



EBOOK

The future of RFPs

Table of contents

1 Introduction: Welcome to the future of RFPs

Contributors

- 2 Matt Combs, Cegid**
- 5 Robin Davis, Metre**
- 7 Kelly Ellis, Lockton**
- 9 Dave Hulsen, RFP360**
- 11 Ashley Kayes, AOC Solutions**
- 14 David Kutcher, RFP Database**
- 16 David Lintz, RFP360**
- 18 Mark Magro, Alter Domus**
- 20 Eric McKinnon, Cerpas Rx**
- 22 Ben Paul, The BD Ladder**
- 25 Matt Prinn, RFP Advisory Group**
- 27 Leonie Thomas, Freelance bid writer**

- 29 Conclusion**

Introduction

For many organizations, the request for proposal (RFP) is a tool for finding the right vendor as well as winning new business. However, despite its business-wide use and strategic value, the RFP is not well liked. When we considered why, as well as what the future holds for the RFP process, we thought it would be best to ask the experts.

Because RFPs are used by two distinct, yet related, areas of the business, opinions about the process vary widely. Accordingly, we asked a variety of professionals from both sides of the RFP (those who issue and those who respond) for their insights, advice and predictions.

With the future of RFPs in mind, we posed these questions:

- How has the RFP process changed?
- What advice do you have for businesses to prepare for the future?
- How can businesses prepare for the future?

While their experience, industries and roles vary, commonalities in their responses are easy to spot. Most agree: **the future of RFPs is more transparent, automated**, centralized and collaborative. In addition, our contributors believe that technology will play a pivotal role in the evolution of the RFP.

We invite you to explore their advice and insights in this ebook. As you read, consider this question: Is your business prepared for the future of the RFP?



Matthew Combs — Cegid

Matthew Combs the Bid Manager for Cegid's North American sales team. With more than 18 years of experience in talent management systems, he leverages his background in marketing, technical writing, project management and sales coordination to manage and respond to RFPs. Matthew is passionate about collaboration, data and technology.

RFP process background: Bid manager

Industry: Talent management software

Years involved in RFPs: 3

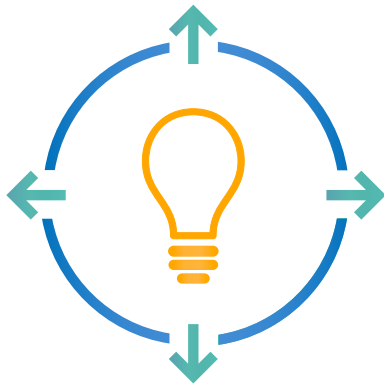
Describe your past experiences with RFP management.

As the Bid Manager for Cegid's North American sales team for the last three years, I have been responsible for coordinating and submitting sales proposals in response to English- and French-language RFPs for talent management software. We respond to RFPs in both the public and private sector from organizations who are seeking SaaS-based solutions to manage one or more of the following talent management processes: recruitment, onboarding, performance, learning, compensation, career development and succession planning.



How has the process changed? What challenges have you experienced?

A positive trend we've observed is that more and more organizations are now using either proprietary or third-party online portals to receive sales proposal submissions for their RFPs. This benefits both the buyer and the vendor. The settings options on these portals enable buyers to precisely set the type, format and volume of content that vendors can upload for their proposals. For vendors, these portals provide clear and structured submission processes and enable them to enrich and adjust their proposals right up until the submission deadline.



What does the future of RFP management look like?

Another trend we've noticed in our field is the increase in joint RFPs where one or more municipal governments from the same region will partner on a single RFP for a talent management solution. This approach enables the participating municipalities to share the cost of the solution while often lowering their overall cost-per-user thanks to the larger user pool. Given the budgetary constraints on local governments, and the fact that our solution enables joint customers to maintain mutual privacy of their data, I anticipate seeing and responding to these types of joint RFPs well into the future.

What advice do you have for others managing RFPs?

Providing customers and prospects with a personalized experience throughout the entire RFP process is key. Using RFP360 has allowed Cegid to build and maintain an extensive database of response content that we then personalize in order to tailor our sales proposals to each organization's specific situation and talent management needs.

Also, helping customers and prospects benefits everybody. Recently, Cegid conducted a marketing initiative entitled, "The Ultimate Guide to Building a Successful RFP for Talent Acquisition in 3 Steps." Targeting organizations who are, or plan to be, in the market for SaaS-based Applicant Tracking Systems, the guide included an ebook and corresponding webinar to help organizations plan, launch and conclude their RFPs with the goal of asking the right questions in order to attract and select the best vendors.

In addition to sharing best practices on each stage of the RFP process, the guide also included a variety of practical and re-usable resources for organizations, such as:

- A worksheet of jobs to do and raw materials to collect prior to drafting your RFP
- The Top 60 questions to include in your RFP for an Applicant Tracking System, including a short list of the Top 16
- A sample demo script to provide to vendors in order to ensure that they address your priority needs and expectations when demonstrating their solution for you
- A selection criteria worksheet to support you in your vendor selection process

Businesses should provide valuable resources like this to empower their customers through all steps of the sales cycle. The RFP is one of the first lines of dialogue in a long conversation between vendors and buyers.

As the Bid Manager for Cegid's North American sales team, I work to ensure that we provide our prospects and customers with a unique and personalized experience.





Robin Davis, CF APMP Fellow – Metre

Robin Davis is the founder and CEO of Metre, a management consulting company that specializes in helping organizations win business through proposals. She has more than two decades of experience in proposal development and management.

