

2020
P R O P O S A L S

SURVEY:
"CORONAVIRUS
VIEWS"

PROPOSALS 2020
LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY

VIRTUAL COFFEE – 9TH APRIL 2020

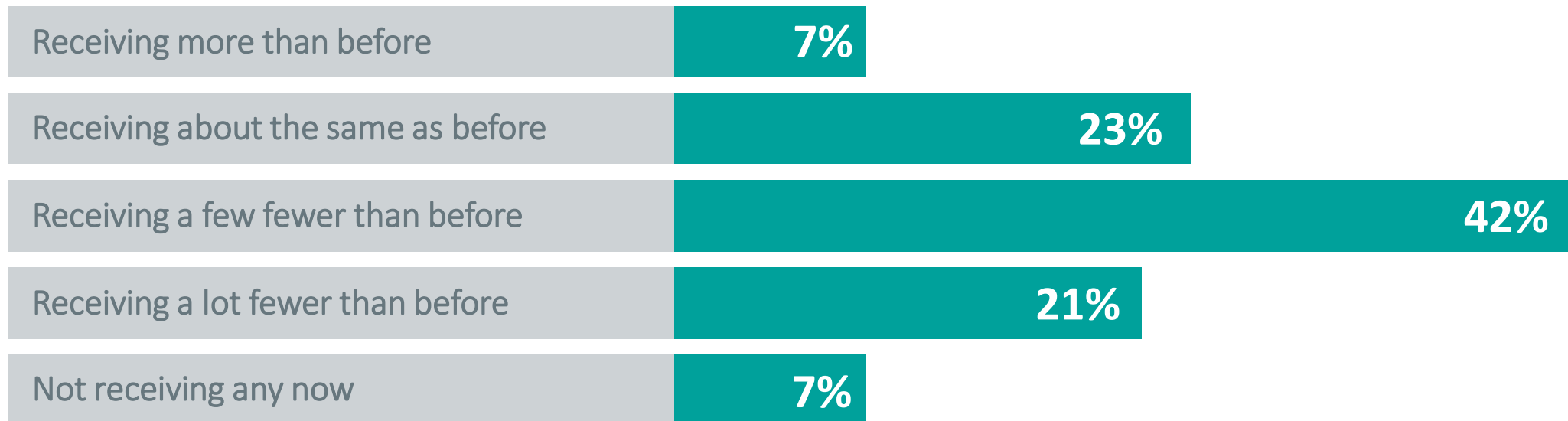


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MANAGING DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC PROPOSALS

Strategic
Proposals

1

Have you seen any change in the past couple of weeks to the volume of RFPs / ITTs you've been receiving?



Strategic Proposals

2

Are you seeing any particular variation in how your clients are responding to the current climate between different sectors or geographies you work in?



Americas

“Taking longer for volumes to drop: currently not much different to normal.”

EMEA

“Volumes are down, but some clients are forging on as if nothing's happening, with their own internal timetables to meet.”

APAC

“Slowly returning to normal volumes.”

“I manage a global team and the decline was - 70% in APAC and now trending West.”

COVID-19 insiders



“Urgent work for the NHS”
“Quick fee proposals for emergency work”
“Deadlines are extremely tight”
“Panic tenders”



“Some clients (e.g. supermarkets) have been experiencing a huge surge in demand, and supply chain issues”

“Deadlines are extremely tight when related to COVID-19”

“Rise in direct appointments as quick responses are required – no time to involve procurement or run RFPs”

“Global volumes are down -12%, value is up +25%”



“Public sector delaying projects / programmes if not relevant to Covid-19.”

“Defence is on near-freeze on procurement, with pipeline moved back.”

“Private sector distracted by crisis.”

“Infrastructure holding up OK. IT doing fine. Everything else shutting up shop.”

“Limiting exposure with New Business customers and focusing on existing customers.”



