

## **How To Master the RFP Process and Land the Deal** **with Steve Boehler**

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Announcer: Why do some companies stand out while others seem to merely show up? That's what we'll explore with leaders across multiple industries to hear how they're creating better experiences by design. And now your host, Susan Quinn.

Susan Quinn: Whether you're leading a company or heading up the business development efforts for your firm, this episode is an inside look at how clients really make decisions from the moment they issue that RFP to the final pitch, what makes them choose one partner over another? My guest, Steven Boehler of Mercer Island Group, has helped Fortune 500 companies and mid-size firms alike to find that right partner. And he's here to share what sets apart the winners from everyone else. If you want to show up stronger and stand out meaningfully and win with confidence. Don't miss this conversation.

Good morning, Steve. It is such a pleasure to have you on our podcast today.

Stephen Boehler: I'm really honored to be here. Thank you so much for the invitation. And I'm really looking forward to talking about business and how professional service firms and other firms can succeed in getting more clients.

Susan Quinn: Well, Steve, I want the listeners to know that I first met your firm because our agency is part of Agency Management Institute, which is essentially our continuing education, and we are all learning from one another, but we have experts that come in to help us do our job better. And that's what I want to pull from you, your expertise. So, let's give the audience a little bit of your background and why they're going to want to hang on to every single word that you will be sharing today.

Stephen Boehler: So, today I have a marketing consulting firm that helps other firms succeed. Our business is to help other folks do better at what they do, help them find more clients, help them position better, help them appreciate how hard it is on their client side to choose the right partners. I ended up being lucky; I went to Cornell University, had a great experience, ended up working at Procter & Gamble in brand management for a decade. All of that, led up to eventually me being president of a small division of a big Fortune 100 and eventually starting this consulting firm. But the whole background really was sort of this odd makeup of different experiences that helped me really appreciate how hard it is to find, keep, and grow clients or customers. And it really has helped us, I think, do a fine job of better helping companies of all sizes with their need to stand out in really tough competitive environments.

Susan Quinn: It is a tough competitive environment, and we have so many different ways to learn about different clients, different vendors. I think there's two types of clients. I actually had a guest

couple months ago on the podcast that said there really two, the ones you have and the ones that you want [laughter]. It's as simple as that. This conversation is around the ones that we want. Specifically, that journey of one point you're the prospect and then they are inviting you perhaps to some bid with RFPs, RFQs, whatever that format might be for the industry.

Stephen Boehler: Mm-hmm.

Susan Quinn: You hopefully want to be shortlisted and then you have the pitch. You get an invitation to participate. If you are unaware that the RFP is going out, are you too late to the game or are there many companies that really are quiet about what they need and then they are looking for the best people to invite to the table? What's your experience in that regard?

Stephen Boehler: I think in a practical sense, you're too late. And the reason I would say that is that, Bain and Company has this fascinating research about B2B purchases, and big B2B business decisions. And in their research, they found that in major B2B purchases, 90% of the firms that were selected were on some kind of initial list.

Susan Quinn: Yeah.

Stephen Boehler: It makes sense, right? The thing that we've seen is regardless of the industry you're in, the folks that are making a B2B purchase decision almost always have a very limited, unaided awareness of companies that could help them. They may know a couple. They may know the firm they're working with or the firm they worked with last time. And by the way, they may not have a strong point of view about those firms. And so, they have a limited list. And some of the experiences they've had have probably not been great. And so, there's some magic in how do you get on one of those lists. Because if you're not on the list, you're probably not in the game.

Susan Quinn: So, do you have a perspective of how you get on the list initially?

Stephen Boehler: We do, we do. I think there's I think there's three major steps to that. I think you have to be ready first. This is a really important step and that's because in 2025, most of that customer's journey has passed by, let's call it maybe three quarters of it, before your firm even knows they might be looking for help. The second step is you have to be memorable. You have to do things proactively as a firm that creates some kind of connection with your audience, so that in that moment, in that critical moment, when they need help, you may be one of the firms that they remember. Or, by the way, that someone else remembers when they phone a friend, or you may show up on the internet when they do a Google search, right? So, then the third step is you have to be findable.

