



Summary

Contracting Success Story: Insights for Government and Commercial Contracting

Commercial VS Federal proposals: Proposal
Development Best Practices Across Industries

VisibleThread.com



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Introduction

This customer spotlight session at Optimize23 featured Leidos' Proposal & Bid Director, Anatalia Macik. Anatalia shared valuable insights on navigating the complex government and commercial contracting world. Attendees learned proven strategies for success with VisibleThread and gained valuable knowledge on how to master the art of winning contracts in both sectors. Whether new to the contracting world or seasoned professionals, the session was great for anyone looking to improve their chances of success.

The logo for VisibleThread Optimize23. It features the VisibleThread logo (a red square with a white cross) followed by the text "VisibleThread" in red, and "Optimize23" in a large, bold, dark blue font.

View the full session with [Anatalia Macik](#) here:

[View full session](#)

Introducing our speaker

"I've been in BD for close to 2 decades. I've worked on Federal Civilian proposals for almost every agency (at least it feels that way). And I've supported commercial bids for companies including AWS, Google, as well as universities, the World Bank. It's actually how I got started in proposals."

[Anatalia Macik](#), proposal/bid director security enterprise solutions at [Leidos](#)





Primary Differences

When it comes to bidding on contracts, there are key differences between commercial and federal proposals. In this guide, we'll explore the structure, evaluation, debriefs, confidentiality, and timelines associated with each type of bid.

Commercial Bids

Commercial bids tend to vary in structure and are generally less formal. Evaluation is more subjective and debriefs are not guaranteed. Additionally, confidentiality of bid price and questions are not always ensured. The acquisition timeline may take weeks to months.

Federal Bids

Federal bids, on the other hand, are more formal and consistent by agency. Evaluation is less subjective and often included. Debriefs are provided but not always informative. Confidentiality is only ensured for the final price. Timelines can take years.

Other Considerations

It's worth noting that certain things true of commercial bids also apply to state and local bids. Of course, there are always exceptions. Not everything holds true for all commercial or federal bids. The key to success is strategizing and having a plan.

“When you dive a little deeper it’s the ways in which Commercial and Federal bids are similar that make them interchangeable for me. I can go from one type to another from week to week without missing a beat. Part of it is strong and consistent best practices, part of it is mindset. Yet, a critical piece is understanding the similarities and working those.”

[Anatalia Macik](#), proposal/bid director security enterprise solutions at [Leidos](#)



Key Similarities

When it comes to bidding, there are some similarities between commercial and federal contracts that are worth noting. While they are not the same, understanding these generalizations can help prepare you for success. Here are some key similarities:

Instructions

- Can be just as confusing and unclear.
- Copy and paste mentality.
- No SME consultation.

Responses

- Compliance is key.
- Answer the question asked.

Competition

- Ghosting is common.
- Qualify opportunities pre-solicitation.
- Sole source is the goal.

Teams

- Collaboration with all teams is key. From Pricing, legal, technical SMEs, BD, executive leadership, to partners.

Side Note

When it comes to bidding on unsolicited or international projects, there are additional factors to consider. Contrary to popular belief, Unsolicited bids have rules and can cause the loss of a sole-source contract if mishandled.

For commercial unsolicited bids, keep it concise, focusing on the customer's needs and cost-effectiveness.

For federal unsolicited bids, the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) provide clear guidelines. And the National Contract Management Association (NCMA) can be a useful resource.

International bids require attention to local customs, regulations, and language barriers. Especially when dealing with international development projects for organizations like the World Bank and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Keeping these additional considerations in mind, you can increase your chances of success in the competitive world of bidding.

“My objective in giving this presentation today is to equip you all with some information and encouragement to perhaps step outside your comfort zones. I want to reassure you, that the differences are not significant. The similarities are many, and the approach to each should, in fact, be very similar.”



Best Practices

Here are some best practices to follow that will put you ahead of the game:

Pre-solicitation

Understand the problem your customer is trying to solve and what sets you apart from the competition. Don't be afraid to meet with your customer and leverage existing contract POCs (Points of Contact). Train your program staff to value BD practices so that you're all on the same page.

Research the latest industry trends and keep a close eye on what your competitors are up to. Monitor industry sites and competitor sites (including social media) to get a sense of what's out there. Determine the previous performance of the contract (if a re-compete). And understand the customer's goals and mission (if it's a new/re-compete).

Use solutioning to figure out what you'll be selling to your customers, whether it's products, services, or staffing. It's important to gain buy-in from your internal stakeholders early so that the rest of the process goes smoothly. You can use this time to determine what resources you will need to bid on the contract.

Solicitation

Once the solicitation releases, re-validate everything you already did and update as needed. Make sure you still have buy-in from your stakeholders and that the resources you need are still available.

Solutioning is crucial in the proposal process, particularly if your company lacks a robust bid/no bid process. A solutioning process can ensure that your team is aware of the steps necessary to proceed successfully. Before starting work, validate and refine your proposal based on the final solicitation and reconfirm buy-in and resource availability.

Compliance is critical for any type of bid, except for an unsolicited proposal that does not have an associated RFP. Create a compliance matrix for each major document by shredding the solicitation. Use VisibleThreads VT Docs to accomplish this and conduct multiple compliance reviews during the process.

Conduct reviews as frequently as possible based on the response timeline. Ensure that you're using independent reviewers to evaluate your proposal. Hit customer's keywords, hot buttons, win themes and key points to respond effectively using independent reviewers. To ensure a consistent tone of voice and resonance with each international customer, invest in VT Writer. You can create regional-specific dictionaries to review your content against localized phrases or where you have different English variants. For example, "color" (US) vs. "colour" (UK).



Post Solicitation

Win or lose, there are always opportunities to improve your proposal process. Here are some best practices to follow after submitting your proposal:

It's important to conduct a **lessons-learned** session to evaluate your performance and identify areas for improvement. Be open to improving and learning on every bid by reflecting on areas of opportunity for future proposals. Remember to focus on what went well and what you can improve for next time.

Requesting a debrief from your customer is crucial, whether you win or lose. Take the time to analyze the feedback and look for trends across all debriefs. This will help you identify areas where you can improve your proposals and stand out from your competitors.

Use the insights from your lessons learned and debrief sessions to continually improve your processes and offerings. By making adjustments and enhancements, you can increase your chances of winning future proposals.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Proposal development best practices apply across different industries despite potential differences in requirements.
- ✓ Pre-planning and strategizing can help overcome any differences and potential obstacles.
- ✓ Compliance is always a critical factor and should not be overlooked.
- ✓ Stepping out of your comfort zone can lead to better results.

For even more insights into proposal development best practices across industries, view the full session with [Anatalia Macik](#) here:

[View full session](#)



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Register for our no-obligation
live demonstration.

Live demo

Need help or
have a question?



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info@VisibleThread.com to find out
how you can avoid these mistakes.