3

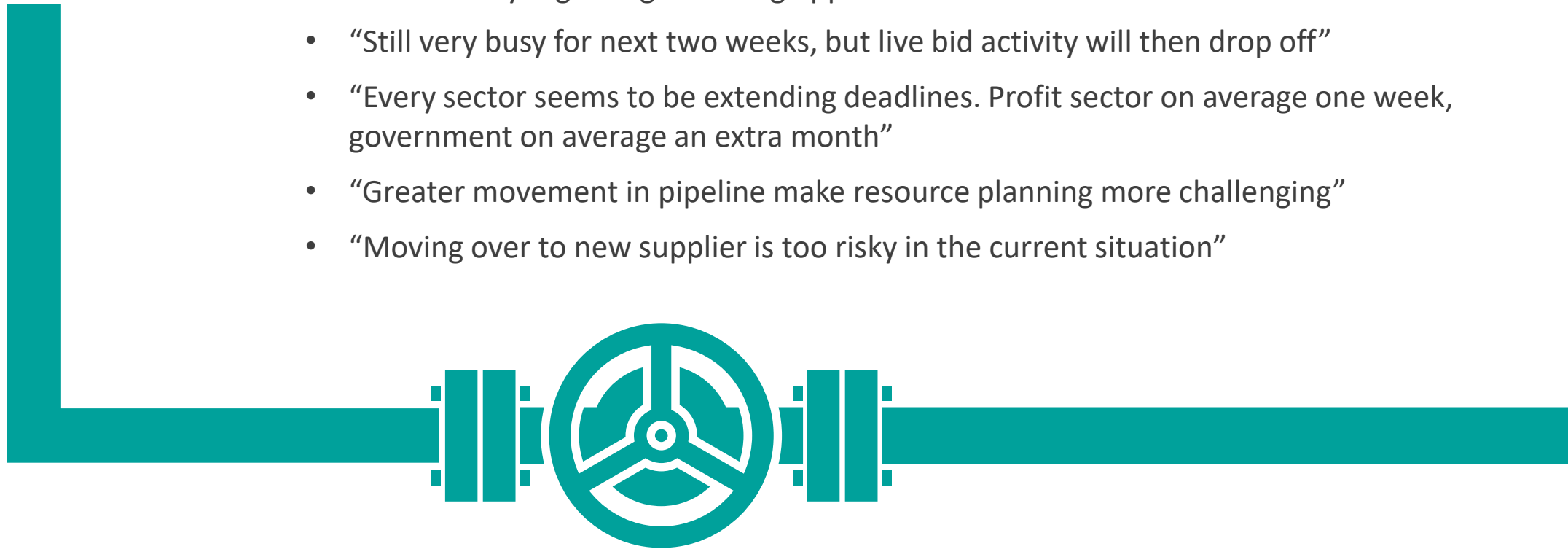
What are the three biggest challenges facing your bid and proposal specialists as a result of the current situation?



#1 67%

Pipeline concerns

- “Lack of new RFPs”
- “Tenders on hold”
- “Some major pipeline bids postponed”
- “Majority of sectors are postponing current procurements until July / October 2020”
- “Timescales are drifting”
- “Uncertainty regarding incoming opportunities”
- “Still very busy for next two weeks, but live bid activity will then drop off”
- “Every sector seems to be extending deadlines. Profit sector on average one week, government on average an extra month”
- “Greater movement in pipeline make resource planning more challenging”
- “Moving over to new supplier is too risky in the current situation”