Susan Quinn: Love it.

Stephen Boehler: That means that it's really easy. The name can't be complicated. You've got to be easy to find online, whether it's through search, because you have enough activity, enough strong enough SEO, et cetera. Content has been great. They have simply the awareness. They know where to find you, and there's steps to do there. But all three of those require hard work. But think of it as I've got to be ready, I've got to be memorable, and I have to be findable. And if you have a plan as a firm to do those three things, you can succeed.

Susan Quinn: Well, I would like to go a little bit deeper. So, when I hear you say you have to be ready first, to me, that implies a strategy of what you would be looking for, that your firm has to have the expertise, that there has to be some credentials to even allow you to be invited to that table. Add to that of what would make sense.

Stephen Boehler: So, the readiness step to us is two main pieces. It's the firm, the product, the business line, whatever you're trying to build needs to be positioned in a compelling way. By positioned, I mean you have an idea of what your point of view is and how you're going to then express it in a number of different situations. This is more strategic than it is tactical. In our world, the positioning thing usually somehow encompasses insights about that audience, that target audience you're after that include insights about themselves as a target audience, maybe insights about how you show up relative to competition. And of course, about your own brand. If you've developed your position with those three frames, you're probably going to be doing pretty well. You want a position that says that your brand can solve that target audience's problems in a way that's distinctive from the way competition would.

That sounds simple, it's hard to do, but that really is sort of the premise. Now, that positioning becomes in many regards sort of the centerpiece for everything else you're gonna do. And the second major part of being ready is having what we would call a prospect-friendly website. And this is more important today than it was five years ago, 10 years ago, and like dramatically more important than 20 years ago. And that's because of what we mentioned earlier in that most of your prospects in any business you're in are going to find their way to your website before you know they're looking.

Susan Quinn: Mm-hmm. Absolutely.

Stephen Boehler: If your website is not just magically wonderful at expressing who you are, what you're good at, and why you are a compelling partner for them, they're going to walk away.

Susan Quinn: Yeah.

Stephen Boehler: The rest of the positioning is the part that makes you special and says, hey, yes, you found the right bunch to look at but hire us because we really got the goods. We stand out for whatever reasons we've determined that we stand out. That readiness step to us is about those two key aspects, being positioned in a way that's compelling for your audience and having the prospect friendly website that helps them advance your case without you knowing that they're there.

Susan Quinn: I think to have a crystal clear what you do. And I think sometimes clients want to put everything that's ever happened in the history of the world, but skinny-ing that down, do you find that an important thing with the clients that you work for? Or who they ultimately bring to the table?

Stephen Boehler: My partner, Robin, says this all the time. You want them to read the things you want them to read.

Susan Quinn: Yeah.

Stephen Boehler: And if you make it too long, they're going to read the things they think they should read.

Susan Quinn: Mmm.

Stephen Boehler: A great prospect-friendly website or almost any piece about your firm in any medium, the editing is critical. Less is often better than more.

Susan Quinn: Yeah. I love the brevity component. There's a time and a place to go deeper, but I want to let you know we're experts, that we understand you. And let's invite a conversation. So, with that as the basic point, so those listening, you've got to have a prospect friendly website and all the three things we said before you're ready, you're measurable, you're memorable rather and findable.

Stephen Boehler: Memorable.

Susan Quinn: Let's zero in on, okay, we've gotten a request to submit an RFP. What are the best ones do differently?

Stephen Boehler: Oh, that's a great question. In a really simplistic way, the best responses to RFPs directly address the business issue the prospect has. And the vast majority of the response is all about that issue and the prospect. The worst ones are all about the firm that's doing the selling. Here's the deal. If you're asked to provide response to an RFP, they probably know something about you. Number one, they really care about themselves. They really don't care about you. And I know that sounds awful, but it's just business.

