

WINNING AGAIN

**A RETENTION GAME PLAN FOR YOUR MOST
IMPORTANT CONTRACTS AND CUSTOMERS**



"If losing a big account is not an option, Winning Again shows you how to keep competitors out and seal the deal a second time."

Jill Konrath, author of Agile Selling and SNAP Selling

ROBYN HAYDON

Foreword

by Glen Makin

I am delighted to start you off on your journey to Winning Again!

This book offers fresh thinking on an important topic – how to successfully retain business you will have to compete for through enforced, competitive tenders.

As someone who has built – and recently sold – a sizeable business whose revenue depended on winning contracts with corporate and government customers, I've been through my fair share of bids and tenders.

I am an electrician by trade, and first developed a passion for satellite and TV distribution technology while working at Ayers Rock Resort in Central Australia. Moving back to Brisbane, I managed teams of contractors, but in 1999 decided to strike out on my own – just me and my ute, working from the spare bedroom at home. There was a lot of work available for satellite technicians at the time, and even more for good ones. Broadband internet was really starting to get traction in Australia, so I set about educating internet service providers and Telcos about using satellite to deliver their products to regional

and remote customers. From this came Skybridge's very first (tiny) delivery contracts.

By 2001, I'd convinced my wife to leave her job, so I really needed to hustle more sales. A company called NewSat was looking for people to install satellite music systems for Woolworths supermarkets around Australia. I gave them a call and two months later, we had a contract worth \$800,000. We quickly won another with Satellite Music Australia to roll out a similar system for Coles Supermarkets and Bi-Lo, and Skybridge was on its way.

For the next few years we steadily built our systems and relationships with internet service providers and soon had a sizeable business delivering satellite-based internet to regional and remote areas of Australia. Our first big foray into the procurement world was in 2008, when Skybridge was invited to tender for a commercial contract with Optus. We knew we could do the work, but when the Request for Tender arrived it quickly became apparent that it was going to be a huge task to respond. Luckily, we met Robyn, who had a lot of experience in preparing tender responses of this size. Skybridge won this contract, the first of many we have won while working with Robyn - approximately \$100 million worth of business to date (and still counting). By 2009, Skybridge was the ninth fastest growing company in Australia.

Skybridge has always competed against much larger organisations, many of them publicly listed, with strong balance sheets and deep pockets. As a smaller player, we've always been the underdog, and the perceived risk of engaging with us has

been high. For Skybridge, it was never going to be enough just to meet the basic requirements of the Request for Tender.

Because of this, when selling to procurement, our emphasis has always been on the innovation in what we offer – and particularly how these innovations create value, alleviate risk or save the customer money. As any organisation starts to grow, innovation becomes more difficult. But continuing to innovate in a way that is meaningful to the customer is the only way to keep them – and to convince them that you are still relevant in their world and to their business.

Selling to procurement can be complex and intimidating, and even more so when you already have the business. Many people talk about developing customer ‘partnerships’, but few are actually achieving this in reality.

Winning Again will show you what it really takes to achieve long term success in these days of compulsory competition, and give you a practical plan to nurture and grow your most important contracts and customers.

GLEN MAKIN

Founder, Skybridge Australia

Introduction

SINCE THE TURN OF the century, business-to-business sales have become heavily procurement driven. So the way we sell has had to adjust.

Most suppliers – even if we don't really like it – have grown accustomed to competing for contracts through formal bids and tenders.

Many have changed the way sales teams are organised and hired extra help to submit proposals.

Through persistence and hard work, you have probably won a number of contracts this way. But you may have also noticed that keeping those contracts is much harder than it used to be.

You might find that customers won't take meetings any more. Everything automatically goes to tender, even the contracts you worked very hard to win. Relationships don't seem quite as important as they once were. Customers are constantly looking around for the next big thing and seem only too happy to move on to get it.

At times, this can feel very disheartening.

