

Letter to RFP Writers

Dear "Request for Proposals" (RFP) writers,

As a supplier of business software, I often have the chance to read your RFP documents to understand your requirements and analyze if our solutions would be a good fit for you.

First of all, I want to thank you for contributing to the noble objective of having an open and accessible supplying process, which is a very important operation to maintain a healthy democracy. I truly believe in the key role that such a process can play in strengthening the credibility of our public organizations by fighting against corruption and favoritism.

Second, I want to warn you against a tendency that I often notice reading your RFPs. This tendency is the one to overprotect yourselves and search for a complete and "everything-proof" solution by adding too many requirements in your RFP criteria.

For example, if what you search for is a document scanning system, do you really need to add the criteria that the system should provide a tool to draw on the scanned images? OK for annotations and comments, but drawing? Do you really need to add the criteria that the system should integrate to a dictionary for words validation?

And if those are really required, can't it be pushed to a second phase of the project?



I think that the question that you should ask yourselves is: "How much am I willing to pay to get this feature? And how much more risk am I ready to assume?" By experience, we often end up with a pricing two to three times higher just to provide this extra 5% of functionalities that wouldn't be required in this first phase. But if we don't include it, we normally are defined as not conforming to the RFP.

And even if we win the RFP with this doubled pricing, then the project is twice as risky as it could have been to cover 95% of the requirements.

IT projects have a tendency to be risky and go over budget. A large part of those risk and cost problems come from the fact that we try to implement too much at the same time. Aiming for a quick and focused project that will still cover most of your requirements will be a success in almost every case, and everyone will benefit from it.

Also, you will have an even better understanding of your complete requirements when launching the next phases of your projects.

Topics: [focus](#), [RFP](#), [requirements](#)