

What's Changing on Your Sales Floor

Engineering Technical Consultancy

You have seen this on your sales floor

“Your competitors’ procurement counterparts are showing up to tenders with AI that already estimated what AI-efficient delivery should cost. Your price floor is not being negotiated in your meeting. It is being set before your rep walks in.”

- 01

Why are we losing tenders we should be winning?
- 02

Why are our wins increasingly on price?
- 03

What happens when our best KAMs retire?

PROJECT ZEUS – TENDER PRICING SUMMARY

CLIENT: EUROPEAN INFRASTRUCTURE PLC | DATE: 22 APR 2026

AI-EFFICIENT DELIVERY ASSUMPTIONS (INTERNAL)

DISCIPLINE	TRADITIONAL HOURS	AI-EFFICIENT HOURS	REDUCTION
Civil / Structural	1,240	780	-37%
MEP	960	600	-38%
BIM Coordination	720	420	-42%
QA / Compliance	480	300	-38%
Project Mgmt	560	380	-32%
TOTAL HOURS	3,960	2,480	-37%

FEE SCHEDULE (AI-EFFICIENT BASIS)

FEE BAND (EUR)	OUR PRICE
Base Fee (Mid Scenario)	1,285,000
Optimism Range	1,210,000 – 1,360,000
Internal Target Margin	15.0%
Margin at Above Fee	11.2%

DISCOUNT SCENARIO ANALYSIS

DISCOUNT	FEE (EUR)	MARGIN
0% (Target)	1,285,000	11.2%
-5%	1,220,750	8.1%
-10%	1,156,500	5.0%
-15%	1,092,250	1.9%
-20%	1,028,000	-1.2%

SENIOR KAM KNOWLEDGE CAPTURED

From: Martin De Clercq (KAM – 18 Yrs)

- Client prioritises whole-life value over capex.
- BIM deliverables drive their internal approvals.
- Pushback triggers: programme risk, compliance confidence.
- Budget pressure mitigated by risk transfer + outcome clauses.

INTERNAL PRICING DECISION

SUBMITTED BY: J. Reynolds

DATE: 22/04/26

☐ APPROVED ☐ APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS ☒ NOT APPROVED

DISCOUNT APPROVAL REQUIRED

>10% discount requires CD sign-off and CFO notification.

A. Price

22/04/26

KEY LEVER

Emphasise risk transfer + programme certainty.

01 EXEC SUMMARY

02 COMMERCIAL

03 PRICE MODEL

04 DISCOUNTS

05 RISK & TERMS

06 COMPLIANCE

You have seen this on your sales floor

Every commercial director at a mid-sized engineering firm in Europe has had the same Monday morning. Three tenders closed last week. One won at full margin. One won at a 15% discount you were not planning to give. One lost to a competitor you do not respect. Your best KAM mentioned retirement on Friday. Your second-best asked for a raise. Your bottom rep is working the same pipeline he worked last quarter.

You have done this job for fifteen years. The pattern used to be simple. Hire reps who had the right stuff. Train them. Coach them. Let the market sort it out. The best reps stood out in two years. You built the team around them. You won a decent share. You lost some. The business was understandable.

Something changed. Your reps are working harder and closing less. Tender prep takes longer than it used to, and the deals still go to firms that clearly prepared better. Your discounts are bigger than they were three years ago on comparable work. Your marketing leads are converting at a lower rate. Your best KAMs are five years from retirement and there is no plan for what happens to the accounts they own. And your CEO is asking why the commercial function cannot deliver the growth the board is asking for.

This is not a you problem. It is an industry problem and a function problem, happening at the same time. Most commercial directors are treating them as two. The ones who see them as one are going to own the next decade of engineering services growth.

This briefing covers what is happening in your industry, what it means for your sales floor and your marketing team, and the three questions your leadership team should answer before the next board cycle.

Engineering consulting just lost the equation that ran it for forty years

Every technology wave your industry absorbed in the last four decades gave clients a reason to pay for more hours. CAD made drawings cheaper, so clients ordered more of them. BIM made models richer, so projects produced more deliverables. Digital twins extended billable engagement across the full asset lifecycle. The pricing model survived every wave because every new tool gave it a new reason to keep working. Your business has run on billable hours for forty years and it never once broke.