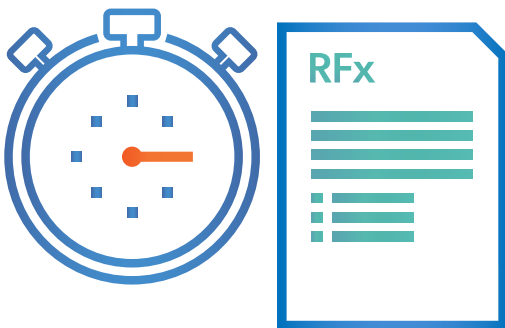
RFP process background: Consultant

Industry: Healthcare

Years involved in RFPs: 20+

Describe your past experiences with RFP management. How has the process changed? What challenges have you experienced?

I fell into proposals in 2001 and built the proposal department for the company I was working for at the time. I used a basic Excel spreadsheet for a project plan, developed a content database in Word, produced proposals in Word and created finalist presentations in PowerPoint. I've used several different sales and proposal-related tools throughout my career to varying degrees of success. While processes and challenges might evolve and look different, you can manage those successfully if you have a process that is modular and scalable, you are using tools that facilitate efficiency, and you have built trusted relationships with the people in your company that you need to work with on proposal projects.



What does the future of RFP management look like?

I hope that companies/governments will move away from paper copy requirements. In a world where we have the technology to facilitate dynamic electronic submissions, it makes sense that we commit to reducing our carbon footprint. I think online

submission tools are great, while at the same time, there is opportunity to improve upon them to allow for more flexibility.

I would like to see the process of writing RFPs and writing responses to RFPs be more transparent and efficient.

Writing RFPs: In terms of those procurement teams or consultants writing RFPs, providing clear and concise goals and instructions is appreciated. Clearly outlining the assumptions you want every vendor to use to develop their proposal is critical when you need to do an apples-to-apples comparison. Provide the background and information on what you currently have in place and the problems you are trying to solve. Then, in your questions, ask the vendor what they would do differently or better and what result they will deliver. In short, transparency is the way to go if you want the same in return.

Writing responses to RFPs: Unless you're selling widgets or commoditized products, sales are complex. That means that "spreadsheeting" vendors does not provide the flexibility for the vendor to deliver their value proposition in a thoughtful and creative way that actually helps solve your problem. In turn, the evaluator does not have all the information they need to make the best buying decision. I would instead encourage word or page limitations that will require the vendor to be concise and make every word count. That is a win-win for everybody.



What should businesses be doing now to prepare for RFPs in the future?

The number one thing a business needs to do to prepare for a future RFP is build relationships with the clients that you want to work with. Sales is still a relationship business. If you don't build the relationship and understand the client's business, culture and needs before the RFP is released, you're already behind and have a much lower chance of winning. If you have a relationship, you also have an opportunity to influence how the RFP is written and you can slant it in your favor. The proposal team should be continuously updating and refreshing their database content so they are ready to go. The salesperson should engage their proposal manager in early conversations about the client when they know an RFP is inevitable. Know your business. Know your sales goals. Know who is in the pipeline and get to know their business.

Do you have any RFP advice to help others be more successful?

Always remain curious, resourceful and flexible. And have fun!



Kelly Ellis — Piper Jordan

Kelly Ellis is the vice president, operational excellence at Piper Jordan, a benefits consulting and administration company. She is passionate about optimizing processes, collaborating with others and pursuing efficiency.

RFP process background: Consultant issuing RFPs

Industry: Benefits consulting and administration

Years involved in RFPs: 18

Describe your past experiences with RFP management. How has the process changed? What challenges have you experienced?

Until about a few years ago, we were using spreadsheets and word documents to manage RFPs. They were cumbersome and labor intensive. We found that we were spending a ton of time trying to aggregate the data and get it into a format that was user friendly. It was taking more time to build the RFP than it was to present the findings, which is obviously the most important part.

So, we went out and did some research to find a tool to help. We found RFP360 and thought, this is going to be something that we can really use and leverage. And from there we've really built upon it because we send out a lot of RFPs, profiles, discoveries and so on.



What does the future of RFP management look like?

Technology is really going to be key. The days of paper and spreadsheets are definitely going away and RFPs are going to have to be digital. They have to be efficient and very streamlined because there's just so much information and so many vendors. Especially as you look at our industry and consider all of the point solutions, wellness initiatives and various vendors. There are just so many.

As a result, standardizing the processes of an RFP is really going to be the way things move in the future. Each section should be standardized from the introduction and instructions to the current state. Every RFP has some elements that remain constant which makes it more efficient. With those standard sections, we are able to use automatic scoring making it really consistent.

Likewise, I think we'll also see fewer open-ended questions and dialogue text. We're moving to more yes-no questions to really consolidate the RFP to get in and out faster. In years past, when you would get something back from a vendor, you could ask one question and their response could be three pages long. We're moving away from that. In a way, we're actually asking more questions, but we're asking them in a way that a vendor can respond in a concise way. Can you do something? Yes or no?

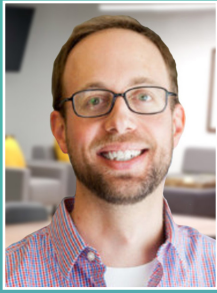
That's one of the beautiful things that technology is helping us do — be less vague and more direct. It's even made contracting faster and easier. Now, it's very simple for us to reference the RFP and build our contracts based on the vendor's responses.

What should businesses be doing now to prepare for RFPs in the future?

Businesses need to take a good hard look at their RFP process and begin to automate and self-score as much as they can. We want to take the guesswork out by reducing open-ended questions because when I read a response one way and my counterpart reads it another way — and we don't get the same impression of a vendor. It leaves things open to interpretation and that's not good for either party. So, from an issuing perspective, taking out any bias is really key.

From a vendor perspective, my best advice to read the instructions provided and embrace technology that serves the client. For us, if they're not willing to respond in the tech we use, they're disqualified. I know that sounds harsh, but it's not about them — it's about the client and being able to evaluate vendors fairly. We expect them to respond in the tool if they want to win the business.