But there is a way to keep the customers and contracts that are the most important to you, even though you can't change how you must compete for them.

When business-to-business sales started being dictated to by the procurement process, something interesting started to happen.

Customers now only want to talk to the senior people who sign the contract (the 'revenue owners') or the operations people who deliver the contract. Not the people in between.

This is a high-stakes game and customers want to hear from those who can make decisions and those who know how things run.

Employing salespeople – even senior ones – often doesn't work out, as there is a shrinking role for salespeople to play. Revenue owners have stepped in to take on this role as well as running the business, managing the Board, and dealing with all the other things that being Head of Everything entails.

Welcome to the new world of business-to-business sales, where revenue owners are the primary business developers and contract delivery teams are the primary selling team.

If you're a revenue owner – a senior person who is ultimately responsible for sales – your role has definitely changed. All of a sudden you are Chief Bid Leader and the person responsible for running proposals and pursuits. Sure, you have people to help you, but you're the one in charge.

For many revenue owners, this is a scary and exposed place to be.

Even scarier is that after you bid for and win the contract, all the risk and responsibility moves from you to your delivery team.

During the contract, your delivery team is your primary selling team. For convenience, I'll call this your **contract delivery team**. It might be your bid that got the foot in the door, but your contract delivery team is responsible for keeping the door open.

My first book *The Shredder Test – a step-by-step guide to writing winning proposals* was essentially about how to get your foot in the door without shooting yourself in it.

This book is about what to do when you're inside – how to maintain a long-term place at the table as a preferred supplier.

The good news is that sales is still all about relationships – it's just that the way these relationships are conducted has fundamentally changed.

Your formal bid, proposal, submission or tender response is often the only way to get business these days. Everything you have today will be subjected to regular formal competition – most commonly, every three years.

This means that at the very minimum, you and your contract delivery team need to work hard every day to make sure that you have a story to tell the next time your contract goes out to tender.

So it's time to forget about the 'art of war'. This is a much longer, more detailed and in many ways more transparent game than you may be used to playing.

Business development is not a numbers game when we sell complex services. Instead, it is a game of passion, persistence and insight.

Winning a contract is really just a licence to continually talk to the customer about our new ideas, and the work of retaining an existing customer needs to start well before the Request for Tender.

Something that I've noticed over more than 15 years of working with incumbent suppliers in many different industries is that the most successful ones – the clear winners – share a very clear and focused pattern of behaviour when competing for existing contracts, while others set themselves up to lose.

The difference between the clear winners and those who aren't as successful as they could be is what I call the 'opportunity gap'.

This is the gap between what actually wins business and what we hope will win business. It's the space between the concrete and the conceptual. It's the difference between contract management and contract leadership, between what we're doing now and what we need to do to position ourselves to win again.

A lot of the conversation in business development tends to be about our credentials and how to shape and craft them to suit an opportunity. In fact, actions are more powerful than credentials. Actions show what we are working on next. Credentials only show what we've already done.

Put yourself in the customer's shoes. You're making a buying decision that will affect your organisation's future. Which would you rather hear your current supplier talking about –

what they did during the current contract term, or the great things they will do during the next one?

In this book, you will learn about:

- The opportunity gap: why it exists and how to identify it in yourself, the team or organisation you manage.
- How successful suppliers bridge the opportunity gap to become clear winners, and the four things you must do to position yourself to retain the contracts and customers you can't afford to lose.
- How to lead and manage yourself and your team when you are involved in complex pursuits, bids and proposals, including how to focus your effort where it most matters – on what's going to help you win.

This book is for everyone who does great work and wants to do more. It's about retaining the business you already have through a combination of breakthrough ideas and focused effort.

And here is the good news.

Procurement is not the enemy. In fact, when you already supply complex services to a business or organisation, the customer's procurement team can be a genuine ally in helping you to retain, and even grow, your business.

When it comes to the supply of services, procurement is judged on how well your services help their internal clients to achieve results. When the business loves you, the procurement team will love you. When you help procurement achieve their goals, they will help you achieve yours too. It's a three-way win for everyone.

