

## Pitch Perfect...



**ANDREW HEDLEY**

Hedley Consulting

[andrew.hedley@hedleyconsulting.com](mailto:andrew.hedley@hedleyconsulting.com)

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**When business is tight, maximising the opportunity afforded by pitches, presentations and proposals is quite rightly an area of intense focus for firms. But what are the simple guidelines which, if followed, can help to improve win rates?**

Success in winning business is, first and foremost, about selecting the right sort of business to try to win! These will be engagements that play to strengths, allowing the firm to demonstrate value to the client in a way which is more attractive and compelling than competitors.

Intense focus on maintaining revenue streams has created, quite understandably, a pressure cooker environment in which the default position is to pursue any opportunity no matter how obscure. On any rational consideration this cannot be sensible. It may be that, under the hawk like eye of the managing partner, some view the frantic actions of the "busy fool" a better tactic than a more objective and methodical approach.

Paradoxically, the quickest way to improve pitch win rates is to pitch far less but with a dramatically increased focus. This means that more time (generally a firm's scarcest resource) can be deployed in developing the opportunity, tuning the proposal and following up the presentation.

The more considered salesman will look for opportunities to create an unlevel playing field, areas in which they can gain a competitive edge by unearthing hidden requirements which often will not have fully articulated by the client. Most crucially, there will be a recognition that the production of a proposal document is but one milestone in the overall sales process.

Maximising the opportunity starts much earlier, through developing a strong relationship, exploring requirements more fully and understanding relative competitive strengths more completely.

Similarly there are many activities that can be initiated after the submission of a proposal to tip the scales in your favour. This period of client decision making is often avoided by nervous professionals, almost as if they are awaiting exam results. Yet this is a window of opportunity to demonstrate enthusiasm, commitment and commerciality.

Partners will generally accept the strategic logic of a focused approach to sales and proposition management. However, in the implementation of such a policy they may be challenged, falling foul of the selection process and finding their own "opportunities" judged not to be sufficiently attractive to pursue. How the firm deals with this situation is the only true test of management mettle in creating an approach that is pitch perfect.

**Andrew Hedley is a Director of Hedley Consulting and the Course Director of the Cambridge Marketing College's CIM Professional Diploma for Professional Services Marketing. He can be contacted at [andrew.hedley@hedleyconsulting.com](mailto:andrew.hedley@hedleyconsulting.com) [www.marketingcollege.com](http://www.marketingcollege.com) 01223 421836**