

engineers to step up to the plate and accept the challenge and duty of engaging in the political process, where critical decisions are made that affect the future of our local communities, towns, cities, states, and country, as well as the world at large. ■

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Win more work through a better understanding of your clients

by Mark Toner

"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't being said." (Peter Drucker)

Most engineering and construction contracts are awarded through a competitive bidding process.

The traditional way of preparing a bid is to have meetings with the client's personnel to clarify issues and sell your company's suitability for the project, respond comprehensively to every issue raised in the client's request for tender, put in a competitive price with minimal variations to the proposed contract, submit the bid and hope.

Deliberately targeting the client's buying process can significantly improve the likelihood of winning such work. One way of doing this is called Strategic Selling, a method published by the US firm Miller Heiman in a book of the same name, in combination with some basic principles of personality type to analyse the buying preferences of the client's key personnel.

Strategic Selling involves:

- identifying all the client's key people (buyers) who will evaluate your bid, and understanding their different roles in the bid evaluation team
- overcoming the weaknesses of your bid using its strengths if possible
- determining the level of receptivity to your bid of each buyer
- identifying the current position of your organisation in the eyes of each buyer
- identifying and delivering each buyer's personal objective for his/her organisation
- identifying and delivering each buyer's personal "win" in choosing your bid
- developing coaches who know the buyers and their organisation.

However, the Strategic Selling methodology covers only what, why and when people buy, but not how.

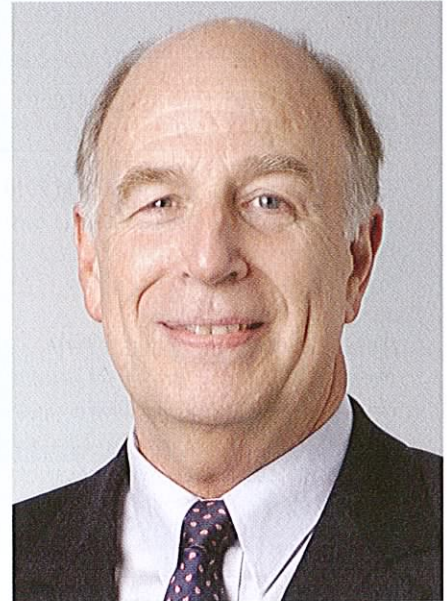
The latter can be addressed using Myers Briggs theory (based on Jung's work on psychological types). The theory holds that people buy in one of only two fundamental ways based on either impersonal things such as specifications, schedules and price, or on personal relationships. The two fundamental ways are then broken down into four basic buying preferences.

A thorough knowledge of Myers Briggs theory enables the seller through various means to get a sense of whether a buyer prefers to make decisions in an impersonal, objective and analytical way or in a more subjective way based on human and social values. (This is Jung's classic "Thinking/Feeling" decision-making preference everyone has.)

It is not always easy to classify every buyer in this way, but the seller certainly has an advantage with this knowledge of human behaviour. It's essential for sellers to identify and get to know each buyer before the request for tender is issued, as communications after that are often limited by the buying organisation.

By getting to know the buyers over time, the seller can observe the buyers' behaviours, discuss their personal interests and concerns about the project, gather information on each buyer from others, and analyse all available data in relation to his/her own organisation's position as a bidder. If the seller knows a buyer well, he/she can even discuss their own personality types. Of course, a smart buyer who knows the game should not be drawn into this.

In general, in technical organisations there are far more objective "thinking" types than values-based "feeling" types, even though there are equal numbers of each in the population. For instance, the majority of engineers, because of their predictable personality types, will be in



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the first category.

So the Myers Briggs methodology reveals both how an individual buys and how important price and relationships are to him or her. Selling to the client's buyers can therefore be tailored to fit with their individual buying styles, making them far more comfortable individually with your proposal.

The combination of Strategic Selling and personality type theories is already being used successfully in the US, but so far only a few organisations in Australia have adopted it. ■

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