**Risk Symptom Checklist  
100 Ways to Mitigate Risks throughout the Proposal Lifecycle**

| **No.** | **Risk** | **Recommended Mitigation Strategy** |
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|  | **Pursuit Phase** |  |
| 1 | Is the bid a strategic fit for your company? | Consider no bidding |
| 2 | Do you understand the customer’s requirements? | Use the time during the pursuit phase to learn more about the customer’s requirements |
| 3 | Do you know who constitutes your competition? | Use this time to learn more about the competition through open source documents, employees, partners, vendors, and hired consultants |
| 4 | Do you have advocacy with the customer? | Use this time to introduce your solution to the customer and demonstrate how it will benefit operations.  If you are the incumbent demonstrate how you add value to the customer’s current and near-term operations  Make recommendations for improving long-term operations during the course of the contract |
| 5 | Does the bid meet the company’s financial objectives? | Determine whether you company will make sufficient profit or if your company considers this a strategic bid and is willing to take minimal profit or just break even |
| 6 | Does the company have sufficient funds to conduct the bid? | Determine if you company can afford the bid and if not, how it can procure a partner or financing |
| 7 | Does your company a viable solution for performing the bid? | Determine if solution gaps occur and try to fill them |
| 8 | Does your company have sufficient resources to pursue the bid? | Obtain the most highly qualified business development and capture resources to bid the job |
| 9 | Can your company demonstrate expertise or past performance in the area of pursuit? | If not, see if you can fill the gap with the past performance of partners or staff members |
| 10 | Can you company manage the job once the contract is awarded | If not, hire the most highly qualified resources and procure the internal business systems or facilities to support the job |
|  | **Solution Development** |  |
| 11 | Does your solution meet the customer’s requirements for usability and navigation? | Confirm the company understands the user’s requirements for usability, navigation, and responsiveness  Test the solution to verify it meets the customer’s requirements and adds value to operations |
| 12 | Does your solution incorporate the customer’s required business logic? | Test the solution to confirm it contains the business logic or rules needed to validate the customer’s data and system integrity  If needed, redesign the solution to fit the customer’s requirements  Explain how your solution will accomplish the customer’s requirements at best value and build advocacy |
| 13 | Does your solution provide a scalable, flexible, and available architecture for meeting the customer’s requirements? | Gain an understanding of the customer’s current architecture and plans for upgrades  Verify the type and scope of architecture the customer requires  Determine what trade-offs the customer is willing to make and what the customer is willing to spend |
| 14 | Can your company provide appropriate training and technical support once the solution is deployed? | Determine the customer’s learning objectives, schedule, and preferred training methods  Determine the level and type of technical support required by the customer and if the customer has preferred service level agreements |
| 15 | Can your solution meet with customer requirements for secure storage? | Test and verify your solution can store the volume of data required by the customer  Test and verify the storage solution can deliver backup and recovery within the customer’s required service levels  Test and verify the storage solution meet’s the client’s requirements for continuity of operations and recovery in the event of an issue or disaster |
| 16 | Is you solution compatible with the customer’s other systems | Test and verify your solution can integrate with the customer’s other systems and secure data exchanges are possible |
| 17 | Can you solution meet the customer’s security requirements? | Test and verify your solution is compliant with the customer’s security requirements |
| 18 | If you are providing a product, does the product meet the customer’s requirements for safety, human engineering (ergonomics), or environmental/green requirements? | Test and verify your product is technically acceptable and meets client requirements for safety, human engineering or environmental requirements |
| 19 | Do you have sufficient personnel to perform the work? | Have a plan to capture incumbent personnel if needed, have sufficient staff within your company or new hires to perform the work  Verify the personnel are available to transition on schedule |
| 20 | Can you transition the work without interrupting or adversely impacting the clients operations? | Acquire and train a transition team  Build a viable transition schedule with frequent milestones  Define a communications process that keeps the customer informed |
|  | **Competitive Analysis** |  |
| 21 | You do not know who they competitors are and their relationship to the customer | Talk with your employees, the customer, stakeholders, users, and vendors to identify potential competitors  Determine if the competitors have self-identified on market research databases |
