Do You Know What the Ideal Winner Looks Like to Win Your Next Competitive Pursuit?— It's Not You

Notional Winner Benchmark

Use a "Notional Winner Benchmark" as guidance during the capture management and proposal development phases. Doing so improves your likelihood of winning. Document a list of the ideal attributes of the winning company, such as credentials, capabilities, experience, past performance, size, and technical approach.

For example, an attribute of the Notional Winner Benchmark of the company to win a competitive pursuit might look something like the following: *"The ideal team to win the competitive pursuit can immediately field a deep bench of Apache Hadoop software developers who offer both the needed experience and security clearances. Plus, the developers are already geographically close to the customer who is located on a military base".*

Think about the hypothetical ideal company or team. Benchmark your company against the notional winner to make decisions on strategy, teaming, and the competition. Spoiler alert—The ideal company does not exist, even if you are the incumbent for an existing contract. Once a company starts to think that it is the ideal winner to win a competitive pursuit with its false sense of bravado, it is on the slippery slope to a competitive loss.

Your Notional Winner Benchmark will only be as good as your context of the opportunity. You may not know what you don't know and need to know. In that situation, a better-informed competitor will have the advantage with their solution design and probability-of-winning (P-Win).

Very often, company's pursuing competitive government contracting (GovCon) pursuits have internal challenges conditions, and constraints that conflict with the Notional Winner Benchmark. For example, your company has a:

- ❑ History submitting incorrect invoices to the government customer and the government is hesitant to work with your company in the future.
- ❑ Reputation of not paying its teaming partners on time and now companies are reluctant to team with your company.
- ❑ Pattern changing out its Program Manager a number of times on an existing contract.
- ❑ Problem staffing in a timely manner to address the customer's requirements.
- ❑ Track record of high turn-over due to non-competitive salaries and benefits.

Some form of internal challenges, conditions, or constraints exist for all companies pursuing competitive GovCon bids. It takes courage for a company to look at its own internal operations and be able to admit that it has problems. An honest awareness about it will help you to determine what is necessary to address it. Not addressing it will lower your P-Win and the eventual value of your company.

The Problem

Understanding the Notional Winner Benchmark is typically something that evolves over time. Regardless, on how you obtain this information, it still must be analyzed to ensure that you have the right context of it. Understanding the customer's real issue and why they are issues, as well as the key factors (i.e., technical, management, personnel, and corporate experience) necessary to address the issues and why the respective key factors are important to the customer are essential to establishing the Notional Winner Benchmark. It might sound basic but poorly performing the activity of establishing a Notional Winner Benchmark in a competitive pursuit is the surest way to end up with a loss. The challenge though is how do we best perform this business-critical activity? In particular, how do we do this in the new hybrid work environment with the same analytical rigor that we once did pre-pandemic when we were able to have collaborative, face-to-face, deep dialogue exchanges?

The Need

There is a need for a capability to help us get back to that collaborative, face-to-face, deep dialogue, and analytical rigor that we once were able to do in order to win that next competitive pursuit. A capture-as-a-service (CaaS) capability where being able to establishing a Notional Winner Benchmark in such a manner is possible is a key part of it.

The Benefits

The benefits of such a CaaS capability are that it would be able to:

- ❑ Perform the upfront analyses (i.e., Issue and Key Factor Analysis), which are crucial before trying to establish a Notional Winner Benchmark.
- ❑ Capture the attributes of the ideal winner in a competitive pursuit; the reason for them and their importance to the customer, and prioritization in the eyes of the customer too.
- ❑ Allow for customer-focused psychographic analysis. For example, is the individual on the evaluation committee? Are they an influencer or decision-maker? How do they feel about your company?— Are they a company advocate or adversary? Are they a leader, visionary or egotist?
- ❑ Allow select-identified Notional Winner Benchmark attributes to be part of a visual blueprint that explains how you are going to win the overall competitive pursuit in the eyes of the C-Suite and the target customer.

"Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence." — Vince Lombardi (NFL player and coach)

We believe that if such a CaaS offering enabled establishing a Notional Winner Benchmark in the manner described that a company's understanding of the customer would improve and contribute to the company experiencing a higher win rate. The bottom line if your company cannot materially prove that it knows the ideal attributes of the winning company in the eyes of the customer; why those attributes are important to the customer; and to whom they are important in the customer organization, then your company will have less of a chance at winning. For this reason, we have developed a capture-as-a-service offering for the GovCon marketspace for its use where one key part of it is the ability to establish a Notional Winner Benchmark in a way that overcomes the challenges of the new hybrid work environment and provides the aforementioned benefits and more.