DYNANET

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Dynanet Corporation has a long history of successfully assisting federal and state governments in accomplishment of their missions. The proof of our success is in the numerous accommodations and awards we have been given and the list of partners who choose Dynanet as a business team member. Our talented and certified professionals are led by a highly experienced and senior leadership team with both private sector and federal experience.

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Qualify, Qualify, Qualify

By Mike Rice, Dynanet Director, Business Development

In my last Business Development post, we asked the question “How do you decide to pursue a contract opportunity?” There were four foundational questions you needed to ask to analyze the opportunity: 1) Is the opportunity real; 2) Do I have solid past performances as a prime / sub; 3) Does my company or my teammate(s) have a strong relationship with the customer; and 4) Can we win.

At this point, you’ve successfully answered the four questions above and received concurrence from your Executive Management Team that the interest is strong enough to declare “Pursuit”. Now, it is time for you to further “Qualify” the opportunity. You may be questioning this additional analysis. You have asked the four questions, received concurrence from management and are ready to start the bid process. What is the value behind additional analysis? Isn’t this just wasting time you could be spending on crafting your response?

Again, that BONSOP (back of a napkin, seat of your pants) tendency continues to rise up inside your chest, but the answer is “we have more qualifying to do”. The objective of the Pursuit Phase is, “*To collect the data needed to decide whether to invest the resources and effort to pursue a prospective opportunity*”. Thus, the decision to bid is still to come.

There are four activities in Pursuit that the Business Development team must engage in:

- **Qualify the Opportunity** - sounds redundant, but simply a continuation of the Analysis Phase.
- **Competitive Analysis** - Looking at the competitive landscape and determine who and what you are up against.
- **Assess OCI’s** - An Organizational Conflict of Interest (OCI) will determine if you 1) **can** pursue the opportunity or 2) **want** to pursue the opportunity.
- **Prepare Business Case** - An honest analysis of your Strengths and Weaknesses, and the acquisition’s Opportunities and Threats (SWOT Analysis).

Qualify the Opportunity – In the Analysis Phase of the capture, we determined that we could win. During the Qualifying Phase, you want to dive deeper into the structure of the acquisition and if possible, help your customer shape the acquisition. When determining the acquisition strategy, your customer is determining funding, timing of the funds and solicitation release. In the federal space, your customer may have several contract vehicles at their disposal, each having their own set of advantages and disadvantages. You can shape the opportunity a bit by recommending contract vehicles that you can access. If the government chooses a particular GWAC or BPA that you do not participate in, your limited to a subcontractor role and may lose some of the leverage you would have as a prime. Finally and also very important during this process, is to meet with the contracting or program office and ask some of the tough questions, for example, "What is the customer's motivation to buy?". The answer to this question may uncover much of the intel you will use to begin to develop your offering.

Competitive Analysis – We tend to find the same cast of characters in our customer space. Some days you are partners, while other days you're competing against each other. You quickly understand where your strengths are versus those of your competitors. And, of course, there are the "unknowns" or competitors that you have no knowledge, so you must do some research to analyze their potential to win and their capabilities. A simple matrix will bring into view the competitive landscape of the acquisition. The matrix, at a minimum, should contain the following information about you competition: 1) What is the competition's current role with the customer; 2) Where in the customer's operation does the competition have a footprint; 3) What role, either prime or subcontractor will the competition likely play; and 4) What are the competition's strengths and weaknesses. Remember, you have not formed a team yet, that comes later. With a good understanding of the competitive landscape, obvious teaming strategies begin to emerge.

Assessing Organizational Conflict's of Interest (OCI's) – You want to answer two basic questions: 1) Does this opportunity present a conflict with a current project. For example, if your company is providing independent validation and verification services to the customer for a program related to this solicitation, you may not be able to perform the work on the new solicitation. The second question you want to ask is 2) Will this acquisition potentially introduce an OCI for some future work you are interested in pursuing. For example, you are considering pursuing a solicitation to provide PMO services for your customer, developing metrics, SLA's and providing Quality Assurance Surveillance for a large infrastructure contract. You know that the customer will be re-competing the Infrastructure contract within the next year or so and you are positioned well to pursue that opportunity. In this case, you choose not to pursue the PMO deal as it would OCI you out of the future acquisition.

Prepare Business Case – Preparation of your business case is as simple as developing a standard Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) chart. Strengths and weaknesses reflect your company's internal attributes with respect to the effort, while opportunities and threats express external factors that may impact your decision for further pursuit. Some quick questions to ask while developing your business case include:

Strengths
What advantages do we have as a company?
What do we do better than anyone else?
What resources are at our disposal that no one else has?
How do other's view our strengths?
What are our discriminators?
What's our value proposition?

Opportunities
What good opportunities can arise from this venture?
Are we establishing a new technology or business trend?
Will this impact customer / government policy with respect to our solution?
Will this extend or expand our business?

Weaknesses
What could we improve?
Can we be ghosted?
What has been the reason why we've lost in the past?

Threats
Are there any obstacles?
Who are our competitors?
Is changing technology threatening our market position?
Could any of our weaknesses seriously threaten current or future opportunities?

There may be hundreds of questions that help determine your company's pursuit posture. I've provided just a few of our high level questions that your company will want to further develop. Some companies have even developed a Go/No Go matrix or decision tree with weighted values to the questions/answers above.

At this time, you should have a better view of the opportunity and hopefully you are still ahead of the solicitation release. If your business case is strong, you and your management team should agree to move on to the next phase, "Capture", which for an old engineer, like me, is the most enjoyable part of the Business

Development process. In fact, there is so much going on in the Capture phase of our Business Development framework that I will spend several articles discussing it. Thank you again for letting me get excited about what we are doing at Dynanet. We, as I write this article, are even now participating in some tremendous pursuits and I must get back to the fun!