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FIELD GUIDE · BID DESK ECONOMICS

Three numbers that show what your bid desk costs

What did last year's RFP responses cost to produce? Three numbers give a first answer. A fourth tells you what each win cost. Put them in a one-screen memo and you have a budget conversation with your VP.

WRITTEN FOR

Heads of sales, commercial enablement leads, bid and proposal managers, and the experts who end up answering the questions.

INSIDE

A worked example, a one-page worksheet, and a memo you can send this week.

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Respond fast. Stay organized. Win more.

AT A GLANCE

What a typical response team looks like

Averages from a 2026 industry survey of 1,500+ companies (Loopio/APMP).

33 hrs	**166**	**39%**	**50%**
Average hours spent producing an RFP response	RFPs submitted per company per year, on average	Average win rate, down from 45% the year before	of respondents rank bandwidth as a top challenge, up from 31%

Most teams can quote these figures for the industry. Far fewer can quote them for themselves. This guide fixes that.

Four takeaways

01 **Win rate is easy to quote. The cost behind it usually isn't.** If you can't say what last year's responses cost to produce, or what each win cost, those are the numbers worth having.

02 **Three numbers from last year give a first answer:** responses submitted, team hours per response, and loaded hourly cost. Add wins and you get response cost per win.

03 **Hours freed by a faster process are capacity, not automatic savings.** The value is what that time supports instead.

04 **Numbers change nothing until a decision-maker sees them.** The useful output is a one-screen memo and twenty minutes on the calendar, not a bigger spreadsheet.

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01 The question with no owner

What did last year's RFP responses cost to produce? If you can't answer quickly, the reason is usually structural, not a lack of effort.

Sales owns the pipeline. The proposal team owns submissions. Finance owns the budget. The cost of responding falls between the three, and nobody's job is to add it up.

The risk runs in both directions. A team can overspend effort on bids that were never competitive and underspend on the ones that were. Neither is visible until the cost sits in one place, next to the results it bought.

02 Three numbers are enough

You don't need a finance model to see the shape of the problem. Pull three numbers from last year:

- **Responses submitted.** Count everything that went out: RFPs, RFIs, RFQs, DDQs and security questionnaires. In freight and logistics, include carrier and lane bids, rate requests and customer compliance questionnaires. They all draw on the same people.
- **Team hours per response,** across everyone who touches it: coordination, drafting, expert review, pricing input, corrections and submission.
- **Loaded hourly cost.** Ask finance for a rate that includes compensation, benefits and employer costs. Billing rates are not labor costs.

> **WHERE TO FIND THEM**
>
> **Responses:** your bid tracker, CRM opportunity stages or the shared submissions folder. **Hours:** pick your last five responses and ask each contributor for a rough estimate. Five honest estimates beat a year of missing timesheets. **Rate:** one email to finance, or use a blended rate across the roles involved.

For a deeper way to count those hours, see The Real Cost of Manual RFP/DDQ Responses on the Qualody blog.

WHERE THE $65 RATE COMES FROM

Illustrative assumption: a $110,000 salary plus $20,000 in employer-paid benefits and payroll taxes is $130,000 a year. $130,000 ÷ 2,000 working hours = **$65 an hour.**

03 A worked example

Take an illustrative mid-size team: 100 responses a year, 15 team hours per response, and a $65 loaded hourly rate.

RESULT	MATH	VALUE
Cost per response	15 hours × $65	$975
Team hours per year	100 responses × 15 hours	1,500 hrs
Full-time equivalent	1,500 ÷ ~2,000 working hours	≈ 0.75 FTE
Annual response cost	**100 × $975**	**$97,500**

Put another way: **three-quarters of a full-time person** spent every year producing responses, on a budget line that doesn't exist.

EXAMPLES, NOT BENCHMARKS

These figures are illustrative assumptions, not Qualody customer results. The 15 hours is a *blended* figure that includes short questionnaires. Full RFPs run longer: the 2026 survey average is 33 hours. At 33 hours, the same team would spend about **3,300 hours (≈1.65 FTE) and $214,500** a year. Your three numbers produce your version.