Those potential clients have real pressures that they need help with, and because of that, when they open up an RFP response, and it's all about the firm that's pitching them and not so much about their business, they're not feeling confident they've got the right partner. The flip side is if they open up a response that is just dripping with content and information and clarity and insights about their problem in their business, they're going to be much more confident that you're the right company to help them.

Susan Quinn: Yeah. So, the types of RFPs that at least come to us, and I think for a lot of our firms in the, would say, AEC industry, architecture, engineering, construction, because we work with a lot of those, it's a very prescribed set of information. They almost want you to follow it to a T. And if I'm looking at some of them, am I always clear what the business issue is or how do I extrapolate that if it's not front and center? Cause, I think you make a good point, you know, direct, the best ones are at the business issue, and how you would solve that.

Stephen Boehler: No, it's a great question, so in our experience, people are so thrilled to get the RFP, that they dive right into crafting their response. And I would suggest a couple of things. In many of these RFP situations, there'll be a mandate that you're not supposed to call them or there's a prescribed way that you can submit questions. I would gently suggest, without going too far over any lines, that the more you can try to engage with them without being obnoxious, before the RFP is due, the better.

Susan Quinn: Yeah.

Stephen Boehler: A lot of firms simply never ask us any question about what they received, other than maybe pro-forma stuff like when it's due, or is there a format you'd like it in? And it seems crazy to me that they're going to go through all this work and never have any kind of conversation. And so, I think that a quick response, even it says that you're not supposed to contact them, a quick email back that says, thank you. We appreciate it. Our plan is, of course, to stick to the rules. We did have a couple of practical, quick questions. Can we get five minutes on the phone?

Susan Quinn: Yeah. Just ask.

Stephen Boehler: Just ask, but with respect and do it in a gracious, respectful way. Because the worst they can say is no, but if you're respectful, you're not going to lose points, right? The second thing I would suggest is most companies in any single industry at any given point in time are faced with the same issues. And so, a little bit of homework can help you quickly figure out what's probably going on in that industry. If, let's say you're familiar with the industry, but you don't do it every day. You're not really an expert, but you're an expert of what you do. And you have some experience. It's not hard to figure out what people are talking about in the industry and what are probably the strategic issues or business challenges that would relate to the specific thing that the RFP is asking for. And so, you can start to make some assumptions based on what's already happening in the industry.

Susan Quinn: Steve, in your experience, someone who gets an RFP and they may be slow to respond because usually they'll say, let us know if you want to participate. The ones who are the most responsive to that, do those get points versus those that are a couple of days later? Does that matter?

Stephen Boehler: Not as much as you'd expect. I think there's this weird alchemy of a lot of things that all add up to who wins.

Susan Quinn: Yeah.

Stephen Boehler: And certainly you want to get points for enthusiasm. And those may not be points on a scorecard overtly as much as they're just, you're embedding good thoughts in somebody's head. And so, I think it's a good idea to respond early. I think it's a good idea to get in early to confirm, and not the least of which is because you need the time.

Susan Quinn: That's right.

Stephen Boehler: Every second counts when you're responding to one of these things, and you want the time, but you might as well get credit for being early. And it's not a game changer. But what I will say about that is you don't want to be the firm that they're trying to track down towards the end to find out. That doesn't feel great.

Susan Quinn: Just to continue down that path, like each one of these add up to the ultimate list of who they end up hiring. But I would think too, if they don't allow a call ahead of time or they don't allow the questions go ahead and ask it. But if you don't submit something and they give you the chance to, that once again is an intangible or one of those things that they may say, you know what, they didn't even-, they were slow to respond. They didn't ask any questions. We had

these others engaged and it could move you out of the space. Would that be...?

Stephen Boehler: Absolutely. Well, it certainly helps separate you, right? Every company wants to be wanted. Now companies are people, so whether it's the procurement person, a strategic sourcing person in a company or it's the line business executive that needs this service, this program that the RFP is supporting, they want people in their corner that they can count on, that they feel want to be there. And so, the more positive and enthusiastic, without going overboard, right, the business-like enthusiasm about it, I think counts a lot.

