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- Who** Foster Brandt is a network of higher-level consultants & trainers, averaging 15+ years in their fields.
- Our work in bids, projects, training & strategy - often a combination of these - is differentiated by a:
- *cross-cutting* approach, applying solutions from many different sectors & countries
 - focus on *longer-term* skills enhancement, via
 - fuller training with templates & follow-up, and
 - consultants, who also coach during roles
 - record developing larger *communities* of bid and project staff, of mixed level, into field leaders; and a
 - *progressive* style, particularly in bid technique.
- What** We typically advise, train, work as critical friends and manage, or share work, enhancing method & process.
- Where** We are virtual, using project hubs more than offices. UK & international roles (see left) see our tools & methods helping nationwide - and in many other countries.
- When** We launched in Brussels in 1999, analysing bid & project learning for the European Commission.
- Why** Our core aim (as in 1999) is to help bids & projects, and the procurements & programmes behind them, to have greater impact, innovate and apply learning.
- How** We have a reputation for being independent, progressive and cutting edge. We design many new tools & techniques. We also troubleshoot - and adapt - prevalent methods, filling gaps with new, tailored, solutions.



In bids, proposals & tenders, we advise & coach on both sides, tuning the work of *bidders and buyers / funders*.

We review and score many bids of all kinds. We spot technique trends and help set them. We enable people to keep pace with such evolution, emphasising process (pre-bid, post-bid & critique especially), team use, concept/USP and higher-level writing method.

In 2009-10, we took a careful look at prevalent bid management and skills models around Europe and beyond.

Skills: We found most bid frameworks and training to be:

- limited to too few bid types (ignoring wider trends);
- weak on strategy versus detail (when bids invariably win on relatively few, higher-level, points);
- hard to reduce for use by less frequent bidders; and
- poor on continuous improvement (their own / their tools for others).

We therefore re-designed our work around a new framework, **BID4**, addressing the above via a focus on 4 broader areas: Process, Content, Organisation & Text (**P-C-O-T**). The approach was widely piloted in 2010 - and well received.

Support: Here we found a need for advice & support for increasingly skilled bidders, which emphasised added value to core teams and higher-level capacity building, more than outsourcing. Our new, menu-based, framework of 8 products to enhance bidding teams and communities is *Art of the Bid*.



PROJECT

In project & programme management, we particularly:

Design

- guiding on scope, aims & outcomes
- advising on partners
- selecting method
- adapting method
- reducing method (PRINCE 2 2009 / MSP / logframe / other)
- devising bespoke toolkits to fill gaps

Implement

- providing interim, or longer term, project managers
- reporting & monitoring
- hand-holding
- trouble-shooting
- closing

Review

- evaluating impacts
- identifying thematic & transferable learning
- devising best practice sharing &/or policy input routes.

Our roles often feature:

Specialists - we increasingly source partners & associates with specific method or thematic credentials to enhance key roles.

Grants - we have particular expertise in grant programme management, which we advise on locally to internationally.

Mentoring - many roles see us work-sharing alongside teams, via our Active Mentoring Initiative, **AMI** (from the French).



Foster Brandt has trained & mentored in bid, project & policy skills internationally for over a decade.

We now run 10 courses in Bids, Projects & Programmes and 8 in linked policy (Option Appraisal, Partnering, SLAs etc).

Style

We are known for a distinct approach to equip people for problem-solving & progression longer term, with:

1. fuller days (with complimentary tutor follow-up)
2. substantial packs (with tools/templates/worked examples)
3. structure & modules (for review & benchmarking)
4. hierarchy (guiding on key points for now and detail for later)
5. contemporary design (aiding absorption & future use)
6. innovation (new ways to engage and support learners)
7. evolution (we test & revise everything we do, continuously).

Options

Many of our training roles are tailored to teams facing specific challenges. Our course research is much commented on.

Options include scenarios, allowing progress in stages through a tailored or lateral context. Our 1914-17 Antarctic setting for project & programme method is a firm favourite.

Our ICBPs (integrated capacity building packages) are a cost-effective solution for multiple groups with differing needs. We can include follow-up, or train your staff as experts / mentors.



STRATEGY

Do you mean those longish documents for public bodies?

Yes. But also short, focused reports, in all sectors, for local to international business positioning. Particularly for bids, tenders & funding - and procurement, or grants management.

But strategies can be rather stuffy and really not that useful?

Ours are practical. People have said: 'smashing paper' (2001), 'cracking read' (2004), 'we were stuck, we now have a way forward' (2007) and 'really valuable, well-received by all' (2009).

So are strategies by consultants still valid, post credit crunch?

Well, perhaps it's more important than ever to think ahead. An experienced external eye can help resolve competing priorities, focus time, reduce error and facilitate faster progress.

But we could save money and do it ourselves, surely?

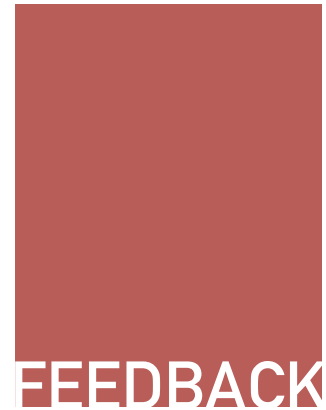
Indeed. But we see increasing merit in strategy via a critical friend approach (however, clients then do more of the detail).

Any other thoughts on strategy?

Another is that people could try to move strategy more simply into ongoing work. We've built strategy solutions and templates progressively into our wider support and training.

So presumably you have a strategy? With outside advice?

Yes. We had valuable help from Business Link & others. This helped us face some hard truths and take uncomfortable decisions. As a result, we are now more virtual, with a larger pool of trusted, often shorter-term, associates & partners. And we are perhaps better placed now than for some years.



A simple strategy for wading through the mire. Great products - CW
Beneficial & valuable. Simple, structured, concise & logical - GM
Conceptually very good - PF
Direct, succinct style, v v good - CK
Excellent resource set for future reference - MC
Feel more positive - approaching tendering with enthusiasm - CM
Great resources, will use templates - JB
High level, corporate, professional - SB
Informative, imaginative, incisive - KW
Just wanted to thank you, team feedback was very positive - KC
Knowledgeable, likable, a brilliant professional - HC
Left me hungry for further knowledge, knowing where to find it - CA
Materials inspirational on how to produce my own documents - PO
Now I have a hope in the public sector - WB
Original, most definitely usable for the future - DQ
Positive approach to demystify tendering - DS
Quality materials - DM
Relaxed, approachable, supportive & helpful - TW
Scenario excellent - KC
Thorough, broad-ranging, concise - RH
Useful, valuable tools - AB
Very clear, engaged with our
group very well - SA
Will be my guide moving
forward - AB
You're fresh,
innovative
- PB

Architects
Broadcasters
Care & Health
Disability orgs
European Union DGs
Fire services
Gypsy projects
Housing
International NGOs
Journalism trainers
Knowledge centres
Local authorities
Marketing firms
National Govts
Olympic contractors
Police forces
Quarry operators
RDAs
SMEs
Training agencies
Universities/colleges
Voluntary orgs
Welfare to Work

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