



Branding strategies for capture

In our competitive world of bidding, every opportunity to secure a new project or client is critical.

As organisations vie for contracts, the question often arises: what is the most effective approach to branding in a bid? Do you showcase your own corporate identity with pride, or do you adopt the branding of the potential client to demonstrate alignment and understanding? This paper delves into the complexities of bid branding, exploring the spectrum of possibilities and strategies to determine which approach might give you the edge in a crowded and demanding market.

What is a brand?

Well, it's not a logo. A logo represents a brand, but it is not a brand. It's not the colours, or the font or the brand guidelines. Nor is it the strategy or the business plan. A brand is the distinct identity that influences customer perceptions. It's all about what people feel about you. It's emotional and intuitive.

Take Apple. Most of us recognise that Apple has a strong brand identity globally - synonymous with innovation, quality, and elegance. This perception is not only down to their sleek products and minimalist design; it's embedded in every customer interaction, from their advertisements to the in-store experience. Apple's brand goes beyond the logo of a bitten apple; it's about the intuitive and emotional connection that consumers feel towards their products.

Now, let's compare consumer branding to bid branding. Here, the target audience is selective - perhaps six or seven evaluators and stakeholders with varying roles and agendas - making the branding approach distinctly different. However, the core principles are the same, as both consumer and bid branding require an analysis of the opportunity, the organisation, and the customer - an analysis you've already conducted as part of your capture strategy.

Every bidding organisation boasts its own brand identity of course. But what does the customer evaluator and stakeholder truly want to see? They've probably already shortlisted or handpicked you to respond to the RFP, based on your organisation's credentials including your brand identity. Why should you use branding as a strategic tool to focus on a smaller, discerning audience? Here are three reasons to start with:



Tailor your approach

to align with the specific needs and expectations of evaluators and stakeholders to demonstrate customer focus at a personal level.



Show organisational empathy

by incorporating your organisation's motivations and values, along with those of your customer, to create a set of values tailored for a particular bid.



Make an emotional connection

with the customer by using win themes and hot buttons that ensure your branding reflects a consistent and compelling message throughout the bid.

Let's go deeper and explore branding as a significant strategic tool, starting from the capture phase, and the numerous benefits it offers in creating consistent and compelling proposals.

Only one company can be the cheapest. The rest have to rely on ~~branding~~

their proposal

Martin Neumeier

Branding as a strategic tool

Branding complements your strategy and starts with research - the foundations of any winning bid. As shown in the following diagram, the information gathered in your research builds to create your strategy, your story, your truths and your value.

Looking at your strategy from a branding perspective can help you unlock your story and introduce the emotional elements that logical analysis might overlook. To do this, you need to conduct a creative, emotional analysis of your research that will complement your logical analysis.



Strategic proposals begin at capture

During capture, there's an opportunity to influence your customer's perception of your organisation and its capabilities, and build an emotional connection with the stakeholders. Starting early allows you to position yourself consistently in the customer's mind.

You can use branding to transform capture from a purely logical, left-brain approach into a cohesive strategy by incorporating emotional, creative, right-brain insights. While capture analysis is highly logical, at this early pre-market stage, your customer is making assumptions and decisions based more on the emotional side of their brains. Integrating right-brain analysis could provide the competitive edge you need.

Branding strategy and capture strategy have a lot in common, but branding strategy highlights some missing opportunities:

Left-brain thinking

Logical, numerical and analytical

Right-brain thinking

Emotional, intuitive and creative

APMP Capture strategy vs Branding strategy¹



By starting to think about branding earlier in the process, you bring the benefits of bid branding with marketing:

Benefits of branding

- Consistent messaging reflecting win themes and hot buttons.
- A consistent script for stakeholders and the internal project team.
- Effective design rooted in strategy.
- A tone of voice, which comes from personality and attitude.
- Strengthened branding that reflects the bid's values and improves recognition.

