Project Marketing, Beyond Competitive Bidding, Bernard Cova, Pervez Ghauri, and Robert Salle

A Book Review by Ian Jay

How do you know where the best place is to expend effort looking for your next project? This book presents a way to deal with this unique marketing problem. It is a problem faced by companies that offer a project based solution. If you provide capital equipment, sell custom solutions, or provide once off type services to third parties, then this book has a marketing message for you.

The three authors are Professors in marketing, and are specialists in the project arena. All have extensive knowledge of the project environment from a marketing viewpoint. Their years of research, as well as cases from industry and government, are used here to illustrate a framework for winning the next tender.

The Project is the Sales Transaction
The problem faced by any company that delivers its service to a client as a project is simply how to retain contact with that client between projects. A project may end and the next time the client needs the services offered may be several years hence. The question is how to keep in contact with the client between projects. This is the problem posed by the book, which goes on to explain how this can be done.

The problem posed above is generally addressed through maintaining suitable relations with key players in the client organisation. This can be a hit or miss affair. It is also resource hungry. For these reasons some method of improving the efficiency of the pre tender phase of the relationship is helpful. This book provides a means of achieving that goal.

Conventional marketing and sales approaches do not address the problems faced by the project based supplier. A point is made by the authors, and it is this gap the book specifically aims to address.

Special tools required
The book provides a set of formal methods to deal with the period between projects. For instance they provide a process to map out the network of key actors. Who they are, their relationships, and how suppliers are linked to one another. Such an analysis is supported by a case history to clarify how to benefit from it.

The key is focus
Companies that use the toolset described in the book will experience productivity gains. Less time will be lost on ‘no hoper’ bids. More time will be spent on real prospects.

The book left me wanting to try it all out!
This is a very easy to read book. The text is written in a clear and logical way. There are easily understood diagrams to support the concepts described, and the supporting cases are also well written and interesting. It has a little bit of theory now and again to support the text but is otherwise very direct and to the point. The last chapter reveals the rest of the book as a useful methodology for market planning. As a practitioner I felt a need to try it all out.

The content of the book is based on experience drawn from IT, Aerospace, Engineering and Construction. The book is of use to any firm that provides capital equipment, systems, or ‘solutions’. It is useful to the small operator or the large player.

Published in the May / June 2004 Edition of ProjectNet Magazine.

©This Book Review cannot be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the relevant authority at the original publisher, ProjectNet Magazine. Contact the Editor at info@projectnet.co.za.