| 22 | You have limited knowledge of the competitors solutions and capabilities | Use open source research information such as the Internet, news, annual reports, and professional associations to identify the competitors capabilities  Hire subject matter consultants who are knowledgeable about the market to describe the competitors capabilities  Look for job ads on the competitors career web page to determine the type and caliber of personnel they are looking to hire for the job |
| 23 | You have limited knowledge of the competitor’s personnel | Use open sources research products or social media to identify the competitors staff and their experience and technical skills |
| 24 | You have limited knowledge of the competitor’s past performance reference | Use open source market research documents or government documents like GAO reports to assess how well the competitor performed  Look for the competitor’s resumes on Internet |
| 25 | You have limited knowledge of the competitors prices | Use open source documents to determine the competitor’s prices including contracts and government documents  Use your company’s technical and pricing experts to build the competitor’s price from the bottom up and top down |
| 26 | Are you able to ghost the competition with knowledge of their weaknesses? | Collect information about your competitor’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats so you can effectively analysis your competitive position and ghost the competitor’s weaknesses |
| 27 | Do you maintain a competitive analysis database or file folder system? | Start collecting information about your competitors so teams working on subsequent bids can benefit from you knowledge |
| 28 | Are you holding competitive reviews prior to and after the receipt of the solicitation? | Start holding the competitive analysis gate reviews or black hat meetings during the pursuit phase and after receipt of the solicitation |
| 29 | Questionable competitive information | Use more than one source to verify the accuracy of the information |
| 30 | Unethical competitive data obtained | Contact your legal department to determine how you can remedy the situation |
|  | **Planning Kick-Off** |  |
| 41 | Insufficient time to prepare for the Kick-off Meeting | Allow approximately 10 percent of the proposal preparation time to conduct planning in preparation for the Kick-off Meeting  Ensure attendees receive the schedule and writers packages, draft executive summary, and communications/ collaboration instructions |
| 42 | Little or no advance warning of the Kick-off Meeting resulting in limited participation | Before the proposal is released, identify as many Kick-Off Meeting participants as possible  Keep them informed of the potential kick-off date  Send an email requesting their attendance at the Kick-Off Meeting as soon as the solicitation is released |
| 43 | The right participants are not invited | Consider holding a second meeting for participants who were unable to attend |
| 44 | The attendees are not prepared to participate | Provide just-in-time training to get them up-to-speed during the meeting  At the end of the meeting everyone should have a clear understanding of their role |
| 45 | Little or no executive support for the bid | Determine why the executives are unable or unwilling to support the Kick-Off Meeting  If needed, consider asking for a new bid/no bid meeting |
| 46 | Incorrect compliance matrix or requirements checklist | Have more than one person prepare the compliance matrix or requirements checklist  Ensure you follow the client’s instructions for preparing the compliance matrix or requirements checklist |
| 47 | Incomplete writing package or schedule provided at the Kick-Off Meeting | Indicate the writing packages are not complete during the Kick-off Meeting, let the writers known when they can get the packages and complete them as quickly as possible |
| 48 | No method of ongoing communications is defined or the method is compatible with the team’s preferred methods of communication | Initiate ongoing standup meetings for managing the proposal  Select time and method of communication that is most convenient to participants |
| 49 | Teaming partners are not included in the planning or kick-off process | Include valuable trusted partners in the planning process their knowledge can benefit planning process or they can help prepare the writers package materials |
| 50 | A Risk Register is not used | Record risks and escalate them to the right source, so they are quickly mitigated, avoided, deferred or ignored |
| 51 | Insufficient time for data calls | If you want high quality information for proposal allow sufficient time for data calls  Start the process during the pursuit phase and ask for final information at the Kick-off Meeting |
| 52 | No strategy for asking questions about the solicitation | The company should not be afraid to ask questions about the instructions, evaluation criteria, or terms and conditions  Determine how questions can affect your competitive advantage before you ask them |
|  | **Proposal Strategy Review** |  |
| 53 | A proposal strategy review is not held | Hold a proposal strategy, storyboard or pink team review approximately one-third of the way into the proposal lifecycle  Not holding a review results in inconsistent messages are communicated across the proposal or key win themes and substantiating evidence are missed |
