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## Getting to the point Minimizing waste

BY LINDA WOLSTENCROFT

Winning new business is a complex endeavor, but it is a challenge many are attracted to because it is interesting work.

There are numerous areas of expertise required to put together a successful new business initiative. Strategy, sales, teaming, supply chain, subcontracting, engineering, technology, manufacturing, contracts, legal, finance, offsets – all of these areas must align their work with the end objective being growth.

The challenge is getting all of these areas aligned.

Sometimes, we end up with a team where some members aren't working to the shared objectives. This team member could be in the form of a separate organization, such as a partner, subcontractor, consultant or service provider; they just don't share the same objective to win the business. It could be that they have their own profit objectives and construct their work to maximize their own profit only; or it could be a lack of interest because the project simply doesn't align with the firm's overall business growth objectives.

Other times, it's inside our own organization where individual objectives working on the project are not aligned. It could be personal, such as they may be looking for another job; it could be political, making them unsupportive of the project because their role is not a stature they like or believe in, or it may be because they have other pet projects that they prefer.

If one is in charge of a business development endeavor – whether as the CEO, senior executive or a leader of the initiative at another level – detection is your job. These areas of weakness must be determined and fixed before it's too late. Cost, schedule and being successful are at stake.

You may have experienced the following:

- **The technical team who does not buy in because they disagree with the project.** Furthermore, they want to work on something else that they are more interested in. To manage this, the project lead must understand the main technical risks, the main technical attributes, and particularly the no-fail technical requirements. Pay attention to getting the basics as a priority, rather than deep-diving into the details. Sometimes, technical designers use a more creative or iterative approach rather than one that is specifically geared to meet the technical requirements. This can yield great solutions – but only as long as the solution meets the requirements.
- **The contract and legal team does not take the time to understand the project objectives and ends up creating obstacles in the name of risk.** It's important to understand and prioritize what the key contract and legal issues are. Is it Intellectual Property? Liability? Performance guarantees? Competitive considerations? Understand the potential major issues and prioritize them early in the process.
- **The finance team does not want to do the detail analysis work; they wish to use their existing templates, stay at a high level.** There could be a tendency to wait and not start working until the numbers are ready. However, preliminary work is important to develop the analysis and pricing templates. Start with the end point and develop the templates for submission and approval. Create a means to assess pricing and cost scenarios. Make sure that the risk is only added at the end – not throughout.
- **The salespeople or marketers see a world of other new opportunities and do not mind if the project at hand is unsuccessful because they believe there will be more opportunities to come.** The problem with this is that they do not realize that every valid opportunity can serve to grow the business and improve the win rate. The importance of this priority must be embraced. Then, the exercises of conducting a logical and fact-driven competitive analysis, developing pricing strategies, and creating market expansion opportunities can be executed.
- **The offsets experts skim the top, miss the detail, and try to shoehorn old solutions into a new project.** Instead, start at the beginning and innovate. Each project should be customized based on the options that meet the offsets requirements. Partners, competition, and ancillary projects can help improve the offsets position. These need to be reviewed carefully so that all options can come into play.
- **The executive doesn't want to get her or his hands dirty.** This is a real tragedy. Executives must be involved, and not only in their preferred area. Whether it be strategy, sales, finance, partnering or engineering – the more involved, the better. As a project leader, give frequent briefings and ask questions often to instill executive participation.
- **The purchasing or supply chain group do not honour the contract and specifications.** The result is a deficient solution and risk to the project. If the requests going to subcontractors and suppliers do not align with the project documents, then the responses will be insufficient. From the perspective of the project lead, the main requirements of the contract and specifications should be to understand and to ensure that the right work is being done.  
Any or all of these can cause serious disruption to a project. As a lead, your job is to mitigate any of these items. The point is that this is the job of a competent lead; this is part of a successful new business initiative.

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