



A KCA Construction Industry Article of Interest:

Creatively Conquering the RFP

Going Beyond Paper to Win New Business

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The driving force behind the construction business today is the creation of a winning proposal. While that sounds like an obvious and simple statement, it's no small thing. When a Request for Proposal (RFP) comes in the door, companies must invest time and money to prepare, produce and track responses. Add on the fact that Contracting by Negotiation through the issuance of RFPs ("Requests for Proposals") requires a whole other level of adaptation to this method of winning business.

If you don't have a dedicated marketing person in place it can be overwhelming to put together a detailed response for an RFP but it doesn't have to be. Responses to RFPs have two levels of importance: 1) what you are saying and 2) how you are saying it. Obviously, content is significant in telling your story, but an important but often overlooked element is how you visually represent yourself. The following are some considerations for creating materials that visually impact customers and prospects and raise awareness for construction companies in the early stages of the RFP process.

Imagine

Typically, responses for RFPs are done in a traditional way: a three-ring binder full of information with the intent that 'more is better'. That is understandable because often there are specifications that must be met and it is quick and easy to print out information, punch holes in it and bind it up with a cover sheet slid down in the clear pocket on the front of a binder. Does it get the job done? Yes. Does it make people remember you? No. This is where you need to use your imagination to take it to the next level beyond the traditional binder. It could be as simple as including a pop of color with a pull-out project timeline or really going the distance with something like Google Cardboard to build an immersive

experience your prospect will never forget. The idea is to think creatively and draw your customer into the experience.

Package

If you have some leeway in how you are able to package your response, there are a number of ways that you can customize your response for differentiation and still meet specifications. Consider a high-quality box with a colorful design or incorporate a different binding method. Instead of the typical three-ring binder, consider buying a spiral binding apparatus, or if time allows saddle stitching, velo binding or perfect binding as options to make your response stand out. You can also explore creating custom pieces in-house to reduce cost and time. The key is to examine what elements are required by the creator of the RFP and rework your packaging to take your response a step above the others.

Evolve

The next evolution of marketing for construction companies will be exciting. The construction industry has been a traditional industry however, with the advent of technology we have the opportunity to move things forward. From video cameras to drones on jobsites, technology is constantly advancing and the time is right to take the steps to allow your company to distinguish itself. Some new methods for winning business include using:

- BIM (building information modeling) to help customers visualize how a structure will look
- GIS (geographic information system) to illustrate spatial data
- Animated CAD (computer-aided design) drawings to optimize design
- Video testimonials and case studies to highlight satisfied customers and successful projects

Without a doubt, responding to an RFP is a critical step in positioning your company to win new business. As such, it is essential that your company represent itself accurately and positively. While an RFP response is not a traditional marketing piece, it is telling your company's story and it must be visually compelling. RFPs can arrive at inopportune times, so being prepared in advance will help lighten the load and help everyone stay focused to present the best representation of the company and win the business.

BIO

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