My hope is that you will find the principles in this book useful as you develop your whole business, not just your most important contracts and customers.

It's good business to be good at what you do. It's good business to strive to be great at it. It's good business to understand what your customers really want, to understand what their business is all about, to know your role in their business, and how you can help them. It's good business to know and implement good practice in your business, including ideas that you come up with yourself and ideas that you've seen others implement. It's good business to try new ideas and to constantly think of new and better ways of doing things.

Some of the ideas you try will be fantastic, win business and hold your market space for many years to come. Others won't be so good. Some of the things you try won't work at all.

But we need to keep moving forward because business never stops and neither do your competitors.

There's no doubt about it, competition can be rough.

No matter how successful you already are, no matter how many great things you've done in the past, there is always tomorrow and the spectre of competition. There is also something very personal about putting new ideas out there for criticism and potential rejection.

A word of encouragement before we start.

I know how intimidating it is to be in a situation where your biggest customer could potentially drop you. I know how angry

and defensive people can get while merely considering the possibility.

I'm not out to further complicate a situation that many find complex and intimidating, and then sell you the 'solution'.

Business development should not be complex or intimidating. It should be fun.

It's energising to talk to people whose problems we can solve. It's fun to think of new and better ways of doing things. It is intensely rewarding to deliver something that enriches our lives and our customers' lives.

This book is not designed to scare you, but to empower you.

When everyone in your business is working together, you will win more than your fair share of business in your market and retain your most important contracts and customers. Others have done it and you can too.

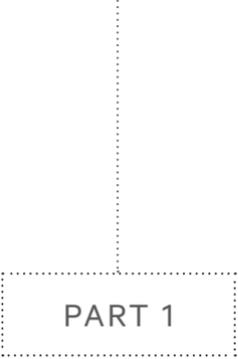
Keep these principles at the core of what you do and you'll not only have a business-winning machine, but also you'll have a great business that makes a difference in the world.

And if you're up for that, I'd love to help you to achieve it.

ROBYN HAYDON

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PART 1

The Market

The way sales are transacted in business-to-business markets has fundamentally changed, and business won through formal bids and tenders must be retained the same way. In this section, we explore the evolution of business-to-business sales methods, including competitive tendering, and explain why being the incumbent supplier only gives you an advantage if you choose to use it.

The New World of Business-to-Business Sales

THERE IS NO DOUBT that winning business through a formal bid or tender can be really tough.

First, there's the waiting for the Request for Tender (the briefing document you have to address in your proposal). Then, you have to decipher it and figure out what you need to do to respond. You can't talk to the buyer at this point, because they've gone into probity lockdown. Eventually you submit your proposal. Then there's more waiting until you hear that you've been shortlisted. After that there's a presentation to a bunch of people. One or two may be familiar, friendly faces, but the others you might have never met before and probably will never see again. Then, there's some back and forth negotiation about price and commercial terms and possibly a best and final offer round. And then there's some more waiting.

Finally, you get there. You've won.

And hey, by the way – great job. That certainly wasn't easy.

But there isn't any time to relax and enjoy things. You are straight into delivery, and there is such a lot to do.

At this point, your confidence is at an all-time high. You were the best team for the job. The buyer loved you. Competitors couldn't come close.

And now, you are the incumbent. Nobody can touch you.

Until they can.

When you are the incumbent supplier, the game changes. It's time to level up and face a new sort of competition – with yourself.

When business is won through a competitive procurement process like a formal bid or tender, it must be retained by competing again when the contract term expires.

In this way, being an incumbent supplier is similar to being a politician or other publicly elected official. The difference is that politicians and publicly elected officials go into their jobs with an acute appreciation that they will eventually be up for re-election, and they think constantly about what they need to do to win again.

By contrast, incumbent suppliers tend to see a contract as a gift for life, rather than something that we will eventually have to compete for again.

