



# BUSINESS GROWTH SERIES

## GUIDE 3



TENDER WRITING TIPS

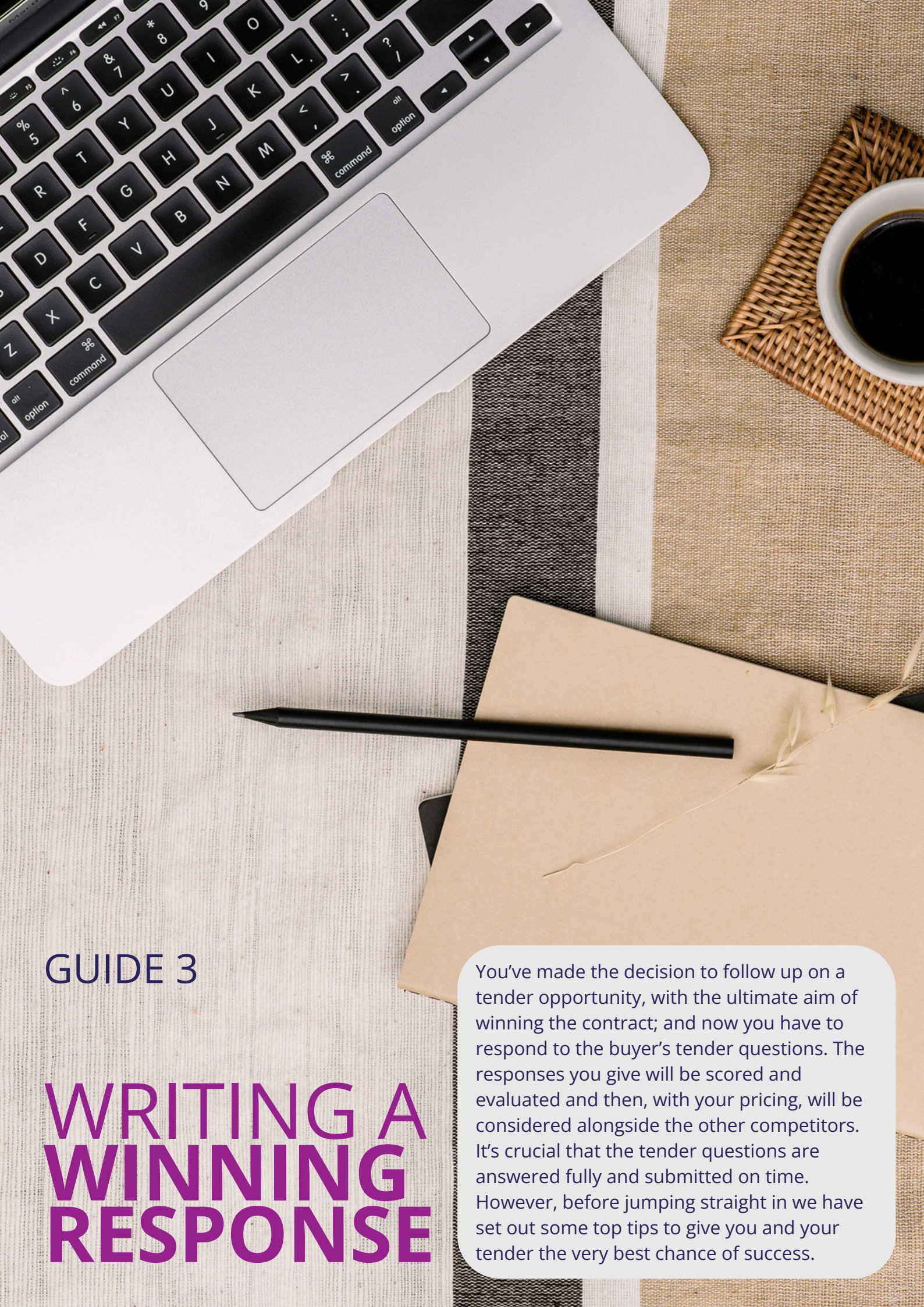


# GROW YOUR BUSINESS THROUGH WINNING CONTRACTS

Welcome to the third guide in our Business Growth Series, designed to support you to win contracts and grow your business. This series is brought to you by **Hertfordshire Growth Hub** and **Complete Tenders**, whose mission is to help small businesses compete against their rivals and win contracts. This series will guide you through the key areas involved in finding opportunities, getting ready to tender and writing winning tender responses.







