

Top 10 Keys to Successful Contract Startup

1. Respond immediately to post-award customer requests; first impressions matter
2. Put top executives in front of the client early and often to reinforce commitment
3. Assign your best people and empower them to address contractual, invoicing, and recruiting needs
4. Take the high-ground during transition, especially when the outgoing contractor is cantankerous
5. Stay above the protest fray and empathize with your customer throughout
6. Remember what you proposed: it is now time to "worry about it in execution"
7. Capture baseline metrics to manage this award and market the next
8. Miss no opportunity to uncover what the client really wanted from the last procurement
9. Promote regular meetings between the program office, procurement shop, and your leadership
10. Implement continuous performance reviews to avoid any surprises in official customer surveys

Get on the Good Foot

- 🐾 Winning and maintaining work is more difficult than ever: pristine startup sets the scene for successful execution over the life of the award
- 🐾 A new win is about more than revenue, it is your next past performance – so set the tone of exceeding expectations during transition
- 🐾 Delivering what was bid requires substantiating new approaches and hardening, calibrating, and refining proven approaches
- 🐾 A new project may mean a new agency, program area, and subcontractors; use it as a springboard into additional insights and revenue
- 🐾 Capture a baseline of every important metric and manage the metrics meticulously in order to quantify the value delivered to the customer
- 🐾 Procurement shops are the purveyors of new work; make friends and develop G2 by building bridges between them and the program offices

Day One is Fun

There is nothing quite like a win. Teammates and competitors alike know your name, sing your praises, and come to you looking for a toehold in your new empire. What comes next is crucial – begin well, and you have a happy client, new possibilities, and rave reviews. Start poorly, and you have jeopardized more than just the newest revenue stream.

Now is the Time to "Worry About It in Execution"

Start by reading the proposal to get reacquainted with what your team promised the customer. Expectations are at an all-time high and awards are under a microscope industry-wide. Pay special attention to the proposed staffing. Establish concrete action plans to realize hoped for "efficiencies," whether from headcount reductions or innovations. Enlist the CEO and the SVP for your line of business – the big guns with the gravitas and authority to commit the company – for early discussions with the customer in order to set expectations and establish rapport.

Transition is the Audition

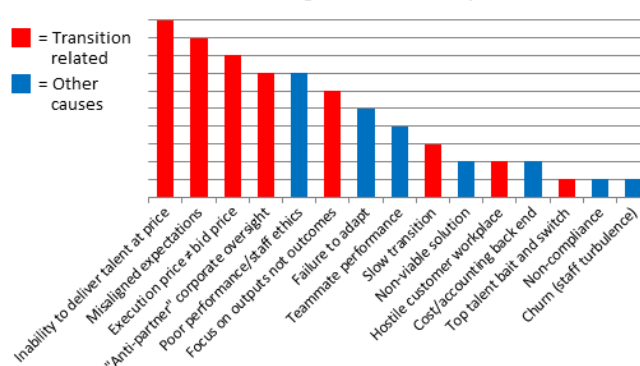
In the pivotal first weeks of the contract, organizations must lean on their key people in each discipline to ensure success. Contract decisions must be prioritized, key positions must be filled, and invoices must be precise. If the client sees a misstep from anywhere in the organization during this fragile initial stage, you will forfeit your first victory before the game has really begun. Bring in the A-Team – the best people from across your organization – to lay the foundation, and worry later about margins, utilization, and greening staff. In the same vein, do not let the client detect friction between you and the outgoing contractor. Maintain the professional high-ground, regardless of the actions of the supplanted.

Can't Manage (or Market) What You Can't Measure

Remember when you were struggling with quantifiable past successes to substantiate your proposed approach? When every PM said, "Sure, we have [virtualized, streamlined, centralized, consolidated] but we cannot tell you the net impact, because we do not have the data?" Remedy this by establishing the new award as the future standard. Capture baselines early for everything you can conceivably measure: CPI, SPI, person hours, customer/user satisfaction, kilowatt hours, joules, hardware utilization, page load times, user clicks per page, throughput, bandwidth, and a thousand more metrics. From the point of initial award, everything you

do should be tied back to a baseline. Quantifying successes, in a way that no one can dispute, will help every single executive, architect, proposal writer, and business developer within your company. Your win, and subsequent quantifiable project performance, will become a force multiplier that your team can parlay into future wins.

One and Done – Leading Causes of Recompete Failure



The frequency distribution shows common causes for recompete losses. Research shows most failures are the result of missteps early in transition and execution.
Source: Wolf Den Proprietary

Build Bridges and Mend Fences

At best, the final RFP represented a compromise between what the client's program office and procurement shop wanted and what was proposed by industry. Your job is to make sure the next RFP accurately defines what they really want, and of course, to make sure your company is the best positioned to execute against those requirements. Start by introducing program and procurement offices. Discuss the trade-offs between cost and capability, risk and reward, various vehicle options, and pricing schemas. You can create a forum for learning on both sides of the table, and bolstered by outstanding performance on the ground, your team will have unmatched credibility to help shape future RFPs for many iterations to come.