And it is here that we let ourselves down.

In Australia, voting is compulsory to elect a new federal government. That means every three years, we are treated to an all-out display of politicking designed to win our vote.

It's fascinating to see how politicians behave when they know it's make-or-break time.

Our political representatives absolutely understand that how they are perceived will determine the job they get – if they get one at all – for the next three years or more. Will they be elected? If so, will they be on the winning side or the losing side? How much impact will they really have for their electorate and the causes that they believe in?

During an Australian election, you'll find our politicians frantically tweeting, Facebooking, flying around the country and appearing on any TV program that will have them. Last election, a national TV show ran a hugely popular political interview segment called "I hate you, change my mind". Unbelievably, some of the country's best-known politicians lined up to feature on the show.

Picture the contracts you have coming up for bid soon. You will have four weeks to respond when the Request for Tender comes out.

What are you doing to push your agenda in front of the customer now, before the probity period locks down? What are you doing to boost performance? To innovate? To leverage your advantage as the incumbent and fence off the business from competition?

In most cases, if you're honest, the answer is probably "not as much as we could be doing".

I really wanted to start this book with the section titled Your Message, because having the right message really is the most important contributor to winning again.

Realistically, though, it's impossible to do that effectively without first understanding the environment in which we operate. The procurement model of competition is so ingrained in the way the market works now that any discussion of how and what to sell really needs to start here.

Since 2001, I've run a practice helping companies to compete and re-compete for contracts through formal bids tenders and other written proposals. My background before this is in strategic marketing in business-to-business markets, doing much the same thing. Although I've helped hundreds of clients to find their way through the Request for Tender process, and experienced first-hand the results of procurement processes and decisions, I have always worked on the supply side. So as well as sharing with you what I have learnt over the past two decades about the tendering system, I want you to hear directly from procurement experts who breathe the air on the other side of the fence. You can learn more about these generous people in the Acknowledgements, and you will see their specific comments and insights throughout the book, particularly in the first two sections (The Market and Your Message).

Firstly, some words of comfort. Procurement's processes are designed to be simple for suppliers to follow, otherwise there wouldn't be any competition. This may not mean that you actually find them simple, but they are intended to be as straightforward as possible.

Procurement isn't out to trick suppliers or trip us up. It is their job to engage good suppliers who do great work.

If the voice in your head makes your relationship with procurement sound more complex and adversarial, please try to ignore it. Procurement is not designed to be like that. In fact, the competitive tendering system we have today is designed to remove some of the inequities and inefficiencies of past approaches to business-to-business sales.

Competitive tendering is here to stay. As an incumbent supplier who competes within the system, you need to understand and embrace it to have the best chances of winning again.

Competitive tendering started in the mid-20th century, but really took off in the 1980s when governments in western countries established compulsory competitive tendering for public entities. Governments in the 1980s were swept up in economic rationalism, and concepts like deregulation, privatisation of state-owned industries and a reduction in the welfare state were all popular.

The origins of competitive tendering grew from the idea of 'contracting out' – having private sector contractors carry out work that public sector agencies might otherwise have done internally.

By tendering contracts to specialists, buyers figured it would cost them less and they would be able to take advantage of productivity gains made by suppliers too. On paper, this seemed to make sense.

In Australia, the volume of tenders started off at a fairly modest level in the 1980s, but it doubled in the 1990s as compulsory competitive tendering started to take off. For example, between 1994 and 1999, municipalities in Victoria had to expose first 20 per cent, then 30 per cent and finally half of their annual budgets to tenders.

In around the year 2000, compulsory competitive tendering was replaced by the best value system, which is still in play today. This emphasises the quality and performance of suppliers, not just cost effectiveness, and downplays competition as the prime objective. The number of competitive tenders, however, continued to power on. It had already doubled again in Australia by 2000, and today, the volume of tenders has just exploded as everything from washroom supplies to warships is put out to bid.