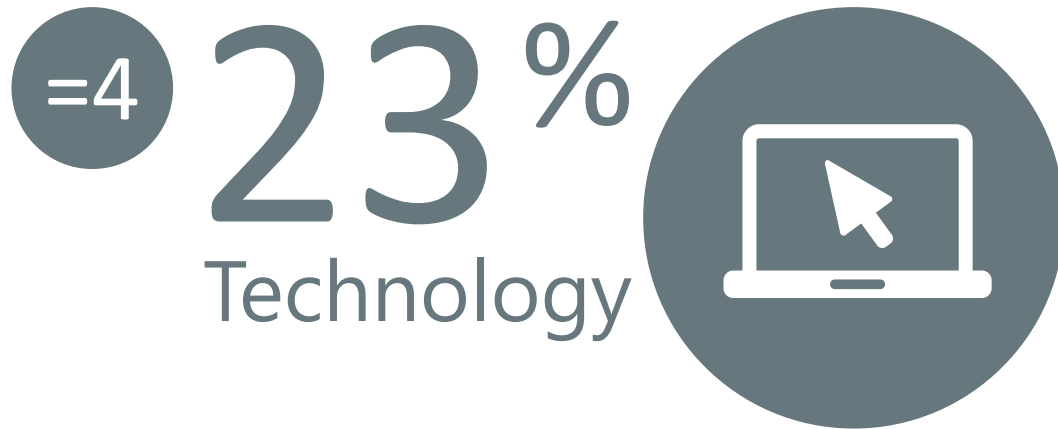




- “Learning to manage virtual teams”
- “Lack of face-to-face interaction / non-verbal communication”
- “Keeping stakeholders engaged throughout the bid period”
- “No quick water fountain meetings to move things along”
- “Business culture and trust to enable remote / virtual working”
- “Navigating home-working interruptions”



- “Undue stress by the combination of economic and humanitarian concerns”
- “Mental health - managing work and family”
- “Morale of team - all individuals responding differently... Challenge as a leader to try and help staff with anxiety and keep them motivated”
- “Mental health of the team - some are naturally better equipped than others to deal with extended periods of isolation. Supporting each other through a strong community spirit”
- “Disconnect and switch off due to WFH and overall fatigue of the market / event”



- “IT systems to enable efficient homeworking”
- “Influx of different web tools - Skype/Teams/Zoom/GoTo”
- “Extra burden on home networks”
- “Technology limitations / frustrations impacting delivery speed”



- “Delaying of customer decisions” (“2-8 weeks”)
- Having to hold price offers indefinitely
- Ensuring proposals are still commercially viable when contracts go live - the world may be a very different place in Jan 2021!

#6 21%

Bid practicalities

- Lack of pipeline visibility
- [Sales] tending to chase anything, risking wasting proposal team's time
- Not being able to get out and visit the sites/customers
- Difference in solutions being proposed due to COVID-19
- Getting prices from suppliers
- Even tighter timelines
- Delivering inspiring presentations using remote working tools



=7 19%

SME support

- Difficulties securing SME input because of self-isolation / furloughing etc.
- Those specialists left being overburdened with work
- Availability of colleagues to support projects due to client support commitments



StrategicProposals

=7 19%

Kids

- Balancing work with childcare
- Balancing home schooling with work responsibilities, especially for those with young children who need pretty much constant attention



Other

- Some staff at risk of being furloughed - but with higher salaries this is a concern
- Anxiety about the company being OK
- Internal business priorities / focus being on COVID-19 related priorities
- Focus on operations, sales are a low priority
- Virus being used as an excuse to 'absorb' bad news and poor business performance
- Proposal specialists seen as overhead and companies reducing overhead
- Team sickness
- A lot of our proposal staff have been pulled into our crisis support team and are doing non-proposals work, which involves long hours and is even more stressful than bids.
- Getting the business on board to support with proactive activity e.g. content library etc.
- Bids delaying for three months will be a BIG problem for the second half of the year. We won't have enough resource to support

4

How do you believe that the current situation is affecting the well-being of your bid and proposal staff?

Please rate from 0 (they're all incredibly worried and stressed) to 100 (they're all fine).

Incredibly worried & stressed



They're all fine

Average 61

How are you personally
feeling right now?

