Here's the Dirty Secret: Government Evaluators Do Not Even Know What Win Themes Are

Win Themes Alone Do Not Make You Win Competitive GovCon Pursuits

Win themes are higher-level features and benefits of your offering. In the Government Contracting (GovCon) space, if you went and asked an evaluator of a competitive source selection, *"How did you like our win themes?"*, they would give back to you a blank stare. They do not even know what win themes are. They are looking for real potential quantifiable benefits realization and no risk from your offering instead. Support and prove win themes and ensure they transcend the entire proposal. This support and proof only come from doing the necessary analyses.

The architecture of any software system is always bound together by a set of principles. These principles transcend the entire system. The software system has the principals designed into it. There is no compromise with them if the system is to operate with success. For an information system, example principles could be security, reliability, or scalability. Win themes are analogous to software architecture principles. Do not compromise them. Ensure they transcend all components of your offering (e.g., past performance, technical approach, staffing, price). Substantiate them with evidence. Distinguish your proposal from the competition with win themes and supporting discriminators. It is the most effective way to do so other than price.

Here are some truths about win themes:

- ❑ They help the customer understand why your offer is best. Test win themes with the customer. This ensures they believe your solution benefits them and/or mitigates their risk. Otherwise, you will not be in a competitive position.

- ❑ They are intended for presentation in the proposal. Develop them early. Do not add them after the proposal is already written.

- ❑ They tie benefits to the customer that are recognizable by evaluators. Also, tie them to decision criteria. In particular, tie win themes to authoritative sources (e.g., government assessments/reports, industry research/studies, legislation, customer strategic objectives).

- ❑ They must be consistent with the win strategy. Focus them on meeting requirements at the lowest price if your win strategy is to offer the lowest price. They should not be about innovation or a superior technical product.

- ❑ They need socialization with the customer as well as being part of the written proposal.

- ❑ They need development across the entire proposal, including the technical and management volumes, past performance, and pricing. Focus them on what the customer cares about the most, whether that is lower cost, low risk, a proven solution, innovation, or performance-based accountability. Develop three-to-five-win themes in total.

- ❑ Substantiate your win themes throughout your proposal

    — Technical approach
    — Management approach

- — Personnel section
- — Basis-of-Estimate (BOE)
- — Past performance (Note: Do not use a past performance that does not substantiate a win theme.)

Win themes must be consistent with your win strategy and backed up by the contents of the proposal. They should resonate with the customer and tie to the evaluation criteria. Successful proposals have no more than a few win themes. The focus of the win themes is on what customers care about the most. This is in most cases, an offering that is:

- ❑ Low cost
- ❑ Low risk
- ❑ Proven
- ❑ Innovative
- ❑ Has solid performance-based accountability

For example, assume that you know that the customer's key concern is meeting the schedule. Also assume that you know that price is a lesser concern. Then an overarching win theme should be about meeting the delivery schedule. Your technical and management approaches must both pick up on that theme. Structure the approaches to give evidence (i.e., proof) of techniques you are using to meet the schedule. Strive to make your offering even more compelling in your past performance. Provide evidence of where you used the same techniques to achieve on-time delivery.

For the above example, also focus on your price volume's BOE. Highlight the resources required to execute the technical and management approaches. Be sure to reference on-schedule delivery. In this example, you should not attempt to make your cost proposal the lowest price. Focus on the right price to maximize the likelihood of meeting the schedule. All volumes of your proposal should reinforce the overarching win theme (on-schedule delivery). By doing this, your proposal will score better in the evaluation.

The Problem

Very often companies do not have a "visual blueprint", as well as a digital thread of the upfront work essential to substantiating their win themes. This means that there is not any traceable, irrefutable, defensible, and explainable evidence to prove their win themes, 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 analyses to help properly formulate and substantiate their win themes. 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 recompete.
- ❏ 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.

Once Someone Throws the Win Themes to Your Next Competitive Pursuit up onto a White Board and There Is No Analysis to Back Them up, Your Chances of Winning Are in Trouble

We believe that if such a CaaS offering existed in the GovCon marketspace 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 marketspace for its use, which provides the aforementioned benefits and more.

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