

Good morning. I'm John Woodcock with The Family Business Institute, where we build better contractors.

Last week, I introduced the concept of early, middle and end game into our sales cycle. And I spent some time talking about what happens in early game. Early game is about identifying the right clients and then positioning ourselves with those clients. We're not selling here, and we're not focused on projects. We're focused on clients because we believe that the best clients are the source of our best project opportunities. So, if that's what early game is all about, what happens in middle and end game? Middle game is about qualifying opportunities. In some of our organizations, the default approach to finding and qualifying opportunities is an exercise in scanning the marketplace for RFPs and then responding to those that we think we have a chance to win. We consider the project, our capabilities and resources and the competition, and we decide where to invest our bidding and proposal resources.

But for the most successful contractors, the identification and qualification of opportunities happens well before the RFP comes out. It happens in middle game, and it happens as a direct result of the work they did in that early game phase. By doing this early game work, we've put ourselves in a position to know our client's hot buttons. Know their critical operational and facility needs and maybe even know their preferred design partners, suppliers, and other key players. You've got superior intelligence about the decision makers and their decision-making process. The priorities for their business, their operation, and the things they really value in a business partner.

Now because of these insights, you're now in a position to do two really critical things. One, you can determine if this opportunity is in fact the best and highest use of your limited resources. And not just your project management and supervision, but also your preconstruction and estimating resources, marketing talent, as well as those hard assets like cash and equipment. And if it does qualify, now you can really dial in your RFP response and the things that really matter. You're going to use your scarce resources in the most effective and efficient way, and only on the best opportunities. Once we do that, now we're in a position to go to end game and end game is all about winning that project.

And winning is by no means easy. But you're going to be light years ahead of the contractor that learned about this opportunity the day the RFP hit the street. In fact, it's fair I think to say that in some sectors, healthcare, I think is a good example. If the RFP is already on the street, it's not worth pursuing. Too many competitors already know about the opportunity and are way ahead of the queue in the game. They already know the design team. If they're a general contractor, they've probably already locked up the key trade partners. And if they're a trade, they're probably already well down the road, working with that front-running GC, doing some early budgeting and preconstruction work. And whoever they are, they probably plan their staffing accordingly, so they're in a position to put their best team in front of the client on proposal day. For them, their end game work becomes about leveraging all of these advantages and using them to formulate the most compelling proposal.

They can capitalize on their strength and on the knowledge, they have of the project and the client. They have the best chance to win in the end game and secure the opportunity. And likely will do so in with terms and conditions that are aligned with their goals and financial objectives. I want to pause here and speak specifically to those of you out there that play mostly in the hard bid world. Where primary selection drivers are going to be some combination of price, schedule and maybe value. I recognize it may seem a little bit fuzzy to understand how early and middle game plays out for you when your access to clients and decision makers is difficult, or maybe in some public procurement scenarios it's even prohibited. But let me offer a couple of thoughts.

First, regardless of your market or delivery method, the objectives are the same, getting clarity of the best sources of future work and gathering knowledge that lets you be more selective about the project opportunities so that you can make use of your limited resources. And second, this approach will still help you get ahead by bringing early focus where you can create the most advantage. Whether it's locking up those best subcontractors if you don't, self-perform all of the

trades. Or developing strategies of how you're going to leverage your assets like equipment and talent to deliver the most compelling proposal or the best price.

Now I've mentioned three phases, early, middle and end game. I'm going to throw in a bonus here. And I call that the four stage I call that, next game. Next game is all about making sure that the client's project experience is positioning us for that next opportunity. How this happens might vary from project to project, client to client. But is there any better way to win that next job than by capitalizing on the opportunity we have at the current one? We'll never have more time engagement and interaction with the client than we will, as we deliver the current job. And if we're intentional, we can use that time to deepen our understanding of their business and their future business needs.

Now, while all of this may sound like it's only about sales and marketing. I like to think it's also about great risk management. In a week or two I'm going to be back and I'm going to talk about how, and especially where and when we can add some great go, no go, practices to help us make the best choices and conserve those valuable resources. In the meantime, please share any thoughts, reactions, or ideas in the comment boxes below. One of our values at FBI is appreciation. And we genuinely appreciate your feedback. It helps us be better and it helps us move closer to our vision of being that firm that more contractors turn to for a better life. Thanks for tuning in and have a great week.