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FCW has conducted proposal win-loss and client satisfaction interviews with thousands of C-Suite and other executive decision makers. Over 20 years these executives have shared:

The Top 10 Reasons That Companies Lose Proposals

	Problem	Example	Solution
1.	**Preparation** Client personnel were ill prepared in responding to the RFP.	Client had not done their homework. They had not spent the time to get to know the company or its needs. Presentations were described as boilerplate and scoping questions demonstrated a superficial understanding of the company and its business. Client's lack of preparation did not engender confidence or trust that the engagement would be well managed.	Be prepared. Do your homework on the target company. Understand needs and identify problems through extensive strategic interviews. Brainstorm with the executives to see the business from their perspective and prepare potential solutions.
2.	**Relationships** Client had not built sufficiently strong relationships to make the client comfortable and secure that they really knew the people to whom they were entrusting their business.	Even upon learning of an eminent change of service provider, Client failed to aggressively pursue this significant opportunity or build relationships, opting instead to wait for the RFP many months later.	Invest in relationships relentlessly. Build them wide and deep in the organization. Be persistent and tenacious in getting face time with target company executives. If an executive is tough to get to, drop in to see them while you are visiting others in the company—your competitors do.
3.	**Listening** Client did not listen, or better yet, hear what the client said they wanted. On occasion, Client will fail to ask the most revealing questions and convert that insight into appropriate responses.	Target company used the RFP process specifically to determine how well each firm would listen to their specific requests. Company executives actually expressed frustration that Client did not seem to focus on their needs or requests.	Be a superior listener. Ask questions that allow the executive to elaborate on problems and issues facing his industry, his company, his boss, his division, etc. Find out what he wants. Note: Client applied learning from 1999 Win/Loss review to help win multi-million dollar external audit in 2001.
4.	**Responsiveness** Failure to respond to a company's specific request leaves the executives with the impression that you do not take direction, pay attention, or follow through on requests. This impression does not give the company much confidence about what the post-proposal relationship might be like.	Client failed to meet with the outgoing internal auditor as requested by the CFO. Failure to do so signaled a lack of thoroughness and caring. Also, the failure to respond to all of the questions in an RFP is an irritant.	Once you identify what the executive wants…give it to him! Don't give him something he doesn't want. Be responsive to company executive needs, wants, and requests—be thorough, be personal, and be enthusiastic with your response.
5.	**Transition Plans** Failure to present a highly detailed transition plan leaves some uncertainty as to exactly who is going to do what for the client and when it will be done. Transition from one internal or external auditor to another is an anxious time for a company and its executives. Much of this insecurity can be mitigated by a clear and concise plan.	While Client was perceived to be as strong as the winning firm on important decision-making elements such as technical skills, industry knowledge, team chemistry, and lead partner skills, the other firm provided a much more detailed transition plan that gave an increased comfort level to the executives. These executives were confident that the tight timetable for quarterly filings could be met because all of the transition elements, tasks, and people to be involved had already been thought through in fine detail.	Present a superior transition plan. It builds confidence that you know exactly what you are going to do, how it will be done, by whom, and when. It reduces uncertainty and helps the executives share a vision for how a seamless transition will be accomplished.

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6.	**Industry Strength** Failure to staff a project with sufficiently strong industry expertise worries the client regardless of all of the firmwide expertise or leadership that is presented.	Client lost one proposal principally because the partner, senior manager and manager had considerably less manufacturing and international experience than the winning engagement team. Despite the fact that the Controller said he felt he could work better, from a relationship standpoint, with Client, he and the rest of the team had to go with the significantly greater (competitive firm) manufacturing industry experience. The client focused on the industry experience of the team, not the qualifications of the total firm.	Demonstrate strong industry capabilities of the firm, but most importantly, demonstrate strong industry capabilities of the individuals on the team that will serve the client.
7.	**Commitment** Failure to show and tell a client that they are very important to you and the firm leads many clients to think you do not really care if you get the business or not. A personal and corporate humility and sincerity that positions the firm as one that wishes to serve, sends a powerful message.	Actions of the winning firm such as contacting the outgoing service provider, making a strong personal appeal for the business, and thoroughly knowing the company and its needs, communicated that they were "hungrier" and "wanted it more." Client lost their "favored" status going into the pursuit because they were more passive and did not seem to be as hungry for the work.	Make a personal commitment to the company and to its executives on a personal level. Demonstrate through your actions and tell them how genuinely important their business is to you and to the firm.
8.	**Ignoring New Business** Upon losing a significant engagement, Client often walks away from new business opportunities and newly-built client relationships that are eager to help Client get new business. Client has a great opportunity to build on these relationships, strengthened in the recent pursuit, to secure significant new business.	One company executive lamented the fact that Client had been absent since the loss of the proposal 4-5 months earlier. After noting three specific new business opportunities to pursue, another executive volunteered others in his firm who were in a position to hire Client.	Follow up on the loss. Even when losing a proposal, Client has specific new business opportunities at about one-third of the companies and a willingness to actively help Client grow their business at more than half of the firms. Use information gathered from Win/Loss Reviews to secure new business and leverage the new relationships that have developed during the recent pursuit.
9.	**Technical superiority** If a firm can demonstrate a superiority in process or technical personnel who will staff an engagement, they will have a meaningful point of differentiation.	Demonstrating technical superiority is especially difficult to do in compliance work, yet Client was able to win a major new client by demonstrating specific, superior technical capabilities.	Demonstrate technical excellence. While technical skill is generally assumed, demonstration of thought leadership, industry leadership, or client testimonials can provide a slight advantage that can make the difference between winning and losing.
10.	**Oral Presentations** On occasion, Client has not rehearsed or prepared well for the oral presentation. A disorganized or boilerplate presentation tells the client you are not prepared or do not really care, or both. Failure to profile your firm, or your team, or to demonstrate your understanding of the client needs in an organized fashion will seal your fate.	In one recent oral presentation, Client managed their time poorly and was unable to address one of the critically important areas of the proposal. Another recent oral presentation was described as disjointed and did not allow the day-to-day service providers adequate exposure.	Oral presentations should be well organized with clear responsibilities, good time management, plenty of opportunity for relaxed discussion, and the participation of every member of the team—especially those that will serve the client day to day.