So you aren't imagining things if you've noticed this trend in your industry.

We've gone from a time when multimillion dollar contracts were sealed with a handshake, to a time when contracts of much lesser value require much more effort for suppliers to win. For example, at time of writing, the Victorian government required three quotes for any purchase over \$25,000 and a formal tender for any purchase over \$150,000.

Back when I started in this line of work 20 years ago, tenders weren't the only way that buyers bought things, and the tendering system itself was much simpler.

For starters, there's the workload, which these days can be gruelling to the point of exhaustion.

In 1995, simple quotes were the norm, and Requests for Tender were usually preceded by an Expressions of Interest process, which allowed buyers to scope the market and suppliers to prequalify. These were usually short documents and straightforward for suppliers to complete. Unfortunately, Expressions of Interest seem to be disappearing as fast as the Antarctic ice shelf. Today most contracts go straight to Request for Tender.

Tender documents themselves used to be 80 per cent quantitative: they were mostly about pricing. Now, they are 80 per cent qualitative: there is a huge amount of work to do in answering questions, completing schedules, and presenting information creatively. There once was a time when the submission itself had no limits. Now, there are page limits, word limits, and even character limits as buyers struggle to manage their evaluation workload. Proposals that used to take suppliers maybe a few hours to complete now take days, weeks or months, and often longer.

As a result, many suppliers feel exhausted by the process and now treat proposals as an exercise in paperwork, rather than as an exciting opportunity to win and retain business.

I think this is mostly because it feels like the relationship has been taken out of the equation. But it hasn't.

Despite appearances, business won through competitive tendering is still about relationships – it's just that the way those relationships are conducted has fundamentally changed.

We are moving from an environment where people and personal relationships had a lot of power, to one where ideas and innovation are the primary currency that drives the customer relationship.

To understand how this came about, it's worth reflecting on how business-to-business sales have been carried out in the past, and how they have evolved to where they are today.

When I first started out in sales and marketing, I worked for a business that sold diaries (yes, it was that long ago). This was back in the days of 'relationship selling'.

Our corporate sales manager, let's call her Sharon, was a one-woman charm offensive. The energy and enthusiasm that Sharon had for selling diaries was remarkable. What is most remarkable is that she was able to sustain this energy every single time she made a call – at least five calls a day, five days a week.

Sharon invited me to accompany her on sales calls one day, to see how she did things. As we pulled up in front of each building in her blue Ford Falcon, Sharon would square her shoulders and say, 'Right. We're going to wow them, and we're going to win them'. And that's just what she did.

Sharon repeated this cycle, and her mantra, many more times that day and every day that week. Customers loved Sharon, and she made a lot of sales.

As a sales methodology, relationship selling worked brilliantly back in the days when deals – including multimillion-dollar deals – were done on handshake. One of the early advocates of relationship selling, Dale Carnegie, said in his book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* that:

“The only way on earth to influence others is to talk to them about what they want and show them how to get it.”

This is great advice, and still works when we have the opportunity to get in a room with a prospect and sell one-on-one. Unfortunately that happens less often these days.

Relationship selling has always had some limitations, particularly in industries with long sales cycles and many stakeholders. In the 1980s, ‘solution selling’ started to gain popularity as the go-to methodology for complex sales, particularly in high technology industries. Neil Rackham’s iconic sales book *SPIN Selling*, published in 1988, presented a well-research methodology that identified the quality of questions asked by the seller as a huge factor in the buyer’s decision to buy. Many thousands of sales people around the world have been trained in the SPIN Selling methodology, and it is still very useful in industries where face-to-face sales remain the norm.

However, face-to-face selling methods are not quite so useful in markets that are heavily procurement driven.

In this new environment, where the relationship between buyers and sellers is conducted at a greater distance than ever before, our approach to business development needs to change.

We are now entering the era of ‘innovation selling’, where new ideas are what wins business.