5



Please rate from 0 (extremely depressed and stressed) to 100 (really happy)

Don't ask



On top of the world

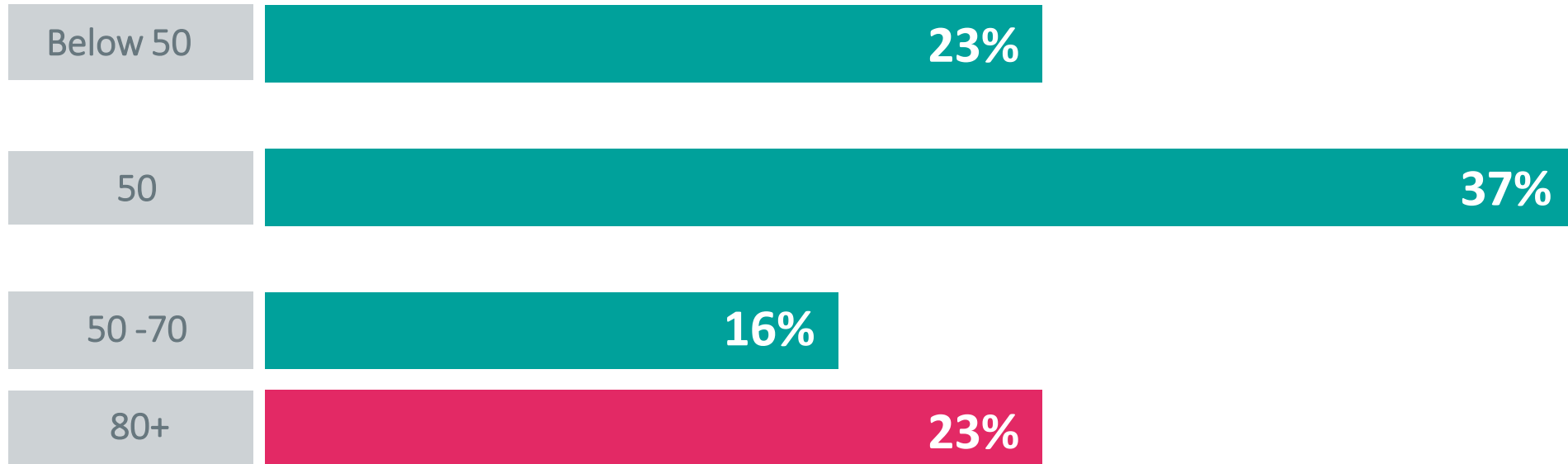
Average 63

6

Do you expect the Coronavirus crisis to have any impact on jobs in your bid / proposal organisation in the medium-term?

Please rate from 0 (we're expecting to have to lose all of our bid / proposal specialists) to 100 (we're likely to emerge from this with more staff than before).

Serious contraction?



Expansion mode

7

How (if at all) do you expect the situation will impact the activities you undertake alongside working on live bids / proposals - e.g. training, process improvement, pre-written content?

For some,
this may not
be on the
agenda right
now...



- "The proposal team is now being used to **cover over gaps** in the business. I fear this might become a trend post-COVID."
- "[There's a drive] from senior leadership... to support prospects and clients however we can in order to **support the rejuvenation of the global economy** post COVID-19."
- "We're **so busy with live tenders that we're struggling** to focus on those things at the moment, but recognise that these are equally, if not more important at this time."
- "**Budget tightening** - we were going out to the market for RFP software this has now been deferred to 2021."
- "In this sort of market everything falls into the bucket of "**nice to**" or "**need to**", and the former is usually put on the shelf. "

