

How to make working with Government work for you

 By [Teresa Jenkins](#), issued by [Litha Communications](#)

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What makes a good client?

The proverbial question for every business is what makes a good client? There are many answers to this question; two of the most critical ones are

- A client that has deep pockets.
- A client that will be around for a long time.

The logic

Regardless of your personal politics, it is hard to argue that National, Provincial, Local and Government Agencies are not one of the biggest potential clients for your business. This is a no-brainer.

As you can imagine, everybody wants to do business with government and government agencies, especially new emerging entrepreneurs in industries with low barriers to entry, such as communications services. The question is how? How do you navigate this potential minefield?

Trial and error

For more than 16 years now, as Litha Communications, we have converted what started as trial and error into a science, and an art.

Whether we are providing a boutique service in printing of marketing collateral, producing an annual report or executive media training for a client like SAHRA, or managing an international conference for the NHBRC involving international guests and speakers and all spheres of government in the Human Settlements space, *the rules of engagement are the same: Government work is gained through tenders.*

The seven steps to increase your chances of winning the next tender:

1. You need to make sure you are registered in the correct databases for the services you provide.
2. You must only respond to services you are competent to deliver.
3. Your proposal must be responsive to the functionality areas stipulated in the terms of reference.
4. Make it easy for a panel of adjudicators to find the information they need to make a decision. Many don't read the proposals before they sit down to adjudicate them.
5. With functionality in place, you must comply with all legal and supply chain requirements.
6. You must have a strong financial position.
7. And lastly, you must spread your eggs in many baskets.

These are just the compliance aspects of doing business with government. While costs need to remain competitive, *most genuine tender panels are looking for value for money, not necessarily the cheapest price.*

Mind your Ps and Qs

It is also important to bear this in mind:

- Government contracting does not happen overnight. Sometimes three weeks, might be three months. You need to hang in there, and remain patient.
- Regardless of how much you bust your guts, government officials will not recognise the value of your expertise until the engagement is over. This is not the kind of work to do if you thrive on praise.
- You are not necessarily as good as your last project. You can deliver wow today, and not get the job next time because government also considers equitable distribution of contracts. Regardless, keep knocking.
- The adage, "the customer is always right" applies to government clients too, even when they are wrong. If you decide to correct a senior government official, be diplomatic, as you would with any other client.

In our experience, this is what has stood us in good standing, sometimes helping government to correctly specify their own requirements.

**The author of the article, Teresa Jenkins, is Managing Director of [Litha Communications](#). This article was provided by Litha Communications which is a sponsor to the Content Marketing Special Focus.*

ABOUT TERESA JENKINS

I am a passionate international marketer with particular bias for building sustainable brands, from inception to managing premier clients' marketing strategies and results-driven Public Relations. Outside work, I cherish spending time with family and friends, exploring wildlife and oceans through travel, indulging in reading, and embracing the adventure of lifelong learning facilitated by the internet of things.

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