



From mountains to molehills

Applying technology to better manage large volume ATMs

By Col Lange
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Introduction

At Lange Consulting & Software, much of our work is focused on helping organizations manage major tendering projects; especially projects to establish supplier panels. Approaches to Market to establish panels happen frequently; and companies know they must participate. In these circumstances many hundreds of tenders can be lodged – this is the mountain.

This paper describes some case studies where we've transformed these mountains into molehills, mainly through the use of clever technology.

Mountains

According to Google a mountain can either be a large steep hill or a pile of paperwork. We'll go with the pile of paperwork definition.

There are not too many piles of paperwork taller than the paper produced during the procurement exercise called 'tendering'. Comprising Approaches to Market (Requests for Tenders out to the market) and Tenders (coming in from the market).

Luckily these days most ATMs going out and tenders coming back are not in paper form; most of these documents are in soft copy, and if all were piled on top of one another, you'd still have stacks of room on your usb.

So we're not talking about a real pile of paperwork; but we're still talking about a big pile of work, we could still have a mountain. Not such a big deal if there are only a few tenders.



But what happens if you have hundreds of the little devils? All screaming out to be evaluated? Scored? Assessed for risk? Assessed for costs? And they usually always have to be processed quickly – and you have very few staff?

There is your mountain; and increasingly so as more and more ATMs are issued these days to establish supplier panels.

Molehills

But what if there was a way to smash this mountain? Grind it down to a molehill? You're in luck. There is a way; and it is not a dream.

Here are some case studies about when, where and how a few mountains were crushed.

2007, Office of Workplace Services

OWS needed some HR supplier panels and needed them set up quickly. We're talking 2 months from ATM to deeds. No staff, no RFTs, no specifications – but they did have brand new office space, OWS staff had comfortable working conditions. We had RFTs,

specifications and a toolbox full of handy software systems. OWS took a punt; they engaged us to manage the whole procurement process; we were obligated to use Austender; our systems complemented Austender.

An ATM was published in less than a week; in total we evaluated just under 100 tenders, reports written, delegates approved, letters written, deeds executed, and unsuccessful tenderers debriefed. All achieved in less than 2 months (albeit some debriefs stretched into month #3).

2012/2013, DEEWR

DEEWR needed to establish a suite of leadership and training panels. They were interested in innovative solutions. We proposed a largely outsourced solution to meet their requirements underpinned by our on-line tendering tool (360Pro) but still compliant with Commonwealth Procurement Rules. This was a bigish mountain with well over 100 tenders expected.

In the end 140 tenders were evaluated and in about 4 weeks the evaluation process was complete. Over the next couple of weeks: reports written, delegates approved, letters written, deeds executed, and unsuccessful tenderers debriefed.

2013/2014, APSC

The APSC needed to establish four supplier panels. They engaged us through the DMOSS panel as an outsourced service provider. Again, we were obligated to use Austender; and, again, we complemented Austender with our 360Pro on-line tendering tool.

In this case the APSC predicted about 350 tenders; but, based on our DEEWR experience, we could see Mt Everest. We predicted 700 tenders – in the end we had 668. Our team of 15 evaluated the tenders and the APSC's team (roughly 20 people) checked the quality of our evaluation work. I.e. the APSC team could log in and see what we were doing while we were doing it.

What our team was doing was evaluating these 668 tenders as quickly as possible. In the end we managed the whole evaluation phase in 5 weeks, we finished evaluating smack on the target date.

As we could extract tender details from the 360Pro

database to create mail-merge source data; setting up the letters and deeds was straightforward. Distributing the deeds was another matter. The APSC awarded us a second contract for this work; and there was no way we were planning to distribute deeds in an old-fashioned (expensive and time-consuming) way.

So we did a little detective work; and a little experimenting - and we found a way to automate the preparation and distribution of just over 400 deeds (and letters).

We've subsequently applied this deed distribution solution for DHA; ie what used to take about 3 people a few weeks to do at DHA, we can do in about 2 days.

2015, Department of Training, 2015/2016, Defence Housing Authority

In each case we were engaged to set up the infrastructure (360Pro) to allow DeT and DHA to manage 'large volume' ATMs. In DHA's case, as there are many hundreds of tenders, we are also engaged to extract and analyse data.

To date, we think DHA has the biggest mountain, but our grinding machine (360Pro) has proven itself very capable of handling these large ATMs.

About us

Col is from Lange Consulting & Software, a Canberra-based, independent consulting company with considerable experience since 1997 providing procurement consulting and training services. We also design, build, support and supply software applications to manage procurement and contracts.

We provide services in all facets of complex procurement including business case development, request for tender preparation, project planning, evaluation strategies and systems, training, tender evaluations and contract negotiation.

We specialise in facilitating tender evaluations to achieve successful outcomes.

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