

Case Library — Real Winning Patterns, Anonymized

The place where the doctrine meets the road. Every case in this folder is a real-feeling pursuit — a win or a loss — written to teach one lesson. This page tells you how to use them.

The doctrine tells you how the market works. The cases show you what it actually feels like when the market decides. They are the difference between knowing the rules of the game and recognizing the game when it is being played against you.

What these cases are

Each case is a **patterned-on-public-knowledge narrative**: the situations, the competitions, the mistakes, and the debriefs are drawn from the recurring lessons that public debriefs, award histories, and press coverage of federal procurement keep teaching. No company, award, or agency in any case is real. Names are descriptors (“a small engineering firm in the Mid-Atlantic”); dollar figures and details are deliberately generic. The *lesson* in each case is real, documented, and repeatable — the *story* is a composite.

That distinction matters, and it is the whole ethics of this library: **we teach the pattern, not the gossip**. The value of a case is not that it lets you name the company that made a mistake; it is that it lets you recognize the mistake while there is still time to avoid it.

How to use the library

- **Read a case the way you will live it:** first the situation and the solicitation, then make your own guess at the decision before you read what actually happened. The gap between your guess and the outcome is where the learning lives.
- **Always read the debrief.** In this market the debrief is the school, and every case is built around it. The lesson is what the agency’s own words revealed — not what the loser wished were true.
- **Use the “what this teaches” box as the takeaway.** It is the one-line transferable lesson. If you remember only that line from the case, the case has done its job.
- **Teach one case per session.** Each case is sized to be read aloud in ten minutes and argued about for an hour. A good session is: read the case, disagree about the decision, read the debrief, and then test the lesson against a real solicitation you are watching.

The case schema

Every case follows the same seven-part shape, so that cases are comparable and so that a new contributor knows exactly what to write:

Part	What it covers	The question it answers
Situation	Who the company is: size, location, certifications, history, and what it believes about itself	Who is pursuing, and what do they think they are good at?
The solicitation	What was being bought, the vehicle, the set-aside, the evaluation factors, and the deadline	What was the actual competition?
The competitors	Who else was in the pool and how the field shaped the win probability	Who were we really up against?
The decision	The bid/no-bid call and the strategy the company chose — the theme, the discriminators, the price	What did the company decide to do, and why?
What actually happened	The outcome: award or loss, and the immediate aftermath	How did the market actually rule?
The debrief lesson	What the agency's own explanation revealed, in its words	What did the evaluation actually value?
What this teaches	The one transferable lesson, stated as a rule	What should you carry into your next pursuit?

The cases

Case	The lesson	Read it when. . .
Case 01 — The Compliance Matrix That Won the IDIQ	Compliance is not paperwork; it is the difference between being considered and being eliminated. The win theme must be repeated until the evaluator cannot miss it.	You are preparing your first bid as a prime, or you think compliance is the boring part.

Case	The lesson	Read it when...
Case 02 — The Price That Priced Them Out	Price-to-win is a position built from market evidence, not a guess — and you can lose on the high side as surely as on the low side.	You are tempted to “price for quality” without researching the competitive band.
Case 03 — The Team That Was Smarter Than Its Size	When you cannot grow capacity in time, you can buy it with partnership — but a teaming arrangement only wins if the roles are real.	You lack the past performance or scale an opportunity demands.
Case 04 — The Ghost Theme	A ghost theme is a win theme your competitors never saw — and you find it by reading the evaluation the way the agency will apply it, not the way you wish it would.	You are the incumbent, or you are convinced you are the front-runner.

Ethics note: anonymization and source honesty

Two rules bind everything in this folder:

1. **Anonymize, always.** No case names a real company, a real award, or a real agency. Descriptors and composite details are the point — they keep the lesson transferable and the people out of it. If a detail would let a reader identify the real pursuit, the detail is removed. This is also the professional rule of the market: the debrief is confidential, and the winning pattern is shared, not the losing company.
2. **Teach the pattern, not the gossip.** Every case is explicitly *patterned on public knowledge* — the recurring lessons visible in published debriefs, award histories, and press. No case claims to be a true account of a specific event, and no case invents a specific real company, award value, or agency. When a case states a market fact (a price band, a set-aside rule, a program name), that fact must be checkable against the official sources. If you are not certain a pattern is real, do not write it as a case — the accuracy rule of the literacy layer applies here too.

Contributing a new case

The forever-learning tier treats case-writing as a discipline contribution, not a hobby: a case is only a contribution if it is (a) a real, documented pattern, (b) fully anonymized, (c) written to the schema above, and (d) honest about its source. Before you write, ask: *what does this case teach that the four existing cases do not?* If the answer is “nothing,” fold it into an existing case rather than adding a fifth story that repeats the same lesson.

The one-sentence summary

A case is a debrief you get to read before the loss — so read them, argue with them, and carry the lesson into a pursuit while you can still use it.