Dave Hulsen — RFP360

Dave Hulsen is the co-founder and COO of RFP360. Dave has an extensive history of issuing and responding to RFPs as a technology consultant. He is responsible for customer services and financial operations and is passionate about empowering proposal teams with the knowledge and technology to be more efficient and effective.

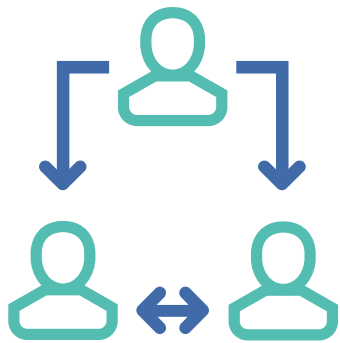
RFP process background: Issuer and respondent

Industry: Technology

Years involved in RFPs: 10

Describe your past experiences with RFP management. How has the process changed? What challenges have you experienced?

When I was a consultant, I did a lot of vendor analysis for large companies. We issued so many complicated RFIs and RFPs that were in spreadsheets and a pain to fill out, but we didn't have a better way, so we sent a lot of documents through email. The sense of frustration and inefficiency in the process was constant. Now, technology is becoming more common in the RFX process, making it faster and easier for everyone involved (on both sides of the transaction).



What does the future of RFP management look like?

Ideally, the future of RFPs will be more transparent and open. One of the common complaints about RFPs is that the process isn't fair or is too bureaucratic. I hope that in the future, both procurement and proposal professionals will use technology and data to communicate more clearly and openly about RFPs.

Likewise, I think it's only a matter of time before we have a more open marketplace for everything that surrounds the RFP process. A centralized place where procurement teams can find tried and true templates for different types of procurement projects. Not only that, but vendors can proactively offer key information about their products and services. Then in turn, this marketplace would allow buyers to identify best-fit vendors without manually researching or collecting the information from each business.

I believe that this kind of collaboration between issuers and responders is essential to improving the future of RFPs. It's why we built RFP360 to serve both.

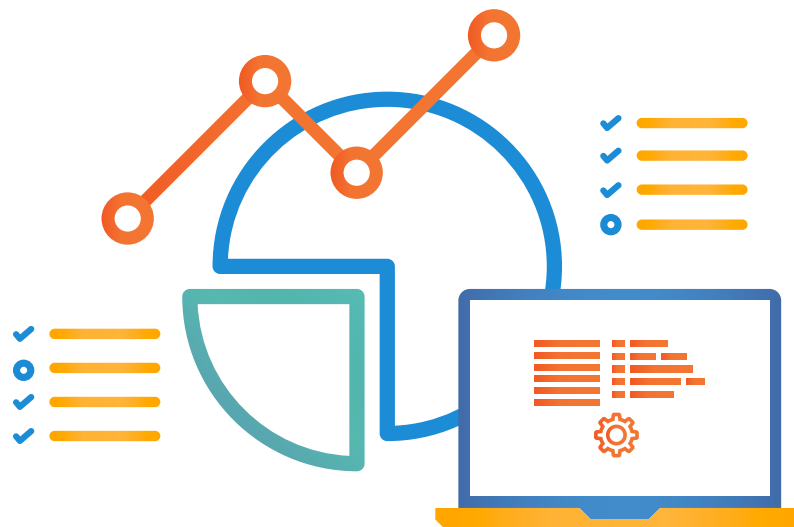
What should businesses be doing now to prepare for RFPs in the future?

Start collecting data. If you have RFP software this is easier, but even if you don't it's worth the time. Both procurement and proposal teams can benefit from strategically mining metadata from their RFPs and proposals. There are so many things that this data can tell your team. From analyzing vendor trend data and exploring how suppliers can anticipate buyer trends to optimizing processes and evaluating your most successful responses, all of it can be pulled from existing data.

What advice do you have for procurement and proposal teams?

Practice fairness and empathy. For procurement teams, this means communicating clearly the background of your RFP. If you have a vendor in mind or are going out to RFP to unseat an existing vendor, it's only fair to communicate that information to your other suppliers. Give them the information they need to make an educated decision about whether or not the RFP is a fit for them.

For proposal teams, I'd advise flexibility and brevity. Every RFP issuer is going to want something a little different. Do your best to work within their preferred format, style and needs. In addition, when you're answering questions, keep in mind that they are potentially reading dozens of proposals. By getting to the point quickly and clearly, you'll help your business stand out from the competition.





Ashley Kayes, CP APMP – AOC Solutions

Ashley Kayes is a senior proposal consultant at AOC Key Solutions. She has more than thirteen years of proposal development experience. In addition she is a Certified Practitioner and active contributor with the Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP). In addition to helping professionals learn about proposal development best practices, she also writes Proposal Reflections, a blog dedicated to

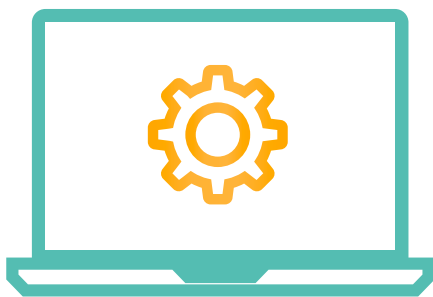
RFP process background: Consultant and proposal manager

Industry: Technology and engineering

Years involved in RFPs: 13

Describe your past experiences with RFP management. How has the process changed? What challenges have you experienced?

Since 2007, I honestly haven't seen much change in the proposal process itself. However, I have seen many more companies adopting technologies to support business development, capture and proposal processes. In the past, opportunity pipelines were frequently managed with spreadsheets and proposals updates were made and tracked by 'saving as' a new version in a shared folder by appending a version number at the end of the file.



