



RELATIONSHIPS WITH BUYERS

WHITE PAPER

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Relationships with Buyers

So, you have your foot in the door with a prospective buyer. How should you handle the relationship from there on in?

We know this is a difficult line for you to tread. Why? Because we ourselves have made the transition from buyer to seller. Here are some pointers to start with:

- **Respect the Buyer's Time** – Don't bombard buyers with calls or unsolicited emails. It is always a good idea to check with the buyer when calling them as to whether they have the time to talk to you. What you have to say may be important to you but may well be way down their pecking order. If they ask you to contact them in a few months then do so but be prepared for them to do the same thing again as they may not be looking for what you are offering at that time either.
- **Gifts to and Entertainment of Buyers** – Many, if not most, buyers are now Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply (CIPS) members or studying for their MCIPS. Any buyer will therefore want to be seen as being above reproach and if they are a member of CIPS they sign up to the Code of Professional Ethics. All gifts therefore should be of a small value and when you are offering entertainment don't expect business in return. When involved in a bid or the negotiation phase of a contract don't offer entertainment or gifts as the buyer will be expected to decline them. Timings aside, it is always worth checking what the buyer's company's or organisation's policy towards gifts and entertainment is – some will follow the CIPS Code of Professional Ethics whereas others, including government bodies, may simply not allow either.
- **Personal Relationships with Buyers** – The foundation of business is trust and personal relationships build trust, for the duration of any potential contract and beyond. People buy into people. A personal relationship with a buyer (i.e. friend or relative or former business acquaintance) can play a major part in introducing your product and / or service to the buyer's business but, for that very reason, don't assume that person will be involved in the decision making process or the one concluding the deal. A professional buyer will always be expected to declare any personal interest which could affect their impartiality during any decision making and negotiation process.
- **Existing Contractual Relationships** – If you are an incumbent supplier you should never bank on your status when it comes to responding to an RFI, PQQ, RFP or ITT. The Buyer may well be satisfied with the products and / or services you are currently offering however this does not guarantee you a place in the next round of the selection process. When evaluating your RFI, PQQ, RFP or ITT submissions the buyer should be judging each participant on what is presented in the responses and therefore discounting what they already know of your business to ensure that all potential suppliers are treated in a fair, equal and transparent manner.