Many are
building
plans



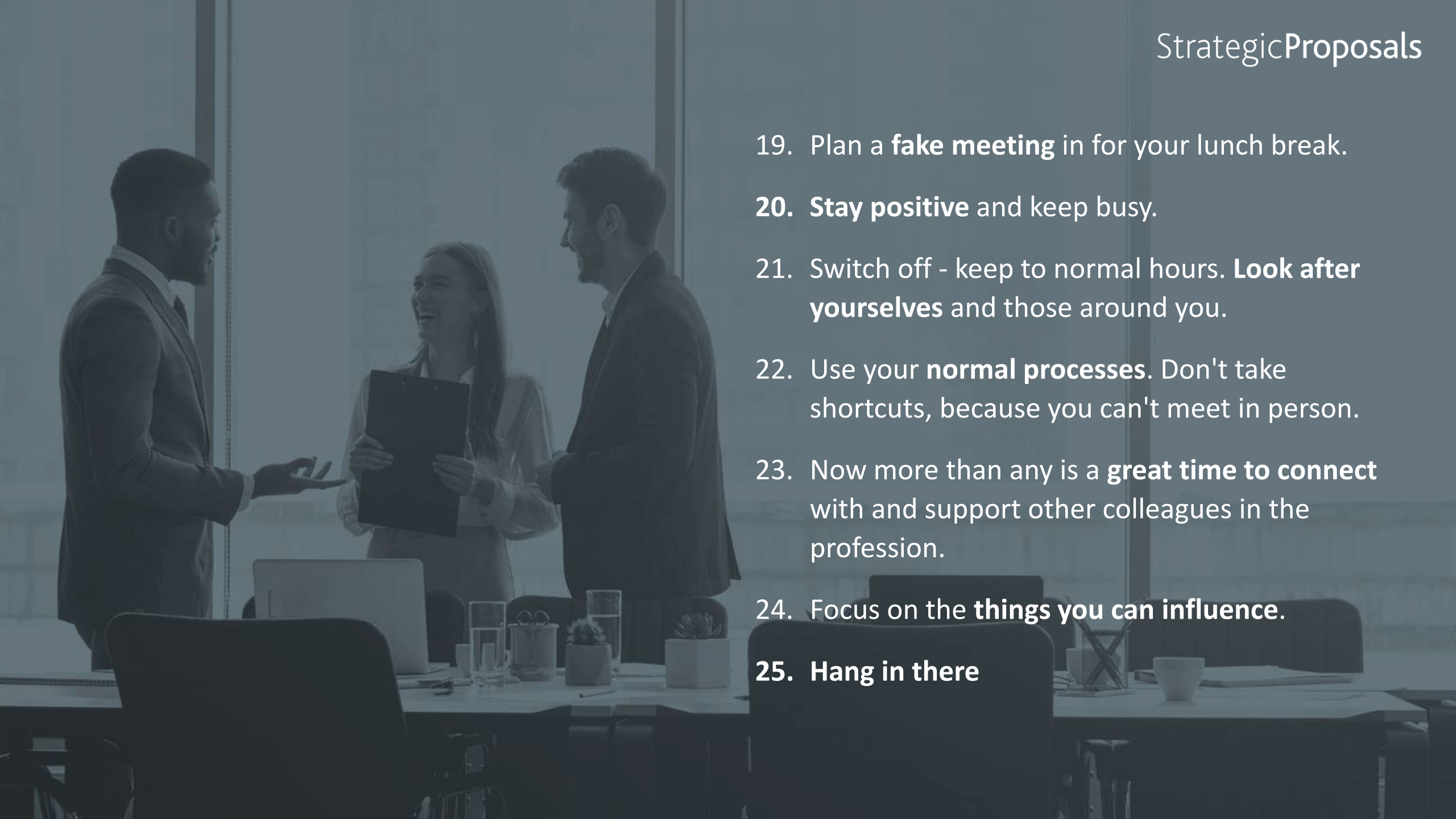
- “We aim to **take full advantage** of the opportunity to underpin the proposal function with great **content and processes**”
- “If there is a decrease in the number of RFPs coming in, this is an **opportune time** to catch up on all the **training** you never usually have time for, to update content and work on professional development.”
- “**50% increase in side-activities**”
- **40% of respondents mentioned “bid library”, “pre-written content”** etc. – not least because “we can use subject matter experts more freely”
- “**Training** will be impacted, as it will either need to be **remote** (do-able, but not ideal)”
- “We know the **bounce back** from this event will probably be **faster than a typical recession.**”

8

What one piece of advice would you share with other leaders in the bid / proposal profession right now?