Today, more and more companies are adopting customer relationship management (CRM) tools for pipeline tracking and leveraging proposal automation tools and other technologies to support the proposal development processes. These technologies have really helped to streamline the business development, capture and proposal processes by providing more

automated opportunity management capabilities, supporting proposal document development and version control, automating review comments consolidation and more.

What's more, I only remember a handful of tools available when I first started in the business. Now there are so many choices available. Companies really can evaluate what they need out of a proposal automation tool or other supporting technology, understand which tools offer those capabilities, compare the costs (and resulting cost savings) and pick the tool that best fits their needs.

What does the future of proposal management look like?

With supporting technologies becoming more robust by leveraging artificial intelligence and incorporating more and more capabilities, proposal managers and support writers will be able to focus more on tailoring content to meet individual customer needs. These technologies and tools speed up otherwise manual, time-consuming processes, allowing teams to focus on the more strategic elements of the process. This enables teams to create better, more tailored solutions in the same amount of time—or even less time in some cases.

Some of the tools out there even help teams to make better and smarter bid decisions, allowing teams to better focus their time and effort on those opportunities that have a higher probability of winning. All this makes proposal teams more efficient, more effective and more satisfied with their jobs.

What should businesses be doing now to prepare for proposals in the future?

If businesses are not leveraging supporting technologies, I encourage them to do their due diligence and take the time to find the tool or tools that might be right for them. Companies should pick tools that fit with the way that they do business and help to solve any problems they might be experiencing with the process. However, simply purchasing a tool is not enough — too frequently companies invest in a tool without implementing proper change management — and then the tool goes largely unused.

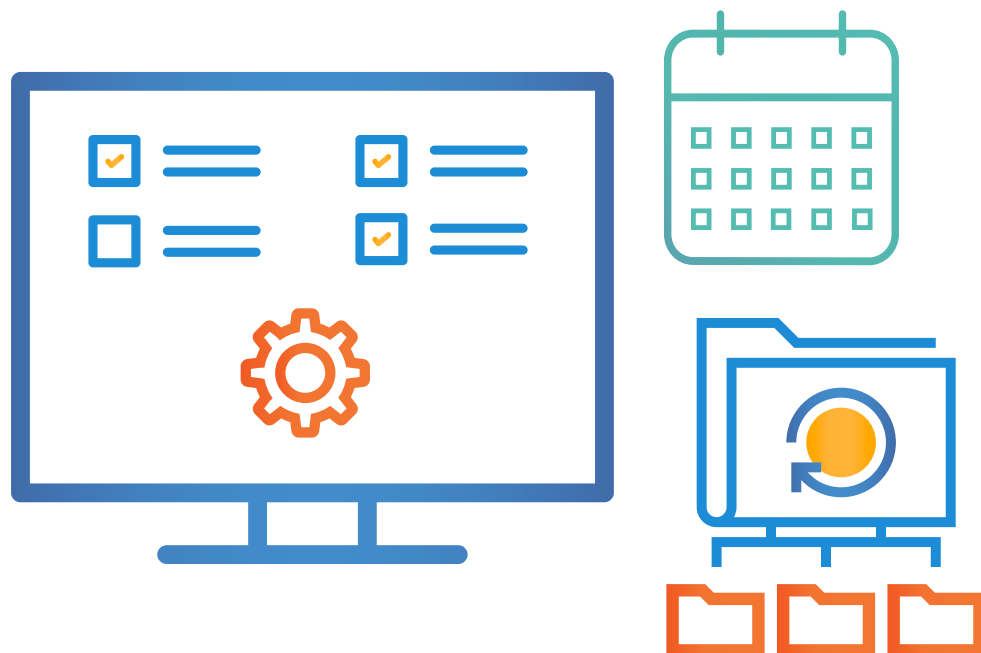
For the best results, when adopting a new tool or technology, companies must take the necessary steps to manage the resulting business process changes. For example, allowing members of the team from all levels to participate in the down-select process and provide feedback on the different choices will help companies to gain better user buy-in from the start. Defining and documenting how the tool will be incorporated into the existing processes before the tool goes live is also critical.

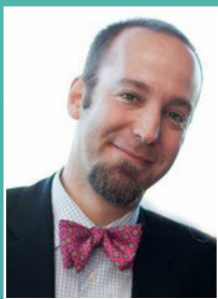
Companies should hold multiple training sessions, not only on how to use the tool, but also on how the tool impacts the processes, including any changes to the processes that have resulted. Additionally, training up a few super users can be helpful as well. These super users can serve as resources for team members who may be having technical issues or who might have questions about how to perform a part of the proposal process leveraging the tool.

Do you have any proposal advice to help others be more successful?

Businesses and individuals can always improve their success by starting earlier. When teams start business development and capture efforts too late, there simply isn't sufficient time to understand the customer and translate that intelligence into compliant and compelling proposal content.

Leveraging supporting technologies can further support a team's capability to track and manage the intelligence gained during the business development and capture phases. Available tools can also reduce the burden of otherwise time-consuming tasks, such as developing outlines, finding and suggesting relevant boilerplate or reuse content, etc. Streamlining and expediting those tasks enables proposal teams to spend more of their time tailoring the proposal content and solutions to address the needs and issues identified during the business development and capture phases. This results in stronger, more compelling content that will have a much higher chance of winning than an otherwise generic approach.





David Kutcher — Confluent Forms

David Kutcher is the co-founder and owner of Confluent Forms, a web consultancy founded in 2002. He also created the RFP Database, which is a B2B marketplace and exchange for Requests for Proposals where organizations announce their competitive bid projects for free while also giving agencies a wide range of potential projects to choose from.

RFP process background: Consultant

Industry: Technology and healthcare

Years involved in RFPs: 18

Describe your past experiences with RFP management. How has the process changed? What challenges have you experienced?