Benefits of a marketing opportunity

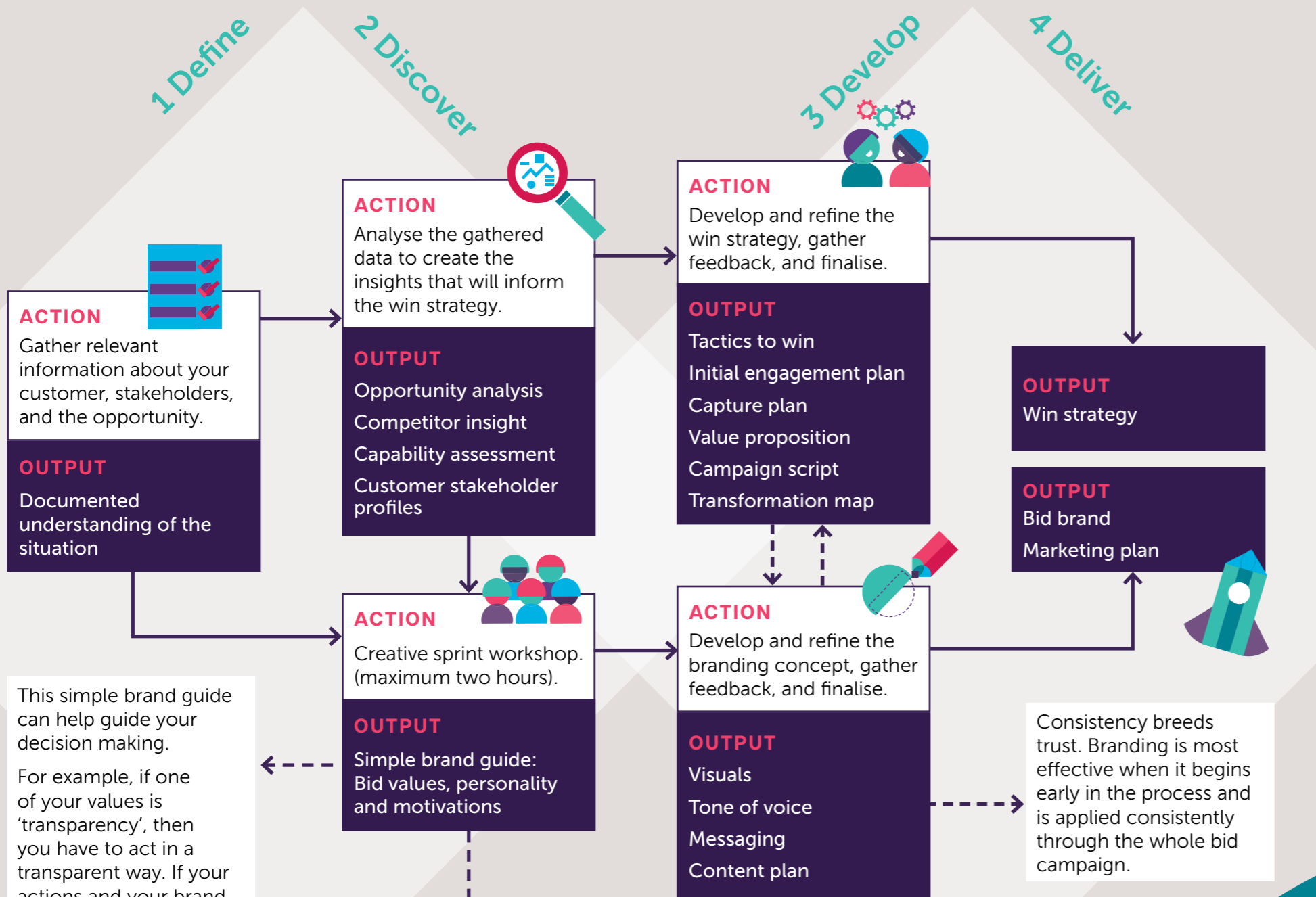
- Establish differentiators with the customer early.
- Make your own luck, engineering every possible (formal and informal) touch point you have with the customer, including meetings, emails and social media activity.
- Present your messaging to the buyer with carefully planned marketing, through advertising, social media, PR and whitepapers, even if the response is restricted to a spreadsheet.



Integrating branding in to the lifecycle of your opportunity

Here's how the best organisations are integrating branding into their opportunities:

Pre-proposal phase



This simple brand guide can help guide your decision making. For example, if one of your values is 'transparency', then you have to act in a transparent way. If your actions and your brand don't align, you will not be seen as truthful or trustworthy.

Take your visual design to the next level by rooting the creative in the overall business goals.

Tactical design	vs	Strategic design
Short-term deliverable Focus on finished product		Conceptual thinking that achieves business objectives Allows design decisions to be based on factual data instead of aesthetics or intuition

Consistency breeds trust. Branding is most effective when it begins early in the process and is applied consistently through the whole bid campaign.

The secret to success: branding at proposal speed

Design cannot slow the process down. If it does, you've failed to integrate it. By following the approach shown here, you'll be ensuring you bring right-brain analysis in parallel with left-brain analysis that's done in the discover stage. This will help your team focus on the messaging and remind them of their organisation's core branding and values – rooting the design in your strategy.

It's key that you're quick and collaborative. This process has been designed to be efficient, avoiding any duplication of research or briefings. Being open, transparent and inclusive will help with teamwork, positive dialogue, and create opportunities for creativity. Collaboration often delivers more than expected, generating ideas for themes or tag lines, and there's potential to uncover undiscovered gems.

It's crucial to engineer every touchpoint with your customer, from meetings and emails to marketing and social media, seamlessly integrating your branding into every opportunity. Done at proposal speed, it will align creative processes with your strategic objectives, to ensure your messaging remains consistent and impactful throughout the lifecycle of an opportunity.



Please share your thoughts on this paper and feel free to discuss this topic further with one of our design experts. Perhaps we can help unlock how you can enhance your branding strategy for greater success.
Find out more: rf@strategicproposals.com

An award-winning team, with over 35 years' experience

Helped clients **win billions** with a capture rate of over **90%**



Over **15** years as an APMP Accredited Training Organisation
Association of Proposal Management Professionals

Over **35** years serving clients globally

Working across all major industries including both the public and private sectors



More than **40** highly experienced professionals



Proven processes and tools



Strategic Proposals

0800 009 6800

info@strategicproposals.com

strategicproposals.com

Strategic Proposals