



THE NEW ELLIS GROUP

# Monday Monday

*Connecting the Dots with Karen Kaplowitz*



*Helping you create and reinforce the habits of successful career building, gleaned from my work as a business development strategist, trainer and coach.*

Volume 2, Issue 3

February 11, 2008

## **Successful Responses to RFPs: Part 2: How your clients evaluate your responses**

Competing for business through RFPs is a fact of life for law firms. Have you wondered whether they are worth the effort? Or wondered why you have won some and lost others? This week, we share recommendations on RFPs based on a senior law department executive's review of hundreds of responses over two decades.

1. Leave out the law firm boilerplate marketing pieces. Your clients won't read them and some will question your judgment for including them.
2. Before responding, request detailed information about the client's historical experience with similar legal work, including risks, complexity and costs.
3. Whenever possible, base your proposals on concrete data from your firm's handling of similar matters and be prepared to explain how you arrived at your numbers. Saying your model has rational assumptions based on reviewing 20 similar cases will earn greater respect than saying you provided your best "guestimate" of the number of hours multiplied by your discounted rates.
4. Answer each question as briefly as possible. Your clients often review five to twenty-five responses to each RFP. To deal with the volume and complexity, many have systems which award a numerical score to each question. Your scores will be lower if the salient information is buried in verbose answers
5. Provide tailored bios with just the relevant work that your lawyers have done.
6. Do not ask for more time to respond. If you hold up the review process, you jeopardize your chances. If necessary, give the RFP to someone else to prepare.
7. Decide in advance where you can negotiate so you are prepared to respond within hours to a client's phone call requesting that you reconsider parts of your bid.
8. Understand the perspective of the client-side lawyers involved. Are they experienced, tough negotiators looking for pricing breaks on commodity work? Are they new to this type of work and looking for experts to back them up?
9. Always remember that the clients are considering which team will make them look good to their management. They are evaluating whether their senior executives will be favorably impressed with your focus, expertise, and ability to communicate key ideas quickly, on paper and in person.

The next time you have the opportunity to respond to an RFP, are you prepared to invest the extra time and effort to do so in a client-aware way that will help you win the competition?