| 54 | Inconsistent with the customer instructions | Verify your storyboards or strategy is consistent with the customers instructions for preparing the bid |
| 55 | No key personnel identified | By the proposal strategy review, storyboard, or pink team review, a company should have key personnel identified  If the risk is not mitigated escalate it to the highest source; by the time the document is prepared for the final review all key personnel must be indentified |
| 56 | An incomplete or uncompetitive technical solution | Not having a solid technical solution before the writing a document for final review is extremely high risk  The company exposes itself to potential contract compliance, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, financial and legal risks  Make it a high priority to complete the technical solution |
| 57 | An incomplete or uncompetitive management solution | If the company is unsure how to manage the contract it likewise exposes itself to potential contract compliance, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, financial and legal risks  Make it a high priority to complete the management solution |
| 58 | A lack of key personnel | Not having key personnel at this stage may result in not having the most qualified personnel to work on the contract and put the company at a competitive disadvantage |
| 59 | A lack of excellent past performance references | If a company finds its clients are unable to provide excellent past performance references at this point, it is imperative to find a partner who can provide excellent technical references  Not having excellent references will most likely reduce your score and even cost you the contract |
| 60 | Inability to clearly define win themes for major sections | If the writers are unable to articulate why the company should win, the evaluators will also be unable to determine and defend why the company should be given the contract |
| 61 | No executive summary | At this stage in the proposal lifecycle having an executive summary is beneficial to communicating the vision, win themes, and technical and management solution to the writers |
| 62 | Inconsistent proposal strategy across sections | Now is the time to correct inconsistent messages so all the writers understand their assignments and the inconsistency is not reflected in the business or technical proposal |
| 63 | No graphics resulting in inconsistent message, color palettes or space problems later in the proposal life cycle | Mitigate this risk by immediately creating and polishing the graphics |
| 64 | Teaming agreements are not completed by this stage | Immediately complete the teaming agreements, and if not consider dropping the teaming partner |
|  | **Final Document Review** |  |
| 65 | No final document review | The company misses one of the most effective and inexpensive mechanisms for improving the proposal  Schedule a final document review as soon as possible |
| 66 | The document review is held too late in the proposal life cycle | Hold the final document review approximately two-thirds through the proposal lifecycle |
| 67 | The reviewers are unprepared | Work with the reviewers in advance to verify they understand their roles, responsibilities, and time commitment  Help the reviewers by holding training or producing a brief training document  Eliminate any reviewer who from the review team who is unprepared or unable to provide an objective review |
| 68 | The review is unorganized or does not produce feedback that benefits the writers | Hold one review team member responsible for ensuring a concise review of the document is delivered to the review team  Assign review members to support the leader with adequate coverage for each proposal section  Assign a compliance checker and gadfly to review the entire document  Ask the review team to put the main recommendations in writing and have individual authors record their comments on review sheets or using automated tools  Use an automated tool to collect review comments |
| 69 | It takes too long to aggregate the comments of a large review team | Use an automated collaboration tool that enables multiple authors to add comments to one document  If a tool is unavailable acquire sufficient staff to aggregate the comments |
| 70 | Conflicting comments | The company must assign one person to make the final decision about conflicting comments |
| 71 | Final document is not compliant with customer requirements | Immediately fix compliance problems – make this the company’s first priority |
| 72 | Teaming agreements are not complete | Consider dropping the teaming partner or get the teaming agreement signed immediately |
| 73 | Key personnel are not identified | Consider using pulling qualified in-house personnel to fill the open positions or not bidding |
| 74 | The technical solution is inconsistent or does not meet the technical requirements | Identify the solution gaps and immediately fix them |
| 75 | The final document is failed by the review team | Determine if you have sufficient time and resources to write a technically acceptable proposal, if so, schedule a second final document review date |
|  | **Business Case Review** |  |
| 76 | Business case in not consistent with the technical and management solution | Immediately correct the inconsistencies in both proposals |
