

Do You Really Have a Discriminator for Your Next Competitive Bid?

Go beyond the Saying, “We Are Unique”

In the government contracting (GovCon) marketplace, winning a competitive bid involves having a real discriminator. Discriminators are features of your solution that differ from those of the competition. The key is that the customer acknowledges them as being important.

The strength of a discriminator depends on its importance to the customer. The strongest discriminators are true for you—but not the competition. They are often confused with their “weaker cousins,” the differentiators. Differentiators are features of your solution that only differ from the competition. They do not carry the same degree of importance in the customer's eyes.



Identify at least one true discriminator to justify bidding an opportunity. If there is nothing discriminating amongst bidders, it will always come down to price. Credible and defensible discriminators most often make the difference between winning and losing. Write them into the executive summary. Also, substantiate them throughout each respective volume of the proposal response.

All four (4) of the following attributes must be present for a discriminator to exist:

- 1) A unique feature. It is unlikely that any competitor pursuing the same deal can make the same claim in a credible way.
- 2) You know that what your company is proposing helps the customer. Plus, you know that it is important to them. It meets a unique need or desire, particularly to known decision-makers and key influencers. It is important to validate your potential discriminators with the customer.
- 3) The benefit provided or risk mitigated is clear to the customer and its constituents. Try to quantify benefits whenever possible. This makes them stronger in the eyes of evaluators.
- 4) You can show proof that what you are proposing has delivered these benefits before.

To help prepare for the activity of discriminator qualification, consider the following:

- Know your company, customer, and competition.
- Focus on discriminators that emphasize people, experience, and results. These tend to be the strongest discriminators.
- Identify discriminators that are positive for your company as well as negative. You might have to spin something negative about your company. Do this to force the customer to consider something to reduce any risk to the government.
- Be specific in the discriminator's definition:
 - Leverage customer context and relevance (i.e., the benefit of the discriminator).
 - Quantify the discriminator when possible.
 - Show evidence of the discriminator.
- Re-examine the discriminator continually. As the solicitation and other factors unfold, things can and will change. A discriminator today might not be one tomorrow.

- ❑ Use discriminators as a key input for win strategy development. Other input includes any gaps that you have. Your win strategy is the result of making trades and striking the optimal balance. The right balance between your discriminators (positives) and any unaddressed gaps (negatives) places your company in the most competitive position to win.

Always develop discriminators and identify gaps first. Upfront analyses should occur before discriminator formulation and gap identification. This includes conducting an issue and key factor analysis, establishing a notional winner benchmark, and performing a competitive assessment. Failure to do these necessary upfront analyses will result in weak discriminators.

The Problem

Very often companies do not properly qualify a proposed discriminator as aforementioned above. In particular, they do not perform the necessary upfront analyses (e.g., issue and key factor analysis, competitive assessment) to substantiate their discriminators. This means that there is not any traceable, irrefutable, defensible, and explainable evidence to show how identified discriminators were derived to substantiate them, particularly in the eyes of the company's C-Suite (e.g., Chief Growth Officer). This results in the company making poor bid decisions that lower win probability and squander internal company resources and time.

The Need

There is a need for a capability to help GovCon companies to perform the necessary upfront analyses to help properly qualify discriminators. There is a need for a capability that provides the C-Suite, business developers, capture managers, proposal managers, solution architects, and others with the ability to understand how the discriminator was qualified using the aforementioned above four criteria. In fact, there is a need for a capture-as-a-service (CaaS) capability where such things and more are possible, particularly in today's post-pandemic hybrid work environment. Such a CaaS offering should be collaborative; analytical; strategy; solution; and customer/company value-focused.

The Benefits

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

- ❑ Support the post-pandemic hybrid work environment.
- ❑ Help do necessary "strategic thinking before writing" in opportunity assessment, capture, and proposal planning phases of competitive pursuits.
- ❑ Enable better executive decision-making by providing quantitative status on the goodness of business development and capture efforts, as well as readiness for recompetete.
- ❑ Help answer most important question when pursuing a competitive bid. "*Why your company?*"
- ❑ Be authoritative source-of-truth for a competitive bid.
- ❑ Support design and development of solution for your competitive response.
- ❑ Generate needed strategies and strengths to win bid.
- ❑ Store rich context of how and why a deal was bid—Company-internal data lake of competitive intelligence for future reference.
- ❑ Capture company's intellectual capital with each use to enable future growth.
- ❑ Act as a living capture plan. In the traditional sense, a capture plan is a framework—a series of folders or buckets where you assemble and organize data by topic.
- ❑ Quantify growth status of your enterprise.
- ❑ Lower cost of capturing new business.
- ❑ Protect customer business you already have.
- ❑ Increase value of company in the eyes of potential buyers.

Go beyond Just Saying “We Are Unique” with Your Next Competitive Bid— Qualify Your Potential Discriminators the Right Way

We believe that if such a CaaS offering existed in the GovCon marketplace that companies using it would win more competitions and increase their overall enterprise value. For this reason, we have developed a capture-as-a-service offering for the GovCon marketplace for its use, which provides the aforementioned benefits and more.

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