Susan Quinn: Let's say that they do invite those who can participate in the RFP that there will be a call to learn more or for you to ask your questions. Sometimes it's a call. Sometimes you're submitting your question. So, I mean, you could have one thought. Well, I don't want everyone else to know what I'm thinking. But I would think to stand out, that's the time to really pull your team together and ask really smart questions, not getting into the nitty gritty weeds, but might that be the time to start to show how you would think about it? Or do you hold your cards close to your vest? What's the best approach there?

Stephen Boehler: We have a really strong point of view about this, which is ask all the important questions that have.

Susan Quinn: Because you get credit for it [laughter].

Stephen Boehler: You get credit for it, number one. Number two, you know in one of these open situations where all the folks pitching the RFP are on a big phone call, sometimes there's like this cattle call, like Q&A session. Just ask. Don't be worried that everyone else is going to hear. All the other responders are going to hear your questions and hear the answers. And there's two really critical reasons for this. Critical reason number one is that without that information, you can't do the quality of response that you want to give.

Susan Quinn: Yeah.

Stephen Boehler: So why in the world you would opt to not have the information and submit a lesser response because of some competitors being in the room or being on the email chain or, you know, seeing the answers, it just sounds like crazy talk to me. It's just really wrong-headed thinking, I think. The second reason is that you do get some credit for asking good questions. If your questions really are strong and they're so clearly about the business, because a lot of the questions that get submitted in our experience end up on the more tactical side of the equation about pitch process and stuff like that, that you would think you could somehow find out in a different manner. Or if that's the emphasis of their questions, it's going to leave that impression on the buyer's side that they're asking questions about should it be PowerPoint or a Word document or a spreadsheet, and I got this business problem I need solved.

I want the guys that are actually asking me questions about my business problem. Let's say they haven't been crystal clear about their business issue in the RFP. Of course, this is a great time to find clever ways to ask about the RFP that may get you information about their business problem, the problem behind the problem. And if you can understand the why behind the why...

Susan Quinn: Yeah.

Stephen Boehler: You're going to do better in your response. And by the way, there's a very good chance that the other competing firms won't really even know why you're asking some of the questions you're asking.

Susan Quinn: So it is, you know, being intuitive enough. It goes back to the point of view, a value proposition for any company is that you're understanding their pain points and you're making an emotional connection. And if you can do that, then you've got a better value prop than whoever is showing up next. The RFPs, so, let's just say this particular client has brought you all in to bring the best of the best and they all have really good proposals.

Stephen Boehler: Mm-hmm.

Susan Quinn: And let's say five or six have been invited to the dance and they're going to select three. Who's in and who's out? Does it go back to, are they addressing our unique point of view or our problem, or if they've all done it, then are there other things that then go to the next level that they're looking for? Give us some intel there.

Stephen Boehler: Prospects, of course, come in all shapes, sizes, and sophistication. In general, there is something they're looking for. At a minimum in their heads, they have some kind of score sheet. Most will have some kind of formal score sheet of what they're looking for that will have been derived around what their business issue is and what they are asking for in the RFP. And so, it's really important to take to heart what they're asking about in the RFP. One of the things that we suggest firms, responding firms do the minute they get the RFP is to deconstruct it and find out whether it's digitally or you print it out and you've got your highlighters and pens, find the words that can identify what's really going on in the business, what the requirements are in your response, what the format needs to be, what the specific categories are that they want you to talk about, and build your own sort of set of requirements of what you have to respond to. Because I'm telling you, there is going to be a score sheet somewhere. And if you choose which parts you respond to, you're going to lose points. And if they asked about it, it has some level of importance. Now, the things that they ask about that relate directly to their business, as opposed to some, I don't know, granular information that undoubtedly the procurement folks want, the things that are more about the business, undoubtedly will have higher score, more importance associated with them. And so you're going to really, really want to lean hard into making sure that you are standing out there. And one of the ways to do that is within whatever the requirements are, the response, like some you mentioned earlier, some of these RFPs, they have an order, and they want you to respond to in order to their questions, right? When you, in those sections that talk about their business or talk about key deliverables, that relate directly back to the business.