18 years ago when I started my web consultancy, I had very little sales experience. So, I tried to find RFPs and got very frustrated with what I was finding, and what I was paying for. As a result, I saw a need and created the RFP Database as a way to make RFPs more accessible.

Not only does it help other people like myself, but it also offers a way for corporations and organizations to publicize their RFP without having to pay subscription fees and advertising fees. I figured, the more we get RFPs out there, the more people can bid on the ones that are the best fit for them.



What does the future of RFP management look like?

I see two directions that RFPs are going and it's based on the organization — whether they have someone who is helping them with the process, or they are figuring it out on their own. For those doing it on their own, I've seen bigger and bigger cattle-call

RFPs. These organizations put out an RFP to the whole wide world, publishing it anywhere they can. It's disheartening every time I see it.

Because, then they get 50 to 250 responses, at which point it's impossible to run a quality RFP evaluation process.

On the other side, I've been seeing organizations get really smart by using an advised, multi-tier RFP process. They use requests for qualifications and requests for information to create a shortlist of providers before it even goes to the RFP. That way you're limiting the full RFP process to a final five or ten vendors. This enables the organization that initiated the RFP to actually review in depth. At the same time, it enables bidders to spend more time creating a quality proposal, because they know that they're already on a shortlist, as opposed to a cattle call.

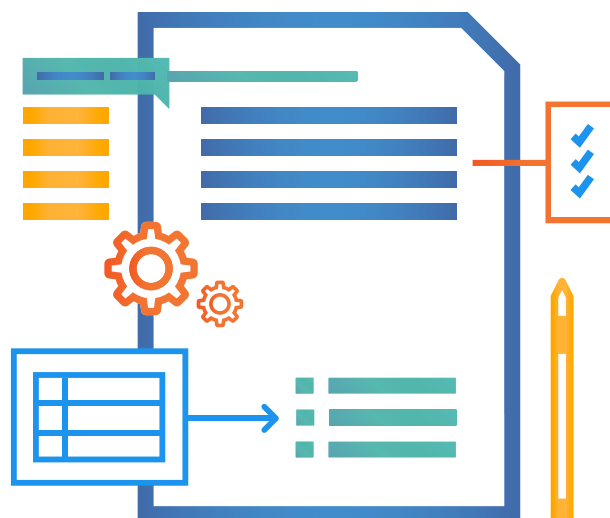
What should businesses be doing now to prepare for RFPs in the future?

Part of the problem with RFPs in general is that if you don't have your boilerplate information prepared, you can't work with tight timelines and create a quality proposal. So organizations need to get their sales process and proposal content organized before they start chasing RFPs. So my advice is to get your content done first. That way you can spend more time customizing your proposal to fit the RFP.

The other thing I recommend is to be selective. RFPs are out there. In fact, there are tons out there, but it's not always worth investing your time into a long shot, unless that long shot is really worth it. It's worth making a go/no-go decision tree. That way you're not spending time chasing those long shots that keep you from responding to the RFPs that you could win much more easily.

What advice do you have for teams creating proposals?

When it comes to responding to RFPs, my biggest tip to people is to be kind to the reviewer, who is reading your proposal. Remember that they are reading another 100 proposals besides yours and if you're not standing out, making yourself clear and helping them get the information they need then you are working against yourself. They have to be able to put you into a spreadsheet in a score box, so be kind to the reviewer and make that easy for them.





David Lintz — RFP360

David Lintz is the chief executive officer at RFP360. He has more than 20 years of experience in software sales and management that has made him familiar with the challenges of the RFP process. He leads the RFP360 team and is committed to improving the RFP process for our customers by delivering solutions that drive shorter sales cycles, improved efficiency and seamless collaboration.

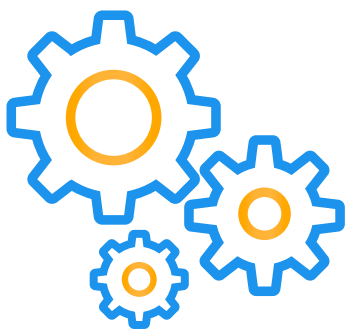
RFP process background: Sales

Industry: Software and technology

Years involved in RFPs: 20

Describe your past experiences with RFP management. How has the process changed? What challenges have you experienced?

More than 20 years ago when I started receiving and answering RFPs, the process was largely managed through email and word processing documents. I started each RFP from scratch and then did my best to keep track of versions as it was sent from one subject matter expert to the next. Even now, this is how some businesses create crucial proposals. Managing RFPs this way is inefficient — and totally unnecessary.



What does the future of RFP management look like?

While we've already come a long way from paper-based RFPs, I think RFP management is on the cusp of significant transformation. Technology has changed the way that we buy goods and services, the way we communicate and what we expect from our business relationships. Similarly, technology is changing RFP management.

Artificial intelligence, automation and application integrations are already coming together to make RFPs more efficient, consistent and transparent for both RFP issuers and responders. In the future, RFPs will be entirely digital and cloud-based, allowing internal RFP teams as well as buyers and vendors to be more closely aligned.

What should businesses be doing now to prepare for RFPs in the future?

In the last few years, I've read a number of articles that suggest that it's time to kill off the RFP. While each brings up valid points about the inefficiency of the process, few have suggestions for what would come next. RFPs connect buyers and sellers, serving an important purpose, so rather than doing away with them all together, we need to find ways to improve the process.

Even if you're not ready to invest in RFP technology, start laying the groundwork now. To prepare for the future of RFPs, which will inevitably be heavily influenced by technology, businesses should focus on improving three key areas:

- **Knowledge management** — A lot of the RFP process is finding the right answers and knowledge management can help. Adopting KM practices to categorize, organize and access proposal content can deliver huge benefits.
- **Project management** — The practices of proposal management and project management share a lot of the same skillset. Defining your proposal process allows you to better review, evaluate and optimize your RFP process to make it more successful.
- **Team collaboration and alignment** — Educate subject matter experts, stakeholders and other involved in the RFP process. Clarifying each person's role and responsibilities in the RFP process will help speed proposal delivery and increase the number of proposals you can respond to.





