



**Everything You Always Wanted to Know
About Writing a Speech Tender
But Were Afraid to Ask**

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1. What? The subject of the tender
2. Why? Purpose of the tender
3. Why Not? Managing side effects of the tender process
4. When? A brief history of (my) time - public tenders
5. How? What questions to put in a tender

What For: Tender much?

- IVR platform
- Applications: NLSR, SV, VSLA
- Include in wider call centre tenders? PABX, Call Recording, CTI, WFM

- Tenderer's goals:
 - Ensure competition
 - Get value for money
 - Ensure fit to requirements
 - As a means of controlling risk (or shifting it!)
 - Elicit alternative proposals not envisaged by Tenderer
 - Purchasing policy requirement

Tender Side Effects: Additional Cost

- A vendor's primary goal is to make money, and to get a new customer or keep an existing (profitable) customer
- A tender has additional costs on the vendor and tenderer, which may appear in the business case and possibly in the price – even if it is explicitly forbidden:
 - To prepare tender
 - To respond to tender
 - To evaluate tender
 - To negotiate with one or more on short list
 - To change (during negotiations, and post contract)
 - To maintain probity (esp. gov't and banking)

Tender Side Effects: The Loss Leader

- Reference site need in a new or consolidating industry can result in a loss leader
 - May entail high delivery risk
 - The nature of this type of solution
- Require a real risk analysis by the vendor & evaluation team (e.g. AS4360), show specific applicability to your organisation:

Project Risks Risk Description	Controls
Insufficient vendor experience & expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Experienced staff, formally qualified – Track record of successful implementation – References
Schedule/budget management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Project management, development and QA methodologies – References
Relevant capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Previous successful project executions – Similar implementation sites to your organisation – World's best practice – Open standards / Multi-vendor capability
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Key performance indicators – Service history with existing customers – locally based 24x7 service division – Industry leadership

Tender Side Effects: The Hired Gun

- **Problem: Lack of internal ‘complex technology’ skill set**
 - web research and conferences help but don’t replace actual hands-on experience
 - Can result in an you engaging an external consultant to prepare your tender
- **Caution is required**
 - It is a small industry, there are often past & future agendas
 - There’s no reason why not to go to the industry for comment, or to have another independent consultant review the results
 - Can save the rework due to a complex, unreasonable, or unfulfillable tender (99.9% success?!)

Tender Side Effects: Vendor Abuse

- Resist the urge to :
 - Screw down vendors' pricing
 - Market price check on existing relationship not likely to change
 - No budget allocated or business case prepared (use RFI)
 - Schedule Tenders over holidays
- Why?
 - Vendors are people, too
 - The response you get will suffer
 - Remember your goals
- Tenderer's goals:
 - Ensure competition
 - Get value for money
 - Ensure fit to requirements
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Tender Side Effects:

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When: Who Has Gone Before

Year	Organisation
2000	Aust Post, NRMA, Telstra
2001	ATO, Centrelink
2002	IAG, Optus, REVS, Suncorp
2003	
2004	CASA, Bigpond, NSW Police
2005	RACQ, VicRoads
2006	Optus
2007	Centrelink, Integral

'Public' tenders, many contracts awarded without tender, or with closed tender

What to Put in a Tender

- References
- Capability
- Technology
- Third party products
- Solution
- User Interface
- Support
- KPIs
- Roles
- Reporting
- Cost!

- Fundamental to risk mitigation
- Many companies claim that they can build speech recognition solutions, but recent and numerous references are the only guarantee

In-House Professional Services Capability

- How much of your staff is dedicated to speech recognition development activities?
- Where are they located?
- Is any development going to be outsourced?
- Is the callflow of the solution integrated with the speech recognition grammars?
 - Dynamic grammars and use of host database records to filter caller-supplied is a foundation for high-performance speech recognition

- Does the solution support universal ports?
(Universal ports are ports that can take calls for any application.)
- Standards compliance (VoiceXML for additional applications, XML for data connectivity, web reporting, etc.)
- The “ility’s” – scalability, reliability

- Is the vendor also a supplier of basic technology?
- Can the vendor work with other vendors and technologies?
- What speech recognition engines and versions are supported?
- What languages are supported by your system for ASR?
- Do your solutions support touchtone and ASR simultaneously?
- What text-to-speech engines and languages are supported?

