

Top 10 Common Teaming Mistakes

1. *Rushing to team without first developing a strategy*
2. *Selecting teammates without regard to cost, price, or contribution margin implications*
3. *Reflexive teaming with incumbents*
4. *Bringing on more subs than needed*
5. *Over-emphasis on perceived customer relationships (so-and-so is the customer's friend), especially at the expense of procurement relationships*
6. *Subcontracting work that the prime can and should do*
7. *Guaranteeing workshare*
8. *Teaming with "usual suspects" who bring nothing that will improve p(win) on any particular opportunity*
9. *Failure to extract clear proposal support commitments*
10. *Picking teammates based on qualifications (easy) rather than forward-looking capabilities and approach (hard)*

Moving Towards Strategic, Not Reflexive Teaming

- 🐾 Move fast, but not too fast; win themes and strategy should always drive teaming...never the other way around
- 🐾 Learn to say no; only add teammates who improve p(win) and fill gaps that cannot otherwise be filled organically
- 🐾 Do not commit to workshare guarantees unless necessary; when you do, make it contingent on price, customer approval, and staffing
- 🐾 Treat teammates as partners, not vendors; honor your commitments and be direct about how you intend to manage the program
- 🐾 Non-exclusive teaming is sometimes unavoidable; just know that the "internal firewall" is not a universal industry standard
- 🐾 *Nullius In Verba*: Do your research, contact customer references, review CPARs and award fee determinations, ask about cure notices

Strategy Drives Teaming

For many companies in the federal sector, teaming is the focal point – often preoccupation – of their capture activities, rooted in a naïve view that teammates can and will carry them (the prime) across the finish line. While teammates can be important to fill gaps, bring qualified staff, meet required small business goals, and strengthen a team's approach, seldom is it the case that they can overcome a weak prime, weak reputation, or flawed approach. Teaming should never precede a well thought out win strategy; it should be the result of it. Bidders who rush to sign teammates, often reflexively coveting incumbents, put the proverbial cart before the horse and subordinate strategy, solutioning, operating models, PTW, strategic hires, and other capture activities to an anachronistic notion of what they think a winning team looks like.

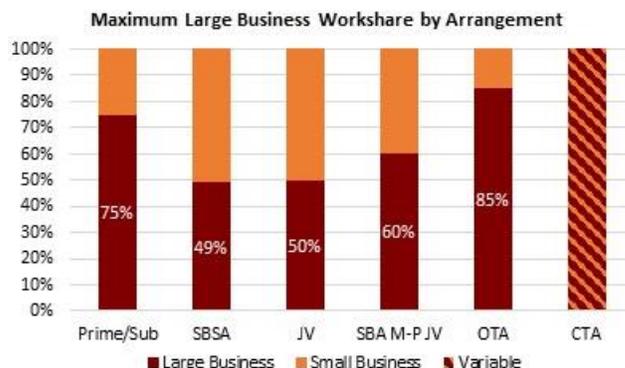
Less is More

The only thing easier than getting a customer meeting is joining a team as a subcontractor. All too often, business developers hurry to add teammates, thinking that if 5 subs are good, 10 must be better, or that any weakness/gap is best cured by adding a sub to fill that hole. This whack-a-mole approach to teaming often results in unwieldy teams that are pricey. Worst of all, they erode the financial contribution of the job to the prime. Organic labor is what drives gross contribution and enterprise value, so do not give it away cavalierly. Scrutinize every teaming recommendation before pulling the trigger to assess whether adding a particular sub will truly increase your p(win) and, if so, if it will increase p(win) by enough to offset the direct labor dilution. If not, politely pass and focus on what matters most: solutioning, bid model, staffing approach, customer contact, innovations, and best practices.

Shared Risk, Shared Reward

The best (winning) teams are characterized by teammates with complementary (not overlapping) capabilities and compatible cultures, competitive rates, and a shared vision for the program. Each teammate should have real skin in the game, grounded in the end-customer mission and the conviction that the team is demonstrably greater than the sum of its parts. Teammates may request (or even insist upon) a defined workshare, but avoid these modern-day *Ixions* whose requirements harm the team's chances, raise the price, and do not benefit the customer. Primes should not over-promise

or under-deliver, and subs should not act as though getting a signed TA is the end of the journey. Clearly convey expectations for proposal support before the TA is signed and hold subs accountable for honoring their commitments.



Strategic teaming is increasingly important as the government introduces more exotic flavors of teaming arrangements – from SBA-Approved Mentor-Protégé JVs to OTAs – with disparate implications for large business workshare. Source: WolfDen Analysis

The Golden Rule

The best primes treat their subcontractors the way they want to be treated when they are a

subcontractor. They are also open about pricing expectations (without giving away their PTW) before TAs are finalized to avoid (or at least moderate) surprises and pricing-related bickering. Good subs, in turn, willingly contribute more than qualifications and resumes – they step up and provide substantive capture and proposal support that improves p(win). "Under/over" and *quid pro quo* arrangements can be useful, but only when viewed through the prism of p(win) and impact to financial contribution. Also, be wary of large companies offering to sub on opportunities they are eligible to prime. Fashion teams based on strategy and approach, not based on who is available or who has come calling. Finally, do not give away workshare to a company solely because they "check a box."