

Pre-Bid Questioning to the Owner or Yourself

Executive Summary. Many challenges in a project can be flushed out in the pre-bid phase with clear and concise questioning to the Owner. Consider these questions as a part of your bidding procedure.

The Bidding Procedure. The procedure's quite simple: there's an *advertisement* phase, an *estimating* phase, and then the *bid day*.



The estimating phase is when the Contractor calculates the cost of a project including all aspects of the Contract Documents. It's also when questions should be asked prior to turning in the bid to help flush out any potential problems during the project.

Questions to Ask. I wrote another article for Construction Executive (scan the QR Code) about avoiding claims in a pre-bid analysis. Those questions are great too, and relate mainly to claims avoidance. [QR]



Here is a good list of questions to make sure you know the answer to before submitting your bid:

Question to Ask	Why Ask?
Is there a differing site conditions clause?	With no differing site conditions clause, any condition underground could be your problem. There will be no relief even if it's a condition never experience before. You better have a contingency!
What comprises the Contract?	Are as-builts, geotechnical reports, third party drawings, environmental reports, and permits a part of the contract? This obligates you to understand what is contained within each document as you will be held to its contents during project execution.

In force account work, are cost markups reasonable?	Some contracts disallow markup for, say, equipment. Therefore, performing extra work on a force account basis may be at or near cost which doesn't grow your business.
Are there liquidated damages?	If the schedule is impossible to meet, make sure to add in the cost of paying liquidated damages, or the overtime to finish timely.
Is there an incentive clause?	Liquidated damages are considered a disincentive. On the flipside, is there an incentive clause wherein you are paid for early completion?
How are bid items paid?	Sometimes pipe is not paid until the pavement over it is installed. Sometimes mobilization is not fully paid until project completion. As an estimator you'll want to know these answers and adjust payment if at all possible to improve project cash flow.
What is the site access like?	Look for overhead conflicts from utilities and narrow work areas as directly affecting choice of equipment and resulting productions.
What are the work hours?	If you're restricted by vehicular traffic on the roadway or operating hours of an airport, translate that impact into dollars in your bid (less daily production).
Are there calendar windows of non-work?	Animal breeding times (common with fish and birds) or holiday closures will stop your projects for days to months.
Do I have client-specific costs or daily hours I must "donate" to the project?	Your client is likely an Owner or a general contractor who may require: one hour per week of site cleanup, badging, specialized training, orientation, morning stretch and flex,

	and/or meeting attendance. All of these items require money.
Is there mandatory staffing?	Are you required to have a QC manager, a safety manager, or a full-time scheduler? Is this person's sole responsibility to perform this function, or can a superintendent also be the safety manager?
Additional costs per manhour for a third party?	Is there a Project Labor Agreement or a related community training program in which each manhour worked requires a contribution to a fund?
Am I required to use local labor?	Sometimes working in remote areas requires hiring the local people. This can affect productivity and many people bid this work assuming zero production.

My Story. I gotta be honest, I never made a list with all these questions and then filled it out on every bid when I had my own business. But, it'd be a good idea in retrospect, especially if you work for a larger company and you have to report information to others within the organization. Take this list and build upon it, it's a great start!



Work safe!