- Give a vendor freedom to describe their unique competitive advantages
- Get a soundclip of what the vendor proposes as the solution for one or more key transactions – make this part of the contract

- Can solutions understand natural-type speech?
- Does every recognised item need to be confirmed?
- Show examples of production systems and perhaps sound clips of real interactions to confirm.
- Where is touchtone input and fallback appropriate?
- Are techniques such as dynamic grammars, cascading n-best grammars, mixed initiative correction & escalation, used? Provide references.

- Give examples
- Ask an opinion on whether this is a good fit for the project
- Can statistical models be used to improve performance beyond more deterministic approaches?

- Show a vendor what your environment is
- Have a vendor show how they can integrate with telephony, CTI, customer databases, networks, and multiple sites
- Provide this as a Visio diagram, the *lingua franca* of technology architects

- Suggest a timeframe, as the cost can vary depending on the urgency
- Have a vendor comment on the timeframe, and provide what they view as achievable and optimal
- What are the impacts of a staged development/deployment on project costs?

- Parameters:
 - Timeframes
 - Performance KPIs –
 - require vendor to suggest and agree to contract to specific performance KPIs
 - Project staging
 - Number of integrations
 - Acceptance testing requirements
 - Piloting and calibration requirements
 - Marketing dependencies
 - Amount of tuning required

- Ask a vendor to show a KPI-cost tradeoff, as there may be multiple levels that are suitable for a particular application
 - Remember that there is no such thing as 100% (Or 99.9%) recognition rates
- What impacts on caller experience can be expected

- Describe technical and customer support services.
- Do you offer 24x7 help desk support for application, platform and technology issues?
- Please describe your escalation process
- Is there a users' forum?
- Describe the training available for system administration.
- Does this include tuning?
- What performance reports are provided as part of maintenance?

- Disaster recovery system – cold, warm, load balancing?
 - What are the advantages/costs of each?
- Cost to increase capacity by 50% in port terms.
 - What price break points are near this level?
- Do port sizing calculations, and provide to vendor for opinion

Solution Capabilities & Roadmap

- VoIP
- O/S
- H/W
- Upgrades
- End of life (historical & future)

- Describe reporting capabilities
- Ask vendor to provide an their opinion as to what reports are necessary rather than requiring exhaustive (and potentially new) engine- and application-level reporting

- Who does what?
- What does your organisation need to do?
- How do teams integrate?
- What work is expected of internal IT, call centre, business or marketing staff?



Voice Biometrics Capability

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- More recent, parallel technology
- What are vendor capabilities/deployments



Voice Stress Analysis Capability

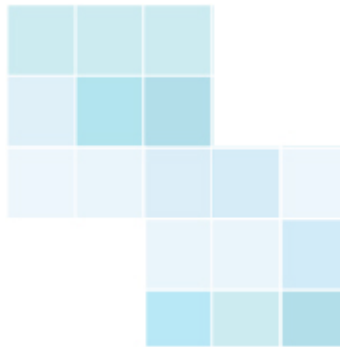
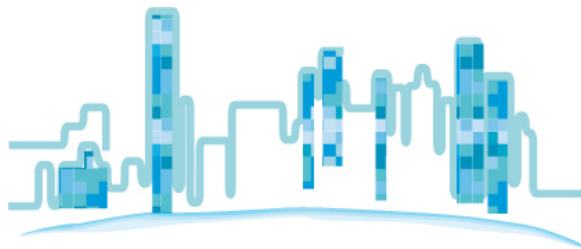
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- More recent, lie detection technology
- What are vendor capabilities / deployments / partnerships

Vendor's Local Presence

- What is current local presence & reputation
- What are future plans

Questions?



Speech: Real World, Real Benefits