Mark Magro — Alter Domus

Mark Magro is a Sales Operations Senior Manager at Alter Domus. He has over 10 years of Sales experience and over the past 3 years, Mark has been driving the RFP answering process for Alter Domus. Throughout these years, Mark has been directly involved in the overhaul of the RFP process with the objectives of making it more efficient, effective and consistent to ultimately drive further sales.

RFP process background: Sales Operations Senior Manager

Industry: Finance

Years involved in RFPs: 3

What does the future of RFP management look like?

Whilst being a crucial part of the sales process, organizations typically view RFPs as a time-consuming, administrative chore. Coordination, quality of content, consistent process flows and timely submissions are just a few of the challenges that organizations face when dealing with RFPs. Despite all the technological process achieved, surprisingly, many organizations across the globe still rely on a manual process for RFP management.

The future for RFP management will surely be transformed by all the technological advances being achieved to increase automation. For some organizations, this will just be a further step forward, whereas for those organizations still relying on a manual process, the future will look very different from the current reality that they are used to. AI's role will surely also increase with time and it might reach a point where a significant portion of RFPs are completed through such mechanisms.

Another area which will probably change in the future of RFP management are the processes through which RFPs are issued and submitted. This will probably migrate to a full online process.



What should businesses be doing now to prepare for RFPs in the future?

Preparation for the future should start by ensuring that certain basics are in place through an assessment of the current situation that organizations find themselves in.

Crucial questions to answer as part of this assessment include:

- How much time on average do we spend to answer an RFP?
- How many RFPs can we manage at the same time?
- What degree of automation do we currently rely on?
- What is the organization's win/loss ratio?



The answers to these questions will reveal the areas where organizations should focus and work on to prepare for the future.

In today's world, a degree of automation is necessary and each organization should identify the best way how to introduce this element in their process. This will free up time that can be dedicated to tailoring RFP messages and the pitch within to gain differentiation within a highly competitive world with overlapping products and services.

Introduction of technology and improved process flows should not distract organizations from a crucial task – content management. Each organization has their own system and process to store and expand their content database.

The biggest challenge is to ensure that this content is kept relevant and fine-tuned to the rapidly evolving environment we all work in.

Do you have any RFP advice to help others be more successful?

To be successful the RFP process should be well organized, structured, clear and involving a cross-functional team. Treating this process as a paper exercise is a recipe for failure.



Eric McKinnon — CerpassRx

Eric is the senior vice president of sales at CerpassRx, a pharmacy benefits company. He is a registered pharmacist that now focuses on bringing in new clients and working with self-funded employer groups. The company works with organizations across the United States and Canada to manage behind the scenes pharmacy operations including sales, clinical support, prior authorizations and more.

RFP process background: Sales

Industry: Pharmacy benefits

Years involved in RFPs: 17

Describe your past experiences with RFP management. How has the process changed? What challenges have you experienced?

Historically, the biggest pain about RFPs has been the manual process it required to respond to and send out an RFP. Before I joined CerpassRx, they had completed around five to seven RFPs. There just wasn't a lot of content, but that wasn't the only challenge. All of the content was just saved in a Word document. So any RFP that I wanted to respond to for sales and new business development, required hours to go through and cut and paste from multiple RFPs and then put that into the RFP response that we were going to submit. If there were questions that had not been answered, then that required developing content.

When I joined the organization, our subject matter experts were the executives, and each would have two or three different lines of business and things that they're responsible for. It was very time-consuming for them to respond and provide content to me to put into the RFP. It was difficult to keep track of who owed what and when, and then the last challenge was really putting it all in the same voice.



What does the future of RFP management look like?

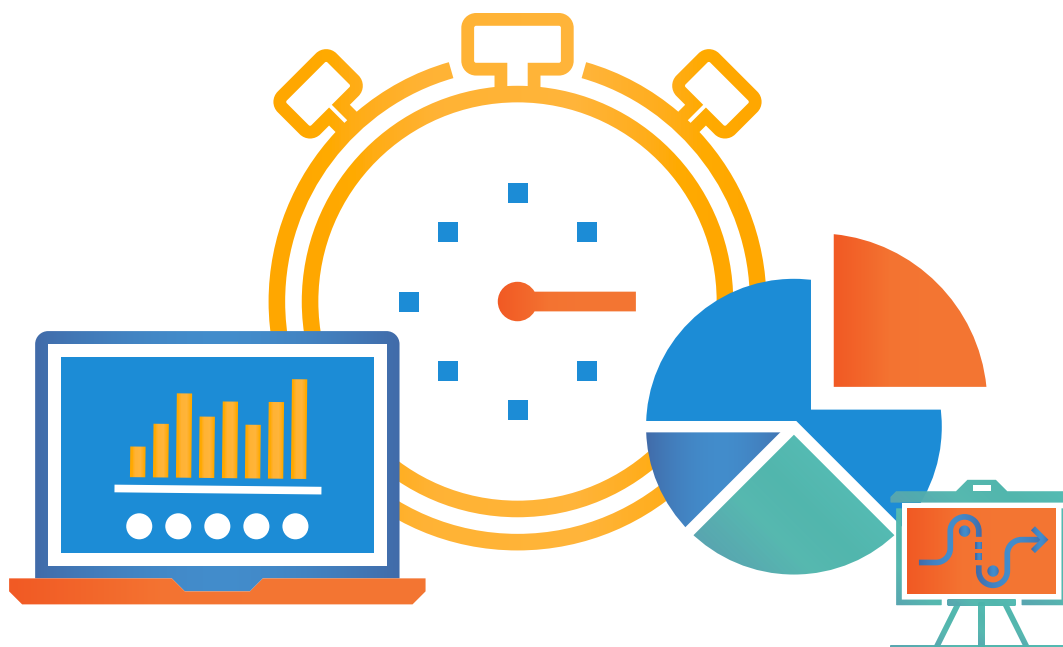
The future is in technology. Specifically RFP management solutions that are more of a business partner to organizations of all sizes. Being able to get everything stored in a single database or knowledge library while assigning RFP questions to subject matter experts and having them answer directly in the system is crucial.