1. Don't let this time become a self-fulfilling prophecy. **Lobby your board** to show that sales is the most important function to maintain growth / survive.
2. Demonstrate that the team is **being proactive**, looking for ways to support the business, pushing hard to assist.
3. **Share (and celebrate) anything that is won**, no matter how small.
4. This is an **opportunity to put your house in order** - to work on the gaps, those things we never have time to do when the next bid comes in.
5. Take the opportunity to take the business into the **digital world** and come out of it with more ability to be flexible, agile and more efficient communicators.
6. **Prepare for the future onslaught**, when all bids on hold are released, by getting your team trained, systems and processes in place and housekeeping in order.
7. Get yourself in the **prime position when the situation turns more back to normality** which means really focus on those proactive and renewal proposals, continuing to develop the pipeline.
8. Use this as an **opportunity to pull further ahead of your competitors**, by using the opportunity of any lull to do improvement work - rather than just stagnating.

9. **Demonstrate empathy** with the situation faced by **your clients** and be human in your response to their needs.
10. **Keep things in perspective.** This situation isn't normal. Don't stress if you or your people are struggling - cut everyone some slack. No-one can work full-time and home-school three kids simultaneously.
11. Give your team the **flexibility** they need right now. Health and wellbeing is paramount.
12. Team communication - not all are familiar with working from home, so making time for each other and **going out of our way to talk.**
13. Have a team WhatsApp group and send each other random chat and **pet photos.**
14. **Two virtual coffee breaks per week** to allow team to dial in and chat about non work-related stuff.
15. **There is no such thing as over-communicating** in these times. In fact, you have to 'over'-communicate to keep your relationships going at the same level.
16. Give **more than the deserved attention** to your team.
17. Good time to **revisit personal and team identity, values and branding,** goals, missions, development plans.
18. **Engage** with your staff, keep them positive in these different times and look for training / L&D opportunities.

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19. Plan a **fake meeting** in for your lunch break.
 20. **Stay positive** and keep busy.
 21. Switch off - keep to normal hours. **Look after yourselves** and those around you.
 22. Use your **normal processes**. Don't take shortcuts, because you can't meet in person.
 23. Now more than any is a **great time to connect** with and support other colleagues in the profession.
 24. Focus on the **things you can influence**.
 25. **Hang in there**



Any other comments,
ideas or tips for people
working in bids /
proposals?

1. Time to be **even more proactive** and innovative to support our customers and prospects, so we can make the difference versus the competition.
2. Bids and proposals are **fundamentally a competitive activity**. Those teams that will thrive in the new world will be those who react quickest to the new ways of working.
3. This is a good opportunity for us to stay safe and put our energy in thinking about **next-gen bids & proposals**.
4. Change creates opportunity, we just need to be smart to see it and **agile enough to exploit it**.
5. Keep your team **thinking positive** for the future and get them preparing for this future.
6. The virus probably marks **the end of an era of indulgence**. It's going to force smarter working with leaner and more virtual teams, a culture change that will be needed for the inevitable recession that will hit once the health concerns have subsided.
7. Run **lessons learned sessions / training / future plans** in the quiet times.
8. **Train your technical teams**, if possible, if / when things are quiet for them.
9. Deal with **what you can control; inspire hope and fun** in your teams.
10. The most important thing is the welfare of your people - **they need to understand this is your priority** and it helps keep morale up.

11. If a team member is feeling low, **buddy** them with someone they trust and **send them a gift** to cheer them.
12. Coach each other by **sharing gifts** of facilitation / writing / bid management / reviewing etc.
13. Have **regular catch-ups each day** with your team (video conference, ideally). Keep the conversation light and discuss the objectives for the day.
14. If you are in a leadership role, **push back on the business** if its expectations of staff are too high, as it's unhealthy for the workforce.
15. Challenge **weak deal qualification**. Don't let lazy salespeople make your life more difficult than it needs to be.
16. Offer **help to others outside your team** where you can. These favours build up goodwill and camaraderie. It will be remembered when these difficult times pass.
17. This period is really intense for everybody, even if you're already used to working from home. **Give yourself the same break** you're giving your team and colleagues.
18. Stay connected! More than likely **others are experiencing similar challenges** (like how to stop your two-year-old having a meltdown when you're on a very important video call!!)
19. **Expect the unexpected.**
20. **Keep smiling, we will get through this.**

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