In 2011, Matthew Dixon and Brent Adamson set out to discover why some sales reps were still making significant sales throughout the global financial crisis, when so many others were going hungry.

They surveyed thousands of sales representatives across many industries and locations, and their book, *The Challenger Sale*, is the first major evolution of sales theory since SPIN Selling. Here’s what they discovered:

“What sets the best suppliers apart is not the quality of their products, but the value of their insights and new ideas to help customers either make money or save money in ways they didn’t even know were possible.

Challenger reps ... teach customers something new and valuable about how to compete in their market. **Our research on customer loyalty ... shows that this is the exact behaviour that wins customers for the long term.**

Challengers are not so much world-class investigators as they are world-class teachers. They win, not by understanding the customer’s world as well as the customer does themselves, **but better ... teaching them what they don’t know but should.**”

The emphasis is mine, but the inference is clear. Customers value suppliers who come to them continually with new and better ways of doing things.

This is great news for anyone who has to compete for business through formal bids and tenders, particularly when you already have a contract (or contracts) you would like to retain.

As an incumbent supplier you have three starting advantages that you can exploit.

1. You have knowledge of how the customer does business. You **know more** than anybody else about how they operate, at least the part of their operation that involves your area of experience and expertise.
2. You have access. You can get deeper inside the organisation, in a way that competitors who are not working with the customer would find very difficult to replicate. This means you have the ability to **learn more** about their issues, and how you can help.
3. You have an audience. You have a customer who is already paying you money to do things, who you can **influence more** about how those things can be done better. By applying your expert lens to their problems and by finding opportunities, including those they are as yet unaware of, you can also help them to see how they can run their business more efficiently and compete more effectively.

Unfortunately, most incumbent suppliers don't leverage these advantages nearly as well as they could, and many don't start actively planning how to retain a particular contract or customer until the Request for Tender has already landed.

As a result, I have been invited to run bid strategy sessions with boardrooms full of anxious people who are acutely aware that they now only have only have four weeks to get their act

together. I can see exactly what parts of their story are missing after spending a day trying to plan a winning response with these teams, based on what I know from working with successful teams about what clients are looking for from incumbent suppliers, and what will actually win the business. It's frustrating for them, and for me, that there's so much more that could have been done, if only we had started early enough.

Essentially, this book – and the work that I do now getting organisations ready to re-compete for business – was born out of that frustration, and the desire to help more suppliers create a sustainable competitive advantage that safeguards their most important contracts and customers.

Every contract changes hands at some point. Whether that's into your new and improved hands, or someone else's hands, is really up to you.

Procurement has an obligation to go to market; not necessarily every time a contract expires, but regularly enough that they understand what the market is able to offer. Things change rapidly, and buyers are responsible for getting the best deal and the best result for their organisation.

Because of this, bids and tenders are here to stay. They may look like paperwork, but they certainly don't behave that way. Tender documents, like Requests for Tender, are simply a convenient way to collect comparable responses from different suppliers. And customers expect much more than a tick-the-box response, particularly from their incumbent suppliers.

Possibly the most common complaint I heard from the procurement experts I interviewed from this book – all of whom

were generous with their time and insights, because they really do want to help you to win again – is that incumbent suppliers don't bring enough sustained effort, energy and insight to the engagement.

Procurement expert Bretton Ackroyd recalls a time when he worked on a complex Australian Navy IT procurement, where the Navy appointed an IT supplier to help define its requirement, provide project management and deliver an IT infrastructure program.

Halfway through the acquisition contract, the Navy went back to market because the preferred IT supplier wasn't delivering the promised expertise. "They pitched their A-team upfront, but gave us the B-team instead," says Ackroyd.

Tehara Wickham, head of Procurement Governance and Engagement at National Australia Bank, agrees that it's common to see junior people from the supplier organisation throughout the course of the contract and then be inundated with requests for meetings from "every man and woman from the CEO onwards" at the end of the contract, during renewal or at tender time. By then, she says, it's too late.