04 The fourth number: response cost per win

Cost per response tells you what the desk spends. **Response cost per win** tells you what producing responses costs for each contract you actually land, because the effort spent on lost bids is carried by the wins. It includes response-production labor only, not total sales or customer-acquisition costs.

STEP	MATH	VALUE
Bids won	100 responses × 39% win rate	39
Response cost per win	**$97,500 ÷ 39 wins**	**$2,500**

WHY IT MATTERS

Response cost per win connects your go/no-go discipline to money. Declining bids you are unlikely to win can reduce response effort. Response cost per win falls only if the reduction in effort outweighs any reduction in wins. Top-performing teams in the survey were more likely than others to track cost per bid.

05 Keep the number honest

Three disciplines keep the figure credible when it reaches a CFO:

01 **Hours recovered are capacity, not cash.** A faster process frees your experts for customer work or more qualified bids. It becomes savings only if spending actually falls.

02 **Keep commercial consequences out of the labor total unless you can document them.** A delayed signature is not automatically lost revenue, and a lost bid is not automatically the response's fault.

03 **Show a range when the hours are estimates.** "$80K–$110K" is more credible than "$97,512". It also invites the right follow-up question: where do those hours go?

06 The deliverable is a memo, not a spreadsheet

Budget conversations run on one screen. Once your numbers are in, the memo nearly writes itself. With the illustrative figures above, it reads:

To	VP, Sales
Subject	**What last year's RFP responses cost us**

We submitted 100 responses last year. Each one takes about 15 team hours, roughly $975 per response, so producing them cost about $98K across 1,500 hours of team time. That's three-quarters of a full-time person.

With a 39% win rate, we spent about $2,500 in response costs for every bid we won.

Can we spend 20 minutes on where those hours go, and which bids we should stop chasing?

That memo is the free takeaway. Fill in the worksheet on the next page to build your own version.

07

Worksheet: your numbers

Print this page, fill in the blanks with last year's figures, and you have everything the memo needs.

STEP 1 · INPUTS

INPUT	YOUR FIGURE
A Responses submitted last year	_____
B Team hours per response (all contributors)	_____
C Loaded hourly cost	$ _____
D Bids won last year	_____

STEP 2 · RESULTS

RESULT	FORMULA	YOUR RESULT
Cost per response	B × C	$ _____
Team hours per year	A × B	_____
Full-time equivalent	(A × B) ÷ 2,000	_____
Annual response cost	A × B × C	$ _____
Response cost per win	(A × B × C) ÷ D	$ _____

STEP 3 · WHERE DO THE HOURS GO?

Split B across the work. This is the question your VP will ask next.

ACTIVITY	SHARE OF HOURS
Finding past answers and evidence	_____ %
Drafting and tailoring responses	_____ %
Chasing and completing expert review	_____ %
Formatting, pricing input and submission	_____ %

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08 · NEXT STEPS

If the hours number is the one that stings, look at where they go.

Most response hours go to finding evidence, drafting and chasing review. That's the work Qualody takes on. It reads your RFPs, questionnaires and assessments, finds the right answers in your own documents, and drafts cited, on-brand responses, each routed to the right expert for review.

STEP 1

Run your numbers

Use the worksheet on page 6: enter your response volume, team hours, hourly cost and wins to calculate your results.

STEP 2

Count the hours properly

The Real Cost of Manual RFP/DDQ Responses.

qualody.com/blog

STEP 3

See it on your own questionnaire

Bring a live RFP or DDQ. We'll show you a cited first draft.

Book a demo → qualody.com

ABOUT QUALODY

Qualody is AI RFP software for teams that answer a high volume of RFPs, questionnaires and assessments. It drafts cited responses from your own approved content, so experts review instead of rewrite.

Respond fast. Stay organized. Win more.

SOURCES AND NOTES

- Industry averages: Loopio, *2026 RFP Response Trends & Benchmarks Report* (with APMP), survey of 1,533 companies. Logistics firms are a small share of respondents, so treat the averages as directional for freight teams.
- All worked-example figures are illustrative assumptions, not benchmarks or Qualody customer results.
- FTE assumes about 2,000 working hours per year.