

How important is training and preparation in a competitive environment?

How much training do you think England did for the Rugby World Cup? I think we would all agree they did a lot and focussed on being in the best shape (physically and mentally) with the right tactics for each game.

Did they always win in the most exciting way? No! Did they always win when they maybe deserved to? No! That just shows how difficult competition is and how important fine margins are.

How much preparation do you do for each bid? Do you get yourself into the best shape with the right tactics? I suspect the answer for a lot of people is 'No'. That is probably for a number of reasons which might include; bidding isn't your main function, you don't have time, you don't have access to the information you need or your bid process doesn't include pre-bid preparation.

If you don't do any pre-bid preparation, how do you expect to win? You wouldn't expect to win a marathon without training would you? So why do you expect to win bids without doing the right preparation?

What preparation should we do?

Let's look at the four main areas that we focus on for pre-bid preparation

- the Market
- the Customer
- your Competitors
- your own organisation.

The market

Why is this work important? Mainly because if we understand the environment (the market) we are operating in, we can adapt and adjust so we can be effective in that arena. Let's compare that to a sporting scenario and take football this time. Would we take a different approach to the European Championships (tournament football) and the league? The chances are we would, because of the length of each competition and the relative impact of winning or losing a game.

The customer

The customer is a little bit harder to relate to sport although there is an argument for this to be a governing body, the organisation paying your wage (if you are a professional sportsperson), your sponsor or the fans. In the bid world the customer is hugely important as they are the ones buying and/or using your product or service. Understanding your customer's needs, headaches, budgets and plans will help you design a solution that is personal to them. I have seen several bids where the bidder has taken the approach 'this is that we do, so that's what the customer is getting'! Are those bids likely to win?

Your competitors

Your competitors are the people you will meet in the arena where you compete and therefore can have a big impact on your tactics and what happens in the 'game'. How many times have you seen a clarification question that gives you an insight in what a competitor is doing and then you adjust your tactics?

People and teams that have the ability to adapt on the field of play are often the most successful. Take England v South Africa on Saturday night, England were dominant until South Africa made some

pretty bold substitutions, including taking off some of their key players. Almost immediately after those substitutions, the balance of play changed and South Africa won by one point despite England leading for 78 minutes. As much as that defeat hurts, it is a great example of how responding to what is in front of you, wins games.

Your own organisation

Looking within is probably the one area that most people forget to do. Many organisations are so busy looking outside at what others are doing that they overlook the fact that they don't have all the right accreditations or their KPIs aren't as good as they should be. I have heard numerous stories over the years about organisations starting to upload their bid to find they don't have the necessary mandatory requirements and therefore their bid is non-compliant and all the time Invested has been wasted.

Summary

It takes time and effort to do the things mentioned above and not many organisations do all four really well. That is a little bit like any sport, the elite of each sport are the minority because they have or have had the opportunity, the time, the money, the natural ability and the desire to be the best. They are also the ones that are likely to make the sacrifices necessary; maybe that is not going on nights out with friends + family, getting up early, or not eating the foods you want.

How often do you think about how strong your organisation is? Are you reactive or proactive? Do you want to win more? Why do you work in the bid world? Do you know what you need to do to win more? Do you have the power/ability to make change? The chances are you won't be able to do all the things you need to in one go. You will probably need a plan to incrementally change over a time period. Understanding that is vital, partly when setting expectations. These things don't happen overnight.

If you need help or advice on how to improve your bid process get in touch with BiddingUK who will be more than happy to help. We have worked with one-man bands to multi-nationals and have seen things that could be better to sheer excellence so will be able to relate to your situation and support you in your next steps to winning more.