Not only that, but having workflow and task management built into that system—with task deadlines and automated reminders set with just a few clicks — it's a game changer. Where I used to have to send a reminder email every three days to subject matter experts, now the tasks are built into their daily workflow so they are able to better allocate their time.

What advice do you have for teams creating proposals?

Set a goal to respond to more RFPs, be ready for quick turnaround times, conduct debriefs and remember that even if you don't win you're still getting exposure to the market. Because we've developed an efficient process that takes a fraction of the time it used to, even when we don't win we find value.

We're able to create strong proposals and build relationships with new brokers that will lead to new opportunities. It's a win for us to be on the radar. Then when we get another RFP from that broker we already have answers prepared.





Ben Paul – The BD Ladder

Ben is the director and founder of The BD Ladder, a business development and marketing consultancy focused on helping its clients to win more work and grow their revenue and brand. He is passionate about helping his clients achieve their full potential, through listening, and understanding what's important to them. He believes that the winning work process can be simplified and broken down into achievable steps that everyone can climb.

RFP process background: Responding to RFPs (national and international bids)

Industry: Business Development and marketing consultancy, specializing in professional services.

Years involved in RFPs: 20

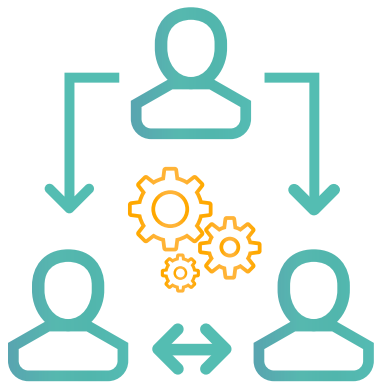
Describe your past experiences with RFP management. How has the process changed and what challenges have you experienced?

Best practice RFP response management has evolved greatly over the years, although the basics still hold true. For any large or business-critical opportunity that you will be responding to, you will need to have positioned yourself well ahead of the RFP being formally issued. This means detailed capture planning is essential. The capture team needs to build great relationships and a clear understanding of the issuer's key drivers well ahead of the RFP being released.

When I started, this was captured in spreadsheets, Word documents and even in the minutes of team meetings. These days, having an online system that provides information in real time is essential.

Thinking back to when I started writing tender responses a lot were created by simply updating the last response, which was a recipe for typos and old company names sneaking through. As systems and processes have evolved, bid management has required systems and tools that allow bid writers to access the latest information from a central source. This then means information can be slotted in and easily adapted for the current bid response.





What does the future of RFP management look like?

Increasingly, the market demand for effective bid managers has been on the up and up, demonstrating how important this skill is for many businesses. As the demand for this role grows, so will specialist software that helps with the project management of RFP responses. This really is vital. After all, you would not send your sales team out without a CRM to support

them. Bid management is a highly specialized profession that needs the correct tools to support its development.

With the growth of artificial intelligence, many RFP issuers will be using software to be able to efficiently score potential providers. This may lead to more fact-based questions that can be easily analyzed as data by online submission systems. Those responding to bids will need to understand how these systems operate and what buzzwords they pick up, to ensure success.

What should businesses be doing now to prepare for RFPs in the future?

Businesses looking to be successful in their RFP responses need to firstly make sure that right now they have all the resources they need. Do this in three simple steps.

1. **Start by making sure that you have the right people and expertise to respond to the RFPs you're expecting in the next 6-24 months.**
2. **Ensure that you have all the material you'll require to respond up to date, available and accessible.**
3. **Get the right technology to support these resources and processes.**

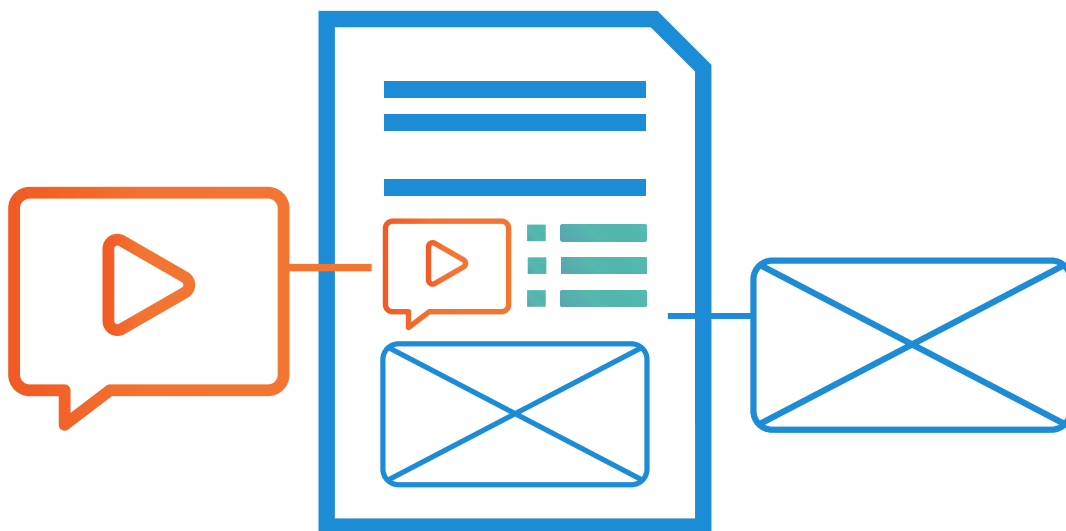
It pays to invest in these areas as it will help you track opportunities earlier and provide succinct and customer-centric responses. The less time you spend gathering information, the more you can spend on making it relevant to the RFP issuer.

