

The Winning Proposal



Content Library (CMS / PMS)

“Ermm, I’m sure we’ve seen this question before and we’ve already answered this ... but for the life of me I can’t remember which bid it was”. Does this sound familiar? If so, the core Bid Team and domain experts contributing to your bids are probably having to spend time at vital moments looking for proposal content that has already been generated in the past. And then, when you find something that looks pretty good, is it actually the best content for the particular question that you are now being asked?

Issues like version control, following approved sign-off protocols and rapid content search are rarely issues that set the pulse racing!

But if these types of issues are not addressed head on, too much energy is wasted on searching and reinventing the wheel – energy that should be going into making your current bid special and better than everyone else’s.

We know about proven protocols and Content Management Systems (CMS) – from the rudimentary (fast to implement) to the sophisticated and slick – that can make the life of the bidder much, much easier.





Duncan Cranmer [of the Winning Proposal] has had a major impact on the quality of the proposals submitted to clients and our final presentations, as well as helping define and improve our internal systems and processes.

Chief Executive Officer, Harmoni



A Common Frustration

As a full time Bid Manager one of the most frustrating things you can experience is waiting for your domain experts to submit their contributions for the new bid.

Your Product Specialist, for example, saw the Bid Development Plan, agreed to get their stuff to you by close of play on Wednesday and now it's almost the weekend. What's going on!?

But ask domain experts about bidding and you are opening Pandora's box:

"Those guys on the bid team don't understand our business properly."

"I've answered the exact same questions before! Why doesn't the Bid Manager find my earlier stuff and get off my back!?"

"I can't believe it! The final submission went in with wording that I developed just last month. Why didn't they use the new material I prepared for them?"

Who's in the right here, and who's in the wrong?

The truth is you can't always say for sure. What is for certain, however, is that bidding generates tensions that can spill over into anger and resentment, fracturing

working relationships at a time when you need to work more tightly as a team than ever before.

What is Going On?

The root cause of frustrations of this type is often poor content management.

Companies that find bidding relatively straightforward and enjoy the highest win rates take a highly structured approach to content management.

The best Bid Teams have access to a system of some sort that is accepted by all as "the one source of truth".

Previous answers, previous tender questions, approval (sign off) details and target review dates – among other elements - have all been systematically detailed.

Systems of this type are referred to as Content Management Systems (CMS) and Proposal Management Systems (PMS).

Whilst these things might sound fancy and highfalutin they can be very basic, some having been developed in widely available applications like Microsoft Excel and Access. Such systems require a high degree of manual involvement, however, and are being superseded by a new generation of automated CMS / PMS offers.

These more advanced solutions can be standalone, but more usually are available to be used directly from within CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems such as Salesforce.com and Microsoft Dynamics.

Automated Solutions

We are independent of any CMS / PMS provider. Should you be considering specifying your requirements for such a system there are a number of benefits that you should be aware of:

1. **Online** – all elements of your proposal can be built online using searchable digital assets held "in the cloud", so they are easily accessed and controlled.
2. **Control** – you and you team are responsible for digital asset management so you can be sure that you only have the best, most recent assets ready for deployment in your next proposal, fostering improved productivity.
3. **Reduced proposal creation time** - reusable proposal templates and a content library filled with ready-to-use and pre-approved content reduce your team's proposal creation time.

In our facilitated Executive Summary workshop we guide you and your bid team to assess the most appropriate messages for your intended audience and how to deliver them in the zestiest way possible.



Duncan [of the Winning Proposal] developed proposal submissions to the highest standard and always on time despite consistently tight turnaround pressures. We are grateful for his expertise and professionalism.



Graham Jones, Programme Director and Bid Controller, DoctorLink

4. Deals close faster – you can submit proposals faster and to a higher level of quality. Your improved turnaround time and responsiveness is reciprocated in the form of faster decision making.
5. Smarter working – it is frequently possible to see when and by whom your online proposal was opened, allowing you to schedule follow up calls at the perfect moment. These insights and analytics help you to know what parts of your proposal prospects viewed, and how long they studied that section.
6. Easier for your prospects – your sales proposals can be viewed by prospects on any device, anywhere, anytime, making it easier for them to review, comment and accept. The process is more interactive and speedier .
7. eSignature support – when prospects are ready to order they can do so by clicking a button or submitting their eSignature.

A Note of Caution

Automated CMS / PMS systems can be massively beneficial. In our experience, however, they work best for shorter, lower value proposals where the effort of proposal development might be described as “turning the handle”.

Even then there can be significant implementation tasks such as creating and loading the right digital assets and training Bid Managers and sales people in the use of the new tool.

Manual Solutions

More basic systems can also work well. Whilst they lack the sophistication of their online, automated CMS cousins they are relatively easy to set up and can be mastered quickly by users.

Requirements Specification

Do you continue to run into issues with version control, finding the right content and experiencing tension between Bid Managers and the wider business (including domain experts)? If you do,

then some flavour of CMS / PMS might be the answer?

Whether you opt for a sophisticated solution or something more elemental, you have a number of important decisions to make including:

- How will the CMS (or “content library”) be accessed?
- Who will be able to access it?
- How are read-only vs. full edit rights allocated?
- What is the best mechanism for version control?
- How is content best indexed (i.e. how is search functionality to be implemented)?

The Winning Proposal can guide you through some of these thorny issues and can even assist with the development of a comprehensive specification, should you opt to go down the formal solution selection process route.



We sought a strategic business partner able to quickly understand our needs for development and to help define our top level plan for future success ... throughout Duncan [the Winning Proposal] impressed us with his thoughtfulness, professionalism and dedication.

Group Marketing Director, benenden group



It is wearing for Bid Managers and domain experts alike when there is confusion over content. Where is the answer for a particular question? Is this the best answer? Why is more recent content not as good as earlier content? How was content approved? If you are experiencing frustrations of this type then you are being deflected from your main task ... that of developing winning proposals. Crack content management and life on the Bid Team becomes easier. Take our hand and allow us to guide you through the labyrinth.

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