



**BLUEPRINT  
CRUSHER**

WHITEPAPER 01

EXECUTIVE BRIEF · 2026

# The Go / No-Go Decision

How high-performing estimating teams qualify bids  
before wasting hours

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A Blueprint Crusher executive brief for quantity surveyors,  
estimators, contractors and subcontractors

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# The Go / No-Go Decision.

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Most contractors do not have a demand problem. They have more invitations to bid than their estimating team can realistically pursue. The hidden cost is not just the bids that get lost — it is the bids that should never have been started. This brief lays out a simple Go / No-Go framework that lets estimators and quantity surveyors decline weak opportunities in minutes instead of days, freeing capacity for the work most likely to win.

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## SECTION 01

# The most expensive problem in estimating

*Inefficiency is not the biggest waste in pre-construction. The biggest waste is working on the wrong jobs entirely — and recognising it ten or twenty hours too late.*

At first, every bid looks workable. Documents open, the scope reads sensibly, and an estimator or quantity surveyor begins digging in. Two days later, reality sets in. The scope drifts away from the firm's core capability. The drawing set conflicts with the specification. The timeline needs a miracle. The client may not be a serious buyer.

By the time these issues surface, the team is already deep in the takeoff. And once hours have been spent, pressure builds to finish what was started — “we might as well submit something.” That sunk-cost reflex is where the real damage compounds.

Across the firms we work with, a meaningful share of estimating capacity is consumed by bids that were never likely to win, or should never have been pursued. Each one displaces a better-fit opportunity that arrived in the same week.

*“ The real cost is not the bid you lose. It is the better-fit bid you never started.*

**10-20%**

Typical win rate for strong contractors across bids submitted

**10-20+**

Hours commonly spent on a low-probability bid before disqualifying it

**30%+**

Bid capacity that can be recovered by qualifying earlier, without new hires

## SECTION 02

# Why bad bids slip through

*Poor qualification is rarely a discipline problem. It is usually a structural one.*

Estimating teams want to be selective. The reasons they cannot be usually fall into four categories — and each one is fixable without adding headcount.

## Pipeline pressure

Sales, operations and ownership all want a healthy pipeline. Saying no to a tender feels like saying no to growth, even when the math says otherwise.

## No structured process

Most firms have no written qualification step. Decisions live in the head of whichever estimator opens the package first.

## Information buried in documents

Risks that should disqualify a project — onerous flow-down terms, incomplete drawings, unrealistic milestones — sit hundreds of pages into the package.

## No fast way to assess risk

Without a way to scan a package quickly, the only way to surface problems is to start estimating. By then, it is too late to walk away cheaply.

## THE PATTERN

Teams react to whatever lands in the inbox. High-performing teams decide, in the first hour, which packages deserve another hour at all.

## SECTION 03

# The Go / No-Go framework

*Four questions, answered fast, before any takeoff begins.*

The strongest pre-construction teams we have seen do not start at the takeoff. They start with a structured first pass against four criteria. The output is binary — Go, or No-Go — with a documented reason either way.

1

## Strategic fit

### DOES THE SCOPE MATCH WHAT WE GENUINELY DO WELL?

Sector, building type, delivery method, geography and project size all matter. A close miss on any of these usually erodes margin even when the bid wins.

2

## Documentation quality

### IS THE PACKAGE COMPLETE ENOUGH TO PRICE WITH CONFIDENCE?

Drawing and specification coverage, addenda, RFI history, geotech information. Gaps here become contingency — or worse, claims — later.

3

## Schedule feasibility

### IS THE BID WINDOW AND THE CONSTRUCTION TIMELINE REALISTIC?

An unrealistic deadline at bid stage usually signals an unrealistic deadline at delivery. Both are risks.

4

## Client and commercial seriousness

### IS THE BUYER CREDIBLE, AND ARE THE COMMERCIAL TERMS ACCEPTABLE?

Payment terms, retention, liquidated damages, named insurance. If a flow-down provision is a dealbreaker on this job, it is a dealbreaker before the takeoff, not after.

### MAKE NO-GO A RESPECTABLE ANSWER

Teams qualify better when declining a bid is treated as a positive contribution. Track No-Go decisions, including the reason, so the discipline becomes visible and rewarded.

## SECTION 04

# A 5-point qualification checklist

*Use this on every package before the takeoff begins. If two or more answers are red, default to No-Go.*

**Scope alignment**

Does at least 80% of the work fall inside our core capability? Are subcontracted scopes manageable?

**Document completeness**

Are drawings, specifications and addenda consistent and current? Are there known information gaps?

**Timeline realism**

Is the bid window long enough to price properly? Is the construction programme achievable?

**Commercial terms**

Are payment, retention and liability terms acceptable? Any dealbreakers in flow-down clauses?

**Client signal**

Is this buyer known to us, funded, and likely to award? Any history of fishing for prices?

A 30-minute structured pass on these five points routinely saves 10–20+ hours of wasted estimating effort per disqualified opportunity.

## SECTION 05

# What changes when teams qualify early

*The downstream effects compound.*

## BID VOLUME

Capacity freed from weak bids redirects to additional qualified opportunities. A 20-30% lift is realistic in the first quarter.

## WIN RATE

Concentration on best-fit jobs improves close rates — the same effort, focused, wins more often.

## ESTIMATOR WELLBEING

Burnout falls when teams stop sinking days into bids they sensed were wrong on day one.

## MARGIN PROTECTION

Documentation gaps and onerous terms get surfaced before they become priced contingency or post-award disputes.

None of this requires new hires or new tools. It requires a structured first pass, a documented decision, and a culture that respects the word “no.”

The teams that grow fastest are not the ones that bid the most. They are the ones that decide, fastest, what not to bid.



NEXT STEP

# See the next 30 hours of estimating, before it starts

Blueprint Crusher reads a full bid package in minutes — surfacing scope gaps, documentation conflicts, risky terms and unrealistic timelines while you still have the choice to walk away. Book a demo to see how high-performing estimating teams qualify bids in the first hour, not the first week.

**Book a demo →**

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