Do you have any RFP advice to help others be more successful?

Invest heavily in your executive summary. Each one should capture the hearts as well as the minds of the issuer. Understand your audience, their drivers, and the bigger picture of how what they've tendered for fits their organization's strategy. Then articulate how what you're offering will deliver against these objectives.

Explore new forms of delivery. I've been involved in submissions that have been delivered via video and even a couple via apps. If you can use technology (without breaking the RFP rules) to provide greater clarity and a more human touch to your response, it is a great idea to do so.

After all, the adage that 'people buy from people' still holds true, even if this human touch is enabled by technology.





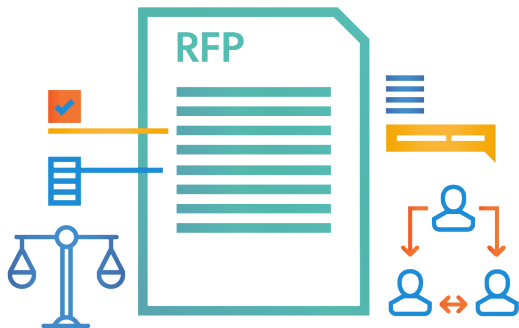
Matthew Prinn — RFP Advisory Group

Matthew Prinn is a Principal with RFP Advisory Group. He has nearly 20 years of experience in the legal industry in roles covering legal marketing, business development, proposal management, pricing and legal operations. He works with corporate legal departments who are looking to use the RFP as a tool to better manage outside counsel, and with law firms who are looking to use the RFP process to drive revenue.

RFP process background: RFP consultant

Industry: Legal

Years involved in RFPs: 20



What does the future of RFP management look like?

For the legal industry, the future of RFP management is going to change significantly. RFP's used to be a tool only used by Fortune 100 legal departments who had procurement divisions.

More and more legal departments are now adding legal operations professionals as a full-time resource. Combine that with the entrance and evolution of new software technology that is making it much easier to issue an RFP and that will equal an explosion in the volume of RFPs we will see.

This impact will change the future of RFP management for law firms in the following ways:

- Firms will need to be more focused on which opportunities they decide to put firm resources towards.
- Firms will need to install a performance tracking and feedback system so that they can learn why they are winning and losing.
- Firms will see more RFPs for a specific matter that will require fixed fee pricing bids.

What should businesses be doing now to prepare for RFPs in the future?

- Install a formal RFP response process to ensure your business has protocols in place to analyze each opportunity and implement a strategic response process that is guided by what's in the best interest of the business.
- Consider the latest technology tools available to your proposal teams. You are living in the stone ages if you are still using word and excel documents to manage your data and performance tracking.
- Sharpen your company's value proposition. Identify what the firm's competitive advantages are and how to best incorporate that theme into different types of RFP opportunities.

Do you have any RFP advice to help others be more successful?

- Use the RFP response as a tool to tell your story — why you are the best choice.
- Consider where video and visuals can replace text.
- Write your responses as if you were in a room with the buyer asking you those questions verbally.





Leonie Thomas

Leonie Thomas is a freelance bid writer, specializing in the construction and infrastructure industries. She has worked on a wide range of bids including projects in the rail, highways, civil engineering and nuclear sectors. She has been involved in bidding for 16 years, including six as a freelancer.

RFP process background: Freelance bid writer

Industry: Construction and infrastructure

Years involved in RFPs: 16

Describe your past experiences with RFP management. How has the process changed? What challenges have you experienced?

When I first started my bidding career, it was enough to submit a compliant bid, along with a price. Submissions have become more complex, with multiple requirements, sections and tailored written content that clearly demonstrates the value the bidder will deliver to the client on each project. These responses also need to be evidenced with compelling and relevant evidence – where did you do this before and what were the outcomes for the client?

Managing the compliance and governance of bids can be a full-time job in itself, and I have seen bid roles specializing and focusing on management, graphic design, information coordination and writing.



What does the future of RFP management look like?

Technology has an increasing role to support the bid process, whether managing the bid cycle, tracking bid content and input, or creating dynamic libraries that evolve with each submission. This is an exciting development – it will create efficiencies and free up time for higher-value work, while driving towards an improved work-life balance for bid teams.

What should businesses be doing now to prepare for RFPs in the future?

Businesses should focus much more on the capture stage of the bid and maximizing the time before the bid comes to market to get to know and understand the customer. Proper business development including targeting the right opportunities for your business will result in winning the right contracts.

Do you have any RFP advice to help others be more successful?

- Create a bid library and base your responses on these as a start. You will tailor your content for each bid, it's more efficient to start with something you can tweak, or worse, having to write something you have already written, but now can't find!
- Manage portal passwords using either a simple Excel spreadsheet or password manager software.
- Have a broad range of content that is ready to go, including presentations, capability statements, CVs and case studies.
- Develop template capability statements and presentations with a full range of projects and CVs – these will provide a good basis when you need them.
- Network with your professional bid peers to discuss trends and themes in bids. Bids are evolving all the time and another perspective is useful.



Conclusion

It's hard to know exactly what the future of RFPs will look like. However, it seems clear that businesses can prepare for success now by adopting technology, seeking more collaborative partnerships and optimizing processes. Are you ready?

If you're not sure, consider learning more about RFP software and the value it delivers. Download the ebook, [Measuring the value of RFP software](#). Or, take the next step and [schedule a call and demo](#) with us so we can explore your RFP management process and help you find ways to automate, centralize and collaborate.

Visit rfp360.com to learn
more about RFP technology.

