

Exceed my expectations? Just meeting them will do, thanks.

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Please allow me to let off a little steam. I am currently reading through a number of responses to a contact centre RFP I recently issued on behalf of a client, and have just been promised by one of the bidders that they will 'go above and beyond the call of duty' to serve my client. Another promised to 'exceed expectations', while still another promised to 'outperform'.

However, I haven't asked for this. All I have asked is that they deliver the service to my client's customers, to the service levels outlined in the RFP, at a cost-efficient price, and to tell us in the response how they will do this. I'm in the game long enough to know that if I could set my expectations higher than I have, then I would have done so. They are set at a level that I know will give my client, and their customers, exactly what they want.

Why this need to promise excessive results? I get the impression they are struggling to explain how they will do something in particular, or feel they haven't been impressive enough in their response, and have resorted to this woolly language to make up for it. It just doesn't work for me.

I'm not even expecting perfection from a supplier. They're human and things will sometimes go wrong over a five year contract. When such unexpected events happen, it is the supplier's ability to correct them quickly that is, for me, a measure of their real ability to deliver the service.

So, all I want is for the supplier to get on with the job, and react quickly to get the service back on track if anything untoward happens. Nothing more and nothing less. Just meet my expectations, which are already equal to or above industry standard. And tell me in the response exactly how they'll do it without flowery promises.

And you've probably guessed it – one of the bidders who promised such exceptional service is the incumbent. If they had delivered the basic service in the first place, they wouldn't be in this re-tender situation. They clearly didn't even meet my client's expectations over the past five years – what makes them think they'll do it in the next five is anyone's guess!