That's where you're want really to lean in and stand out. So, maybe you answer the question specifically about capabilities. Maybe there's like some capabilities questions, but within that question, maybe you throw in some caselets that show, that sort of lionized the amazing success that you've had for other clients in just a handful of words with a few snippets of huge results. Take every flexible moment you have, you know, you're responding from stand out in a way that is distinctive.

And the final thing I would say is, in some of those areas, go ahead and build in some sort of speculative thinking. It could be as simple as: boy, we love your category, we've got a lot of experience in your category and quickly updated ourselves. And here's like five key themes that

we're seeing these days, that are emerging for your category relative to your competition. And we would keep up this work if we were lucky enough to be selected.

Susan Quinn: Yeah.

Stephen Boehler: So, you're not solving for it, but you're showing an enthusiasm and a knowledge base that speaks volumes about your intent. And I'll tell you when firms do that, what, however far they take it, whether it's just, here's some notes on the industry, here's some insights we have about what's going on with your competition, or even if you carry it through to so even some early draft recommendations, the folks on the deciding side, the folks in the business unit are going to, in their heads or on paper, give you some extra points.

Susan Quinn: I love that.

Stephen Boehler: Now, so some people are to say, oh that's a lot of work and I'm not getting paid to do this. And great, that's fine. Don't do it. But if somebody else is going to and they're going to win and you're going to lose. One of themes that we like to express to our clients is that if you want to win, you have to go all in.

Susan Quinn: Does it serve a company if they feel that it is not wise to respond to an RFP or do you just always respond so that you can at least learn from that experience?

Stephen Boehler: I do think you want to be strategic about what you respond to and what you don't. Most companies will respect if you simply say that it's not a good time. It suggests that you are good businesspeople because you're not going to try to tackle something that you aren't staffed to handle. Now, what I will say is don't start the process and then stop. That can leave a negative taste in somebody's mouth. And so, if it's a public or government kind of RFP that's more of a cattle call and anyone can submit, that's probably not a big deal. Those are just sort of numbers mills. But if it's a corporation with a procurement organization or a business line in an area category that you want to do business in long-term, people have memories over this stuff. A good example is, back to this notion of, we were talking about, about how the firms that do well in these processes are the ones that are talking about the prospect and not themselves.

Susan Quinn: Well, what I think what we want personally is probably what we want professionally, and I often say to our clients: be really clear as you're, we're defining guiding principles and you want that to very visible on your website as they are looking to see who's at the other side, but then actually living it.

Asking good questions, I'm hearing, is key. Deconstructing that RFP, I think, is wonderful advice. And really looking at the words and what are the requirements. Don't just read through it, have someone put it together. But I would think multiple people putting an eyeball on it. So let's say you get shortlisted. What is the magic in that? So once again, I'm assuming they've read the RFP. There's a lot in there. Do you highlight bits and pieces or do you give a totally different presentation?

Stephen Boehler: Hmm. Good question. So, let's say there is a formal presentation. So, you've submitted something in writing. It was good enough to get you in sort of to that next step. I would make a couple of assumptions. Assumption number one is that there'll be people in the



room that could be really important decision makers that haven't read your response. And this is a really, really important issue point, which means that you're going to want to make sure that anything really critical in the original written response is somehow captured in the presentation.

Susan Quinn: Okay.

Stephen Boehler: You'll also need to take it further. You may have submitted a proposal in writing that not only does some strategic analysis and even develops recommendations around what you think they should do and seems like almost essentially a complete proposal. Now you're into the presentation. Our encouragement is you take that even further. You take another look at it, ask them about why did you end up being shortlisted? What was it about the present, the written response that they appreciated? Did they have any questions about any of the recommendations you made or any of the point of view that you expressed about them, their business, their industry, their challenge, so that you can then further fine tune what you're recommending in person. When you actually are in the room, and this is really, really important, I think when you're in the room, one of the very first things you wanna do is, of course, thank them for inviting you into the room. It's part of that gracious piece, right?

