



THOUGHTS OF THE ALCHEMIST

IN Bidding, There is NO ROOM for WIN & WIN

In the 1990s that I first heard the term Win: Win. Suddenly, everyone was saying it, *“I really want this to be a win: win conversation between us, you are fired so your win is you have your life back, for me, well I don’t have to deal with you, anymore.”*, *“We need to ensure that this is a win: win for us and the customer.”*

Well, I was young and learning and it sounded so impressive to me. Then, I started to think about it. In my world of the game of sales, win: win is just so hippy and love and peace. It just does not work. Would we win deals w if we just focus on this? Training (by people who never worked a bid in their life) was compulsory. The focus being that we should always target the win: win.

In Bidding, we want Win: Lose. We want our proposition to mean the customer wins. They get to reap the benefits of their business strategy and business case investment. We want the competitors to lose. We beat them by our smart thinking, playing out in our win strategy. By getting this right we naturally get the win, no point in talking about it, we win the contract, we get the money, we hurt the competition.

The word “lose” is important. It is not a soft word; it is as hard as granite. To get the competitors to lose, we have assertively made it happen. Not such nice hippies are we now!

If you think of a sporting star or team, they only win the cup by beating the competition. That is how we need to think. Each down select is another measurement in the success of our win strategy. When the competition that you wanted out at that round get the bad news, you must think that you had something to do with it. It is the enactment of your win strategy that has been their undoing.

The best moment to illustrate this was winning a deal that on paper we had no chance. The competition was either 50% cheaper than us or they had markedly higher quality. The first job was to get the cheap competitors out of the game, before procurement became involved. Yes, job done, now it is a race between us three quality companies.

It would not be possible to beat them in a straight game, they were larger than us, they had local facilities, they had reference customers who were not on red alert and they were cheaper than us! So, I played a wild strategy of getting the customer to love us and fear the competition. I used our weaknesses as strengths.

Then the day came, and we won. I did not celebrate the win. I celebrated beating the competition because that is what I had done. We won with no local facilities, as a small company (not even in the top ten) and at 10% more expensive than the competition. The customer won, because we were the right choice for them, and the competition lost, and they lost bad.

Weeks later, I sat on the panel for a job interview. *“Just for sport”*, the sales director told me. The candidate was none other than the Sales Professional who had led the competition and had let his organisation become confident that the win was in the bag. So confident, that when they lost, they sacked him.

I asked him, *“what do you think our win strategy was?”*. *“To be honest, we did not do much thinking about you, we thought you were just kept in the race to keep us honest”*.

In life, I like to think I am one of the good guys, caring, supportive and helpful. But in bidding, I am an animal, the competition is my prey and I am hungry, so hungry. Nothing makes me happier than the poor Sales Professional’s statement. I had outplayed him, and I made him lose.

So, just remember the Sales Professional wins the deal. As bid professionals, we beat the competition.