARDS



TRAINING AND COACHING



BRAND AND DESIGN



MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS



RECRUITMENT



PROPERTY



RESEARCH



ENGINEERING



MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY



FINANCE



SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT



A track record of winning landmark deals

We've worked on literally thousands of live tender opportunities for organisations of all sizes and we're proud to have contributed to some of the biggest and most exciting professional services contracts both in Australia and abroad, including:

- Defence Major Services Provider Panel
- Defence Infrastructure Panel
- Defence MSS Panel
- Defence PMCA Panel
- Property Acquisition & Disposal Services
- Consulting services
- Legal services
- Audit services
- Advisory panels
- Recruitment services



1500
PROJECTS



\$160 B+
SUCCESSFUL
PROJECTS



98.5%
SUCCESS RATE



 Offices
  Teams
  Major Projects
  Projects

Figure 8: The Aurora Marketing presence continues to grow in stride with our success.



Trusted by the leaders in professional services

We're particularly proud of the client base we've served. Across the professional services sector, we've worked with some of Australia's best-known companies including:

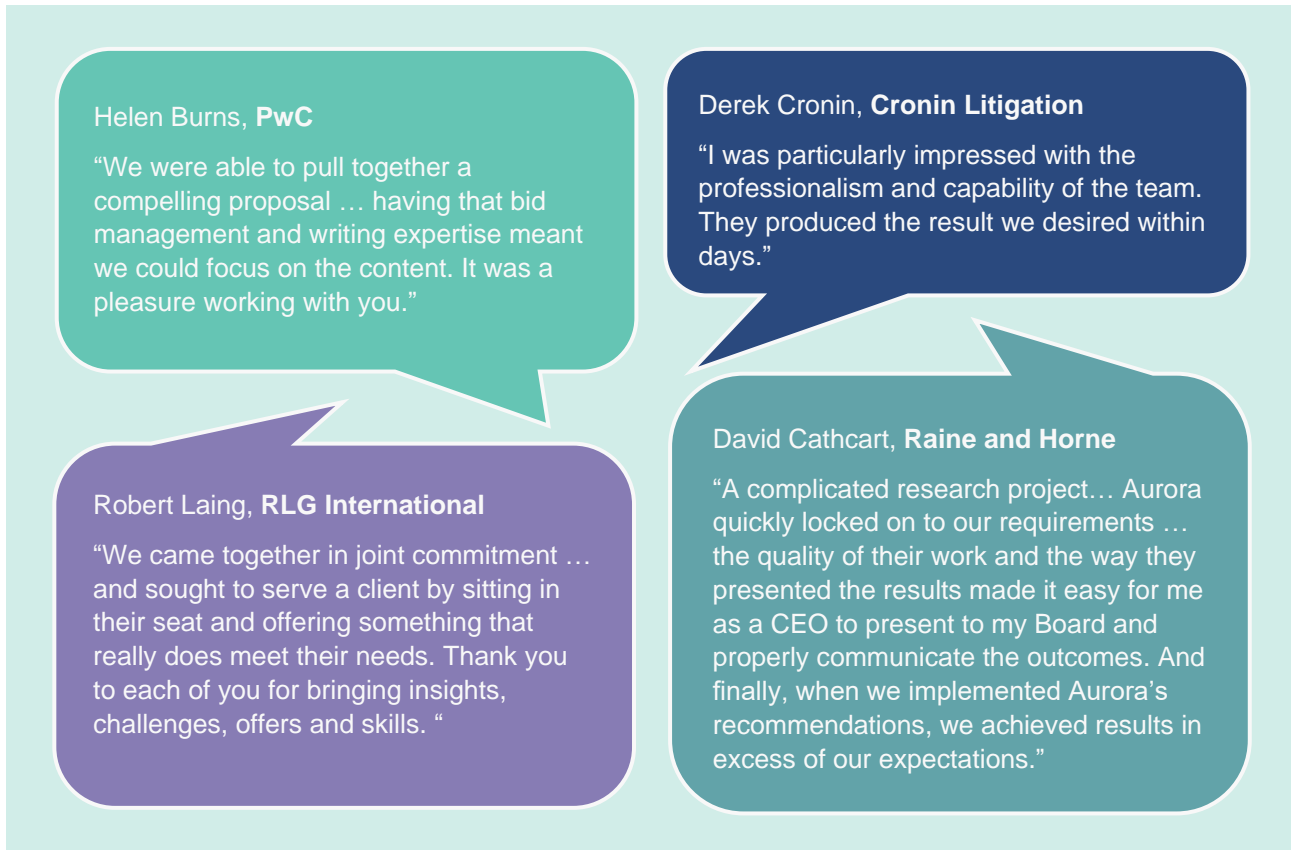
Table 4: Our clients are as diverse as the industry itself.





Delivering exceptional results

Don't just take our word for it – our clients sing our praises too:



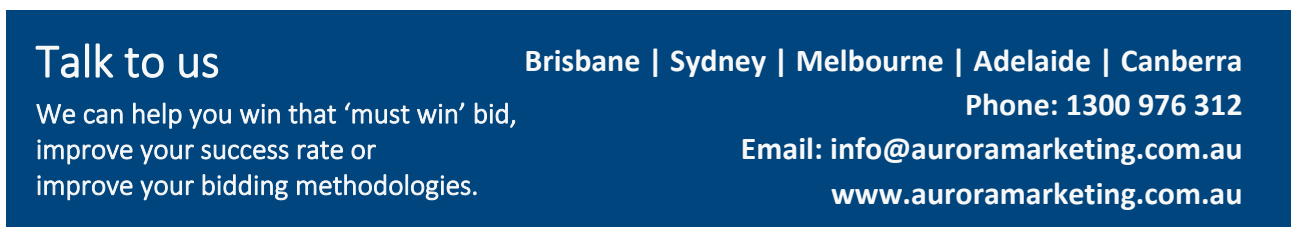
Helen Burns, PwC
“We were able to pull together a compelling proposal ... having that bid management and writing expertise meant we could focus on the content. It was a pleasure working with you.”

Derek Cronin, Cronin Litigation
“I was particularly impressed with the professionalism and capability of the team. They produced the result we desired within days.”

Robert Laing, RLG International
“We came together in joint commitment ... and sought to serve a client by sitting in their seat and offering something that really does meet their needs. Thank you to each of you for bringing insights, challenges, offers and skills. “

David Cathcart, Raine and Horne
“A complicated research project... Aurora quickly locked on to our requirements ... the quality of their work and the way they presented the results made it easy for me as a CEO to present to my Board and properly communicate the outcomes. And finally, when we implemented Aurora’s recommendations, we achieved results in excess of our expectations.”

Figure 9: Client testimonials.



Talk to us
We can help you win that ‘must win’ bid, improve your success rate or improve your bidding methodologies.

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