



## What is keeping your tender from reaching the top of the pile?

The four main reasons when preparing a tender and proposal are compliance, completeness, cost and clarity.

In your tender you may have satisfactory compliance, all the necessary information, and a competitive price, but if the assessor has to read pages and pages of unfocused and poorly written material you will miss out. Assessors need to get the message quickly as they read through and will not spend time working out what the real message is.

Writing a winning tender that represents your company and what you can bring to a project, is a skill. The art of crafting a winning tender is to make it all about the client, not about your business.

A tender must be structured to give the assessors all the information they need in order of importance. Never answer questions with vague promises and general reassurances that your company can fulfill the work. Assessors want specific answers based on value concepts and solutions that clearly address the questions and provide the best solutions to their client's needs. Do not include unnecessary graphs, examples and tables, as these may complicate a tender to the point that the main message is lost.

All tender questions and proposals must be well written in a clear, concise writing style that has an overtone of sales pitch. It must be written for the intended audience and must reassure the prospective client that you understand their market clearly and why your business is the best one for their job.

The writing must be easily interpreted and understood, free of waffle, contain no ambiguities, and no idiomatic jargon or clichés. If there is a need for acronyms and trade words make sure they are adequately explained. Words must form sentences and paragraphs that place the emphasis in the right place and sentences must be kept to a readable length. Confusion can arise from poorly structured answers, and inconsistent and bad writing.

One of the main issues in writing tenders and proposals is consistency. Consistency of style includes using the same words, spelling, abbreviations and capitalisation throughout the document. When a tender or proposal is written by multiple members of a team consistency comes a poor second and this must be dealt with at the planning stage.

Remember; when your proposal is assessed against your competitors, be aware that although writing may not be an assessment criterion, a poor and sloppily written document can indicate a poor and sloppily run business.

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*Jill Nicholson is a Course Director for tender writing and business writing courses at Kite Events & Conferences. To attend Jill's next workshop, see the schedule of upcoming courses at [www.kiteservices.com.au](http://www.kiteservices.com.au). You can have Jill customise an in-house workshop for your company. E-mail us at [info@kiteservices.com.au](mailto:info@kiteservices.com.au) or call Shuba Paheerathan on (02) 9660 0300.*