| 77 | Assumptions are not documented | Define all known assumptions that could impact the price or operational delivery |
| 78 | The company is unable to meet the terms and conditions specified by the client | Document what terms and conditions you are unable to meet and why, if the customer is open, renegotiate the terms and conditions before submitting the proposal  If you are unable to meet the terms and conditions consider not bidding |
| 79 | The business case is too high risk for the company the support | Consider pulling the bid |
| 80 | The resulting profit margin is too high or low | Fix the profit margin so your bid is compelling and still makes sufficient profit to meet company goals |
| 81 | The document does not present a clear case for selecting your company’s bid | Provide a narrative explaining why your company offers the lowest price or best value  Define all the value-added terms or options that your company provides |
| 82 | Errors in the business case | Immediately correct the error(s) |
|  | **Production and Delivery** |  |
| 83 | Insufficient production time | Allocate 10 percent of the lifecycle for production  Check with your production staff prior to creating your schedule to verify they have the bandwidth to complete your job on schedule |
| 84 | Unreliable equipment | Test all equipment prior to production to verify it functions as intended  Have a backup plan for production if your system malfunctions |
| 85 | Problems with tabs | Learn how to produce tabs  Learn how to correct tabs if a new tab is needed |
| 86 | Problems with graphics | Develop graphics early in the proposal lifecycle and verify the graphics are clear, uncluttered, and illustrate a benefit to the client  Use graphics tools that can be edited by more than one person in case last minute changes need to be made |
| 87 | Insufficient resources | Ensure sufficient paper, binders, tabs, electronic media are available to produce the proposal  Order the materials well in advance of production  Maintain an inventory of spare materials |
| 88 | Configuration control problems resulting in the wrong proposal/sections being delivered | Maintain a configuration control system that ensures only the most current and valid version of the proposal is in the approved folder  Save older versions of the proposal in case you have to rollback to an older version  Verify track changes are turned off prior to submitting |
| 89 | Viruses on the files sent to the customer | Check all files and media for potential viruses before they are sent to the customer |
| 90 | File corruption or inadvertent file deletion/misuse | Create and deliver pdf versions of document whenever possible |
| 91 | Security risks inadvertent release of the proposal | Define a process for file management, control, and release to the customer  Assign one person to be responsible for the release of files to the customer |
| 92 | Insufficient time allocated for the delivery | Never plan to deliver a proposal on or near the time it is due; allow sufficient time for getting to the client site, obtaining access to the client’s office, and obtaining a receipt  Take a dry run, if possible to verify you have sufficient time for delivery  If you have to ship the proposal allow a day or at least a half day for the shipment to arrive |
|  | **Post Production and Lessons Learned** |  |
| 93 | Copies of the proposal are not securely filed in a final production area and the proposal manager inadvertently uses the wrong version to respond to post production questions or clarifications | Copy the final files into a secure folder or area on the server and lock access to the proposal to a limited few |
| 94 | Instructions for responding to questions or clarifications are not followed | Compliance check your responses to customer questions or clarifications |
| 95 | During negotiations the customer asks for benefits or concessions the company is unable to provide | Require company executives to determine if they will comply with the customer’s requests and how it affects the technical and business solutions |
| 96 | A lessons learned session is not held after the proposal is submitted and after the customer’s debrief is delivered to the company | Make a lessons learned session part of the original proposal schedule |
| 97 | The lessons learned session is not supported by executives so staff members only participate sporadically in the process | Acquire executive support, clearly state why documenting lessons learned are important and how the proposal process will benefit |
| 98 | Lessons learned are not integrated into process improvements | Review you processes to determine how lessons learned could improve productivity, quality, and morale |
| 99 | Lessons learned are not communicated within the company | Create a tool and method for communicating how lessons learned are communicated in the company |
| 100 | Lesson learned are not monitored to verify they accomplish the intended result | Monitor the recommendations you implement to verify the have helped improve productivity, quality, and morale and if not eliminate or revise them |
|  | Overall Risk |  |
| 101 | Miscommunications or misunderstandings | Maintain frequent and open communications through daily standup meetings or scheduled meetings to review progress against the plan |