Suppliers need to have been building those relationships and strengthening multiple levels of engagement throughout the contract, not just bringing in the big guns at the end in an effort to impress the buyer.

Likewise, procurement expert Neil Hubbard says that most suppliers will only give procurement what they say they want. Because he expects more than this, a major part of his team's

day-to-day work involves working closely with suppliers and encouraging them to be more proactive.

“The shift has moved away from finding a supplier that can do a job for a price to finding a supplier that can do the job that we don’t know we want. We only know what we know. We don’t know what we don’t know,” Hubbard explains. Imagine the efficiencies that could be gained for Hubbard if his suppliers already came to the table with a ‘challenger’ mindset.

If you have a contract that you’ve held for a while and it comes up for bid again, other people are going to want it. There might be three competitors, six, 12, 24, or even more. It can feel intimidating as the numbers grow.

While we are busy delivering, competitors are upping their game and figuring out ways to take us out.

Competitors are hungry, and we need to stay hungry too.

I meet many suppliers who work very hard, but don’t realise that they are only really delivering on the customer’s basic expectations. Essentially, they are just doing what they are being paid for, and even if they are doing this exceptionally well, it isn’t enough to win again.

I live in Melbourne, and recently needed to stay in Sydney on business for a few days. It was Mardi Gras time and accommodation was in short supply, so I was only able to get the hotel I wanted for two nights before I had to move on.

The second place wasn’t exactly five-star, and when I got into the shower in the morning I had company – there was a tiny cockroach sharing the stall with me. I’m not a huge fan of bugs,

but hate the thought of getting rid of them even more. So I turned on the shower, tried not to freak out and kept one eye on what he was up to.

The poor little guy was really struggling. He was going up and down the wall, trying to get away from the water spray and fell a couple of times, but managed to get back up again. And although I wasn't that thrilled to see him there, by the end of the five minutes I was pretty impressed by how damn hard he was working. In the end, my shower companion was trapped up the top and it was obvious that he wasn't going to be able to get to a nice dry space. Just as I was about to switch the shower off, he fell and went down the plughole.

Before he had the misfortune to run into me, that little bug probably thought "Hey, I've got the place to myself. I can hang out here for a while. It's pretty nice in here." And then all of a sudden he found himself in the equivalent of a monsoon.

I don't want to see that happen to you.

Failure is not an option, but it is a reality.

This is a truth rarely acknowledged or talked about in the world of sales and business development, where the only conversation you will ever hear is the one about winning and success.

Yet the prospect of loss is the ugly spectre that hangs over everything we do, and past losses we haven't grieved for and learned from can actually prevent us from doing our best work with the customers we have today.

I am neither trained nor qualified in psychology but have always been fascinated by how people behave when they are under

stress. In my line of work I have spent years up close and personal with people while they grapple with the hugely difficult task of bidding for business that means their job, their team's jobs, or even the future of their company.

What I have noticed is that the fear of loss is paralysing for some of these people, while it is the energy and enthusiasm created by the thought of winning – and beyond this, the idea of doing great work that makes a difference on the world – that empowers others to succeed.

Anxiety is a gnawing feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome. Knowing that an important contract or customer might go elsewhere can put us in a state of anxiety for a long period of time.

Sustained anxiety causes a range of unwelcome effects – from heart disease to depression – by keeping us in a state of permanent 'fight or flight'.

In the workplace, anxiety presents in many ways that mask what it really is: fear that derives from a sense of powerlessness and the spectre of impending loss. In boardrooms and in bid team 'war rooms', I've seen anxiety show up as arrogance, bullying, lying, dissembling, blind faith, or bluster. Other times anxiety will be cloaked in busy-ness or other forms of reality avoidance.

There is no doubt about it – losses hurt, and when you've always been on top, the only way to go is down.

My son, who is in primary school, loves maths (go figure). Like a lot of kids where we live, he is part of the Athletics competition at school, which encourages kids to practice their maths online.