## GUIDE 3

# WRITING A WINNING RESPONSE

You've made the decision to follow up on a tender opportunity, with the ultimate aim of winning the contract; and now you have to respond to the buyer's tender questions. The responses you give will be scored and evaluated and then, with your pricing, will be considered alongside the other competitors. It's crucial that the tender questions are answered fully and submitted on time. However, before jumping straight in we have set out some top tips to give you and your tender the very best chance of success.



# TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS



## 1 Before you start, identify your key experts

If you have a team, how can they help with the bid preparation? Who are the experts within your team who can provide the details needed e.g. value proposition, qualifications, experience, case studies, systems, technical information, policies etc. Spreading the work and involving subject matter experts will help ease the pressure on you and will also ensure your answers demonstrate the appropriate knowledge required.

## 2 Take time to read the questions thoroughly

There is nothing that will score less points on a tender than not answering the question properly. It sounds obvious but often people will skim read the questions (because they look like one seen before) and dive straight in to writing an answer. Sit back and read each question in detail a couple of times, thinking about what the buying organisation is really asking and how you can best write an answer. Can you meet the minimum requirements or are you able to show how you will exceed them? How is the question scored? What do you need to write to score 5 out of 5?

## 3 Look at how the question is structured and answer each one fully

The structure of the question can help guide how you respond to it. As an example, if the question includes bullet points, create sub-headings within your answer and then address the specifics of each bullet separately. Each bullet/part-question should be answered fully and if a tender question asks you for information you have provided in a previous answer, don't be tempted to simply refer the buyer to that answer, write it out again. Each tender answer is usually evaluated on its merits individually so you may have to include the same information several times if it relevant to more than one question.

# TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS

## 4 Use the buyer's terminology in your responses

If a buying organisation refers to a 'client', use that word throughout your tender response; if they talk about team instead of staff, use the word team. By paying attention to and mirroring the language used, you are showing you understand the buyer, their values and making your answers relatable. In a similar vein, if they talk about a section in a question, i.e. section 2:1, reference that section in the answer – it shows you have paid attention and makes it easier for the bid evaluation panel.



## 5 Provide evidence for everything you say

It's absolutely crucial that you back up everything you say with evidence. This could be facts and figures about the business and its stability, it could be details of staff qualifications or key successes, KPIs and outcomes that you have delivered on other similar contracts. Your internal industry experts should be able to collate this for your business. Case studies, previous results and testimonials will prove to a risk-averse buying organisation that you aren't talking in hypotheticals, you have actually done what you say you can do and it's been successful.

## 6 Pay attention to the word count

It is usual for each question to have a word or character count limit – look at what this is and ensure you stay within it. It can be difficult as your first instinct can be to put everything remotely linked to the question into the answer (to hedge your bets) but refrain from this. It can help to create a skeleton draft (bullet point all of the information you want to include) and then mould this into your answer. If the word count is 1,000 words, don't write 100.

Give yourself plenty of time to do this as it will take a few attempts to ensure you've got it right and remember, this isn't a marketing advertisement for your business, so your responses need to be succinct and waffle-free.

# TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS

## 7 Avoid using the word 'I'

Writing responses in the first person should be avoided, it can appear informal and make you appear less credible. If you are a one-person band, that's fine, but you need to give the evaluation panel the assurance that you are a robust and resilient business. State 'Mrs X is our Health & Safety lead and takes responsibility of tasks 1, 2 and 3' as opposed to 'I am the Health & Safety lead and I perform tasks 1, 2 and 3'.

## 9 Use your words wisely

It can be easy to state a point in your answer and then keep re-iterating it without adding any extra value. You may feel like you are re-enforcing the point but this won't gain you any extra marks (it will also eat in to your word count). If word count is limited, go with more information and less grammar/style/prose. An evaluation panel will prefer to see the details, rather than how pretty your sentences are.

## 8 Don't make assumptions

All buying organisations should give you the opportunity to ask questions so if you think something is unclear or ambiguous ask a question. All public sector tender exercises and most private sector tenders provide a window of time before the tender submission deadline to ask the buyer any clarification questions. There is nothing worse than putting in time and effort to a tender and then seeing that you completely misunderstood a question and your assumptions were incorrect.

## 10 Ask for help

A tender is an investment and if you don't think you have the time or expertise to ensure a good return, ask for help. Good tender writers (like our team here at Complete Tenders) have years of experience in crafting winning responses and work to high professional standards to ensure you will benefit from their knowledge. Aside from being tender writing experts, they are less emotionally invested in your business so are able to filter the information you provide and apply it objectively to a tender response in the same way an evaluator would.





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