

## 10 Things You Tell Yourself While Under the Influence of a Proposal

1. *Don't worry, we will make up the investment with revenue in the option years*
2. *We will only propose our key personnel on one bid at a time*
3. *Our p(win) is WAY over 50%*
4. *Our tailored "Plan, Do, Check, Act" process is a discriminator*
5. *We have a bench of talent dedicated specifically to this particular effort*
6. *The government hates the incumbent and there is no way that this is "wired"*
7. *Our corporate leadership is aware of and dedicated to ensuring the success of this program*
8. *Our subcontractors and on-site SMEs can be relied on to develop compelling proposal content*
9. *Our efficiencies will enable us to green the staff in the out years*
10. *Let's cut the transition in half to show our commitment to the mission*

## Surviving the Post-Proposal Hangover

- 🐾 Proposal content, included in the submission or left on the cutting room floor, should be preserved to be repurposed in future bids
- 🐾 Instructions in ENs should be followed closely to clarify your approach and not taken as the time to introduce new concepts
- 🐾 While you sharpened your pencil to get to your low price, if the ENs request more hours or LCATS to reduce risk, add them
- 🐾 While some debriefs are purposefully vague, they can provide a learning opportunity for your capture and proposal teams
- 🐾 Do not be disheartened by excessively red debriefs; learn to distinguish between true weaknesses and "protest-proof" points
- 🐾 Protesting just to extend revenue may provide short term advantage but risks spreading ill will with government staff – wherever they go

### Cleaning up the Mess

Post-proposal submission is like the end of the stereotypical college rager – every contributor scatters to the wind, leaving the host (proposal tank owner) to clean up the mess. While most are tempted to quickly shove the debris into a closet and take a nap on the couch, a careful approach to collecting and correlating artifacts can lead to a truly epic experience next time. While "cut and paste" is a loser's approach to proposal writing, keeping a repository of past performance, resumes, graphics, and solution write-ups, and documenting lessons learned are parts of any well-oiled proposal machine. This is also the time to begin preparing for transition. Working the tricky bits of the solution, difficult-to-find key hires, and other challenges defended during the content creation lays the foundation for successful execution.

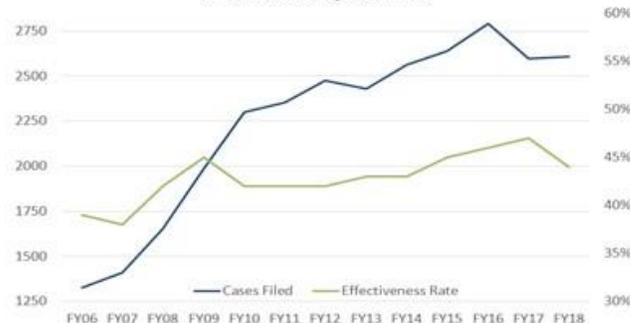
### Hair of the Dog

Sometimes you need to take a little hair of the dog that bit you to get over the hump. We get a taste of this when the government comes back with questions or evaluation notices (ENs) and it is time to dive back into the proposal. Managing the response to ENs should be customized to the request and timeline – a question and answer table does not need a comprehensive review, while a redlined technical and price volume will need iterative reviews. Be sure to avoid the temptation to add additional themes, features, and benefits, which often introduce more risk than reward. Often the ENs will request adjustments to your price to make you more competitive, while other adjustments for more hours are focused at alleviating risk. To eliminate confusion, it is important to keep updated pricing consistent with the modified technical approach.

### Alright, What Did I Say?

After every party, it comes time to figure out what you said, the texts you sent, and how they were received. Luckily, the government will tell you exactly how they felt about your proposal messages. Decoding the government's debrief, however, can be a challenge ("What do they mean by 'inadequate'?"), with the government's stated evaluation method providing little help. Even if you win, relish any opportunity for government feedback. For written debriefs, focus on whether issues are related to compliance or quality to determine if you need changes to your reviews or other proposal areas. For in-person debriefs, know that if you bring your lawyers along the debrief will take on a very different tone. Sometimes that is the right approach, but it will be more formal and potentially less informative.

GAO Protests by Fiscal Year



The effectiveness rate of protests (the protester obtains relief through corrective action by the contracting agency or GAO sustains the protest) has not increased as sharply as the number of protests filed each year.  
Source: GAO Bid Protest Annual Reports to Congress

### Pleading to the GAO Gods

For multiple award GWAC and IDIQ contracts, protests have become commonplace. Some are motivated by procurement flaws and sincere beliefs of injustice, but most are logical responses to the fact that the government often chooses not to defend protests on MACs, instead awarding all protestors and letting secondary competition at the task order level weed out the weak bidders. For single award contracts, every winner's knee jerk reaction to an incumbent's protest is to assume it's motivated by a desire to continue the revenue stream, but many incumbent protests are rooted in the view that the evaluation process was not fairly applied and was thus inherently flawed. If the government made mistakes or evaluated in a way inconsistent with the RFP, then a protest is warranted. Should the decision be reversed, the protestor will cure the hangover with a win party.