

## Keeping Prospective Job Candidates Engaged During Bid-To-Win

23 hours ago by [Marc Berman](#) 0



One of the most challenging situations for staffing professionals in the government contracting (govcon) industry occurs during the bid-to-win period. From the date a contractor submits its proposal to when the award is made, there could be a waiting period of 90 days or more. During this time, it's hard to hold on to the talented people who have been recruited to work on the contract team.

But that's not all. The staffing acquisition challenges related to the bid-to-win period start even before the proposal is submitted. To find the talent needed to secure a winning bid,

it takes a high degree of staffing savvy and expertise.

First of all, staffing pros need to look for candidates who are gainfully employed. People who are out of work are not considered "A-list" talent. Usually, you have to dig deep to find top people who are not looking for a job. The pool is smaller and often it takes referrals obtained through an extensive network of personal contacts.

At this stage, it's critical to know precisely what's needed in terms of skills and experience. All candidates have to match these criteria and, ultimately, will have to be approved by the government before any contingent job offer is made. Interviewing the government client during the proposal development period to clarify what they are looking for in a winning contract team not only brings surety to the staffing search, but also sends a positive message that your company is doing its due diligence – long before it wins the business.

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Once you've identified a candidate who has all the requisite skills, you need to check the person's enthusiasm level. You're looking for people who are genuinely excited by the opportunity.

Next comes a rigorous interview process during which two things need to happen: the candidate's credentials and clearances are verified, and expectations are clearly set. The recruiter must be open and up front with the candidate that your company does not have the work yet. The candidate must have the capacity to hold out and wait for this new opportunity.

Once the top candidate is identified, he or she should be given a contingent offer letter. Then communication becomes all-important. All contingent employees should receive weekly calls to let them know what is going on, and that your firm is monitoring the proposal evaluation process on their behalf. Contingent employees want honesty, whether the news is good or bad. It's all about continuing to build and maintain relationships with top talent who could be assets to your company for years to come.

### Role of Outside Staffing Companies

The truth is, most companies can't do this alone. Internal HR staffs are too busy with their day-to-day responsibilities. To find the "best of the best" govcon talent, most contractors need a partnership with a remarkable staffing company.

This partnership should start with a pre-bid interview in which the staffing company clarifies the type of solicitation and

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ascertains odds of winning the contract, relationship between the govcon client and the contracting agency, number of competing bidders and prior experience with this scope of work. The staffing company can work harder and more effectively if it is armed with the facts.

Because external IT staffing firms are paid to find the A players, they make it their business to know who the top people are and how to find them. You won't find these people on the job boards – they're working. The best staffing companies have their own proprietary applicant tracking systems using specialized database software to harvest cream-of-the-crop talent from many different sources.

A top-flight recruiting firm also knows that it is essential to conduct thorough face-to-face interviews with each candidate to ensure all the other intangibles match as closely as possible. In addition, an excellent staffing company will verify not only clearances but all other aspects of the candidate's background.

Here's the bottom line. A staffing company has skin in the game: it doesn't get paid unless it finds and places the candidate needed by the client and the government. A staffing company is aiming for a triple win. Internal recruiters simply don't have the same incentives and motivation to go the extra mile.

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