



Dyson Café Project

Lessons Learned

January 2018

Background

In June 2017, Imperial College London issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the provision of catering services at the Dyson School of Engineering (DSoE).

The Proposed Dyson Café

The café area is 133 m² and will be situated on the ground floor of the new Dyson building adjacent to the main entrance on Imperial College Road.

Customers & Demand

The Café's principal customers will be the 400 staff and students at the Dyson School of Design Engineering. This number is set to increase to 600 – 700 within the next 4 years; additional demand may also come from staff and students on campus as well as visitors to Imperial College.

Timings

The original ITT schedule indicated a contract award date in August, and a go live date for 1st January 2018. This was not adhered to by the client, and the lead times and changes were a consideration for the bid team. However, all requested deadlines were achieved on time by ICU.

- 26 June Request For Proposal (RFP) received by ICU
- 28 July response to RFP submitted
- 19 October, ICU invited to present proposal and menu tasting in November
- 17 November ICU delivered presentation and tasting to DSoE and College Panel
- 28 November, notification of unsuccessful supplier selection

Staff Resources

The bid was led by PB, with the assistance of the DPFS, the Licensed Trade & Venues Manager and Finance Manager. At the time of the RFP process there was limited staff resource available with the capacity to undertake the necessary work to submit a considered proposal within the allocated time.

To provide the best opportunity for success, SMG concluded that it would be wise to appoint an external consultant to assist the team with the RFP, and developing a proposed menu and mobilisation plan.

Appointment of External Consultants

SMG appointed an external Consultant and Chef with extensive experience in the Hospitality Sector, Universities and Visitor attractions, recommended by PB.

With short lead times, and limited staff resource available, this approach ensured that we did not put any additional pressure on our in house catering team or Social Enterprise Management. The bid team were then able to concentrate on working with the consultants to develop the concept and vision for the space, consider the operational challenges, and develop a budget and proposal that we believed would provide a compelling offer to the client.

The consultants were closely managed by PB with clear direction on the work and output required within an agreed budget and timeline.

Learning: Using carefully selected and managed external consultancy services provides welcome support for ICU staff, and adds capacity and expertise to our operation. Feedback from colleagues on the process and the quality of the assistance provided by the consultant was positive.

Information Provided by Client

The information provided in the RFP was limited to a general description of the opportunity and one plan drawing of the space. The venue was still under construction and it was therefore not possible to visit and inspect the space available. Throughout the process, the ICU team were conscious of the operational challenges of providing a catering service within the space as we understood it, and we planned our proposal accordingly.

Learning: Drawing on the collective experience and expertise of the bid team and consultants ensured that we were able to ask probing questions of the client and maintain an objective view of the risks and opportunity available to ICU.

Client Feedback & Outcome

The evaluation panel feedback was good and they commented that they were impressed by ICU's proposal, but we came second with a score of 173 against a winning score of 181.

Stage	Description	ICU	1 st Placed Score
1A	ITT Method Statement 2 - Due Diligence	Pass	Pass
1B	ITT Method Statement 3 - Service Specification	136	139
2	Supplier Bid presentations & Menu Tasting	37	42
	Total	173.0	181.0

Learning: We believe the process of submitting a strong bid provided a valuable development opportunity for the Union and our colleagues. It increased our confidence in our abilities and future potential, and enhanced the reputation of the ICU. We don't need to be the first to run the Dyson café, but we have demonstrated a level of ambition and confidence that we believe is respected by College stakeholders.

What we did well

- Maintained an objective approach to challenges and opportunities
- Managed our resources bringing together a small team supported by external expertise
- Managed the consultants work programme and costs
- Benchmarking on site catering and high street trends
- Menu development
- Presentation and menu tasting

What would we do differently?

- Collect and draw on more of our own feedback and evidence of customer needs to inform our opinion in anticipation of future opportunities. (Dyson had conducted their own survey and focus group to inform the RFP).

Not so well?

- We didn't win. However, we still had reservations based on the information available that the café would have been a viable proposition for ICU. Moving to the next stage would have required appropriate due diligence and the approval of the Board prior to contract.

Budget

- c£3k in professional consultancy services

How well are we prepared for future opportunities?

In keeping with the aspirations of our strategy, our carefully considered proposal demonstrated an ambition to challenge ourselves as an organisation and extend our services to our members beyond our current facilities.

Using external consultants provided additional capacity and expertise to help support our bid and manage our resources. We added to our own knowledge and expertise through the process and retain the documentation for future reference.

We believe our reputation with the College Procurement Department and stakeholders has been enhanced by the process, and the Union is recognised as a legitimate potential supplier for catering services at Imperial. Our confidence, expertise and reputation have all been reinforced by this process and prepares us well for any future opportunities.