But introduce the team really briefly, just, and this is really critical critically important because you have limited amount of time with them, but it's who you are, what role you play on the business. The individuals can introduce themselves on your team, the pitching team, or one person could introduce everybody. But then what you want to do is immediately shift it over to them and say, listen, before we begin, we'd love to understand. We'd love to have you folks introduce yourselves. And please tell us who you are, what role you have play in the business, and one thing you'd like to get out of this meeting together today.

And they'll do this. That one thing question becomes really important because, as I mentioned earlier, some of the folks in the room will have not read anything. And this will be their first instance in interacting with the firms that are pitching. And some of those folks are going to be really senior probably in the organization.

Some of those folks may be the decision makers. And some of those folks may not have paid much attention to the RFP process until they're sitting in that chair, in that conference room, seeing your presentation, and what they want to hear you talk about may be very different from what the RFP said.

Now well you've done a couple of magical things here. Magical thing number one is you may have heard right there at the start of your meeting about something you weren't ready to talk about and you would never have talked about that's on the mind of an important decision maker.

So, you can redirect how you address that meeting. Number two, important, but not quite as earth shattering important as that, is that you'll have had everyone on the client side, the prospect side, talk. Getting them talking is the hardest thing to do in a presentation. And yet we all say we'd like this to be interactive. And then we all talk for an hour. And it's so focused on the presentation because we're asking them what they want. It's like one of the best. Taking that kind of frame of reference to the to the meeting is a really important sort of starting point in your thinking process about how you can stand out. And I guarantee firms that do this stand out. They seem different. They seem confident. They seem like the kind of people you'd want to work with.

Susan Quinn: You gave that recommendation in one of the sessions I attended probably eight years ago, could be even longer than that. And we started to do that in our presentations. I would say we get shortlisted most of the time, not always, and that's okay.

But we did start to follow that same thing. The thank you, introducing our team. And then what is, please tell us about who you are and the one thing you want to make sure. But it is powerful because you know, all right, we're going to address eight of the 10 things because we know, but you've got to quickly be able to determine who's going to answer nine and 10 that isn't part of the presentation, but you know what's on their mind. I think that is a real way to stand out. So I concur with that.

You've got to be good listeners to them, but then you've got to give a good presentation. And at that point, are you digging deeper? You're giving them you know understanding of their problem and then how you are being, would you say early on some of the speculative thinking?

Stephen Boehler: So our advice about the presentation is that after that initial opening, you dive in and you address their problem. Put it right up there in their words, by the way. Do not change those words. We see firms do this all the time. They see that an RFP saying we need more leads or we need more sales and somebody changes it to you need more leads because that's their impression. Once you do that, then you start to solve. You show them all the analysis that you did. You show them the insights that you were able to derive from that analysis and what that suggests as a way for them to succeed.

And when you come up with some sort of fundamental point of view about what their critical solution strategy should be, you're probably two thirds of the way through the presentation at this point. At this point, you say, now, before we recommend our solutions, we'd like to take just a quick break because we recognize that you have there are a lot of firms that you could consider for this work. And we'd like just take a quick moment to put in context a little bit about ourselves so that you can better understand how we do our work and the solution we're going to recommend.

And then you have five slides, no more than five slides about your business. And the five slides are pretty simple. It's what your business stands for, sort of your positioning. It's the process you use is slide two. The slide three is something about what it's like to work with you as an organization. Slide four is the logo slide that they look at and they think, oh, wow, look at all the experience they have that's relevant to me. And slide five is a quick capability slide. That's it. That's all you talk about for yourself. Let them ask more.

Susan Quinn: So, this is powerful stuff. We now know what to do before you submit the RFP, how to actually do the presentation. So, finish this sentence for me. The firms that win are the ones who consistently do all of that beautifully. I mean, we followed the steps, but what's the magic? Are they looking for a team that gets along? Are there some intangibles that go beyond that scorecard that they're looking for?

Stephen Boehler: In finishing the sentence, it's I have confidence that team will help me succeed. That's really, this is a confidence test. And either have confidence or I don't have confidence built into the confidence. There's a bunch of little things like, yeah, I'd like to work with those folks, right? I sort of like them, but the likability thing and the chemistry thing, it automatically gets a

bit better as long as you're not a jackass. If, if they're confident, you know what you're doing.

