



HOW A MICRO SME WON BIG BUSINESS FROM THE OLYMPIC DELIVERY AUTHORITY

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

When the decision to award the 2012 Olympic Games was awarded to London in September 2005 it was immediately recognised that in order to mount a successful event there would need to be intensive planning and investment in infrastructure and facilities. The body set up to plan, design and deliver the infrastructure and facilities was the Olympic Delivery Authority – ODA.

IRIS Consulting (IRIS) was involved in the very early days of the shadow ODA to assist in inducting new Board members and members of the senior management team in understanding their roles and how they could work together as an effective team. Having been set up in 2000 by 2007 IRIS employed 3 full-time Directors and 10 associate consultants.

Back in 2006 some of the elements of the original vision that inspired the work of the ODA were:

- The need to see the Games as a catalyst for a lasting legacy
- The completed facilities will take 6 months to demolish before legacy works like schools and housing begin
- There will be some 15 years of development post Games
- Some zones will be a construction site for 10 years –
- Target for 2013 being to create open and green space so the legacy areas don't appear a construction site.

These complex objectives required planning, policy and project management skills of the highest order. With the benefit of hindsight there is virtually universal acknowledgement that the Games were a resounding success – but at the time there were many doubters and prophecies of failure.

HOW DID SUCH A SMALL SME CONSULTANCY WIN THE BUSINESS?

ODA adopted an open and highly transparent procurement approach whereby all major commissions were published and competitive tenders invited.

In 2009 the ODA identified the need to run a tailored leadership programme for its senior and middle managers involve in ensuring that all the inter-linking transport facilities would work smoothly in the run up and through the period of the Games. ODA decided to source the providers of this leadership training through an open

competitive tender in order to ensure a highly bespoke offering at the most competitive price.

IRIS submitted a bid which was one of very many received. ODA short-listed 5 potential suppliers which included well-known national companies and some multi-national consultancies. After submitting detailed statements on methodology, case studies of other clients and Q&A interviews the ODA awarded the contract to IRIS.

In the event the leadership programme was designed and delivered to time and, of course, all the transport facilities were fully co-ordinated and worked excellently throughout the Games.

The Head of Organisational Development at the ODA, Michele Owens, has provided glowing testimonials about the contribution made by IRIS in helping achieve the successful outcome. She has commented:

“The contribution made by IRIS in designing and delivering a leadership development programme that exactly fitted our needs was vital. The programme enabled our managers to rise to the challenges and have the confidence to succeed”

LESSONS

What this case study illustrates is that even the smallest companies can win work from public agencies in the face of stiff competition from established players and “big names”. What is more such small companies can often deliver higher quality at lower prices.

What is required is that they be given a fair chance to compete and demonstrate what they can do.