Maths is something that comes easily to him and that he is pretty good at it. Since he started Mathletics, he had always been pretty much top of the ladder. One day, he came home from school looking very sad. When I asked him what was wrong, he said, “I was number one on the Mathletics ladder, and now I’m number four.” It hadn’t even occurred to him that this could happen. He had no frame of reference for the concept that he might not always be on top.

If you have ever lost an important contract or customer, I really feel for you.

I have worked in this game a long time and see many people struggling with unacknowledged grief for past business losses. Sometimes the wounds are fresh and raw. Other times, scar tissue has built up to cover the wound, but it is clear that the loss still affects them.

None of us are robots. We are people with feelings. Losing a customer or contract creates hurt and fear, both of which are huge drags on our creativity, energy and enthusiasm — the very things that we need the most when we need to compete again. Unacknowledged grief is a bomb waiting to go off – somewhere, sometime when you least need and expect it.

Before you delve too far into this book, consider whether the prospect of loss, or your experiences of loss, might affect your ability to move forward today. If you’ve ever lost a piece of business that was important to you, please give yourself the opportunity to grieve for it. Really feel what happened and then let it go with gratitude.

There are lessons in loss, and one of the most important is to be thankful for and work hard to retain the business that we have today. Being aware that loss is a possibility – and without being scared of it —will drive you to think more broadly and bring new ideas to fruition.

This book sets out the program that will help you to get ready to re-compete for your most important contracts and customers.

At the very least, your Ready-to-Re-compete Program will act as a life raft to get you through the choppy waters of enforced competition. At its very best, this program could be the game-changer that dramatically boosts the value of what you deliver to all your customers.

And the very act of developing and delivering this program will help you to take your power back.

Picture your most important contract or customer – the one you absolutely can't afford to lose. Calculate how much time you have left before the Request for Tender hits.

And let's get you ready to re-compete.

Chapter summary – The New World of Business-to-Business Sales

- ✓ **Competitive tendering is here to stay.** When business is won through formal bids and tenders, it must be retained the same way.
- ✓ **Contracts need to be led, not just managed.** Customers expect much more than just baseline delivery of the contract from their incumbent suppliers.
- ✓ **Ideas and innovation are the primary currency of contemporary customer relationships:** personal relationships are far less important than they used to be.
- ✓ **As the incumbent supplier you have three starting advantages:** you know more about the customer, have access to learn more and can influence more than competitors can.
- ✓ **Unacknowledged grief from past losses creates fear that holds us back from fulfilling our potential,** and depletes the creativity, energy and enthusiasm you need to compete and win again.

This is an extract from *Winning Again: A Retention Game Plan for Your Most Important Contracts and Customers*. Order your copy from <http://www.robynhaydon.com>

About the Author

Robyn Haydon

Robyn is on a mission to bring creativity, energy and enthusiasm back to the process of winning and serving high-value business customers. As a business development expert, she helps organisations to compete – and re-compete – for important contracts that are won through formal bids and tenders.

Robyn is the author of two books, *Winning Again: a Retention Game Plan for Your Most Important Contracts and Customers* (2014) and the Australian Institute of Management bestseller *The Shredder Test: a Step-By-Step Guide to Winning Proposals* (2007). She helps organisations who sell complex services, including government-funded services, with:

- Business development strategy
- Retention and growth strategy for contracts subject to competitive tender
- Bid strategy
- Organisational bid capability

- Communication skills for contract delivery teams
- Training for Bid Leaders & proposal writers
- Keynote presentations and workshops

Robyn's clients have won and retained hundreds of millions of dollars worth of business with many of Australia's largest corporate and government buyers including ANZ Bank, ATO, BHP Billiton, Centrelink, Commonwealth Bank, Dept of Defence, Dept of Employment, Dept of Health, Dept of Justice, Dept of Human Services, NBN Co, News Ltd, Optus and Woolworths.

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