Susan Quinn: Yeah.

Stephen Boehler: That is absolutely the critical thing. And we didn't talk about this, but one of the ways to make sure that this comes across is that for the leader, the key leader on the pitching group side, to open and close and shut up the rest of the time. Let the team shine. And if you don't have confidence that the team can shine, then you got to train them up. If you need to do the pitching and bring in somebody else that acts like the leader, right? Because they want to think that the people that they are going to work with on a daily basis know what the heck they're doing.

Susan Quinn: I'm hearing this confidence word that moves those to the end, confident that they're going to make us look good. They're going to solve our problem. They're going to mitigate the risk. Whatever that risk might be, that someone's going to lose a job, or you know, whatever it is, if you're building a building, that the building is going to stay standing. So confidence is an important thing. I also wonder... if you have impressed them, can you go too far with confidence and too far...? I mean, what what's that fine line of where you are?

Stephen Boehler: Yeah, I think it's important to be yourself. And so, if being yourself is a bit of a quiet confidence where you're just crystal clear about your answers. You don't have to be screaming at them, right? And pounding the table that you know what's going on. And you want them to select you because of who you are and what you represent. If it's not real, it's a big risk.

Susan Quinn: For anyone listening that has a pitch or a presentation or a proposal that's due in the next couple of weeks, what's the one thing that they should revisit today to make sure that they are going to not just show up, but stand out and ultimately win?

Stephen Boehler: I think the thing that they should revisit in most cases is to make sure they are crystal clear that there's more going on than the RFP. And that they should be trying to think about what is really the reason for the RFP and what's the business issue that the RFP is meant to address. And that if they can think that way, they'll be thinking in a more holistic way about how they can help serve this customer and help the customer succeed.

Susan Quinn: I love that. I always end with one question, so how do you keep bettering your best?

Stephen Boehler: [Laughs]

Susan Quinn: How does Mercer Island keep getting better as you clearly are, because you are such a valued resource to so many?

Stephen Boehler: That is such a great question, and I think the answer will vary by whoever you're talking to. The way I do it is that I read voraciously about issues that will impact the industries and clients that we're involved with. And so I skim, I skim headlines like there's no tomorrow. So, there's probably 20 or 30 people on LinkedIn that I follow really closely, and I'll see what they're talking about.

And, but I'm a headline skimmer until something triggers me and says, oh, I need to know more

about this. And I'll do the same thing with the major publications, the major trade publications, business publications, the Wall Street Journal, the New York times, all of that stuff is part of my daily routine, but to make it work, the only way it works for me is, I'm a headline skimmer. And until something screams at me, that's relevant to my clients, my prospects, or our company. And then I'll dive in, and I'll pick the most important issues that are relevant to the, how we position Mercer Island Group and what our point of view is. And that's the stuff I really have to understand, because my point of view has to be able to be relevant tomorrow as well as it might've been last week. And so, whatever's changing the industry, I gotta know what's going on. So...

Susan Quinn: I don't think I've ever heard that response. And I love it because I personally feel somewhat overwhelmed, like drinking from a fire hose. So, much information. Where do I go? But to actually just skim and have your very prescribed places that you are skimming. And then it goes back to the power of that headline or what whatever you've titled it. Do I want to know more? And so that reminds all of us who are creating content to make sure it's relevant. I'm not sure what captures you. And it could be where you sit or stand at the moment and what is important.

Stephen Boehler: Undoubtedly. And I think staying current is really important in 2025 because we're all overwhelmed. And so, you've got to figure out how to choose your battles, and find your way to the stuff that really, really matters.

Susan Quinn: That is full of wisdom. And I appreciate that conversation so much. Thank you so very much for your time. I've enjoyed every moment and look forward to chatting with you soon.

Stephen Boehler: It's been an honor. Thank you.

Announcer: Thank you for being part of our best in class community. And until next time, keep bettering your best.

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