AI does not behave the same way. The client still needs the same bridge, the same compliance check, the same MEP design. The scope of the work is unchanged. But the routine production work that used to absorb most of the hours can now be done in a fraction of the time. Under hourly billing, faster delivery at the same rate means less revenue for the same scope. Your industry calls this billable-hour compression, and for the first time in forty years, your pricing floor is actually sliding.

Your competitors' procurement counterparts are showing up to tenders with AI that already estimated what AI-efficient delivery should cost. Your price floor is not being negotiated in your meeting. It is being set before your rep walks in.

The competitors in your segment are not waiting. Major engineering firms have committed significant budget to AI partnerships in the last twelve months. The ones moving first are already running ten to twenty percent fewer sellers while winning more tenders. Their reps are walking into meetings with preparation yours cannot match. The client-side shift is the other half of the story. Buyers in large engineering clients now run their initial research through answer engines and AI-assisted procurement tools. By the time your rep sits across from them, the buyer has a shortlist of two or three firms. In ninety percent of tenders, at least one of those firms is already the buyer's preferred pick. Your rep walks in to confirm, not to persuade. If they were not in the conversation before the shortlist, they are not in the tender.

Your sales floor, your marketing team, and your rev ops are feeling it every day

Your tenders. Your reps walk into specification meetings where the buyer has already done their research. The ones who prepared arrive with the buyer eighty percent decided in their favour. The ones who did not are starting from forty percent. Win rate on the first group is roughly double the second. The reps who prepare also hold pricing. The discount conversation is lost in the meeting before the price is ever quoted, not in the negotiation at close.

Your marketing team. The lead-generation playbook changed in a single year. Organic search is falling even on the pages that used to convert. Buyers research in ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Gemini before they hit your website. If your brand does not show up in those answers, you are not in consideration. Your MQL volume is degrading in quality, and the answer is not more MQLs. The leading firms are shifting marketing from lead factory to authority engine. Original research the answer engines cite. Senior voices in trade press. Customer stories with specific outcomes. Presence in the forums where buying teams compare vendors privately. Marketing's job is moving from filling the top of the funnel to making sure you are already the preferred pick before the funnel starts.

Your rev ops. The function that used to run CRM hygiene, forecast cadence, and quarterly dashboards is becoming the architecture of your entire commercial engine. The tools every rep uses. The data that flows between marketing and sales. The agents that capture what your best people know. The metrics that prove the transformation to the CFO. All of it runs through rev ops. Most commercial directors still treat rev ops as reporting. The ones pulling ahead are repositioning the rev ops leader as the architect who ties sales, marketing, and customer success into one system. This is the quietest change happening on your sales floor and the highest-leverage one.

Your reps' week. Account research, competitive intelligence, tender prep, follow-up, CRM entry. Six to ten hours a week of work that used to be the cost of being a professional seller. That work can now be done in thirty minutes when your team is set up for it. Your best reps are using the freed time to win more deals. Your middle reps are using it to do the same things they did before, which is now not enough.

Your best people. Your top three KAMs carry between twenty and forty percent of the revenue. They built it on fifteen to twenty years of customer knowledge, never written down. When your best KAM leaves, the knowledge leaves. The accounts' order frequency drops in the twelve to eighteen months that follow. Two of your top three are over fifty-five. The retirement conversations are already happening. You know which ones.

The winners are already running one commercial system

Your industry is compressing because AI takes hours out of delivery. Your function is compressing because your reps have free time they did not have before, and your buyers show up armed. Same force, two altitudes. But there is a third thing happening that most commercial directors have not named yet, and it is the one that matters most.

Look at the firms pulling ahead. Sales, marketing, and rev ops are running as one commercial motion, not three separate teams. Marketing is in the pipeline review every week. The rev ops leader is in the tender strategy meeting. Sales reps feed back what the buyer actually asked so marketing's next authority piece targets the real question. The data flows between the three functions. The tools are shared. The metrics are shared. Everyone is working the same system.

Most commercial directors are still running three teams with three plans. A sales copilot for the reps. A campaign refresh for marketing. A new dashboard for rev ops. Twelve months later nothing compounds, because the three plans never met.

Your competitors who get this will close tenders in seven weeks that used to take fourteen. Their reps walk in with everything yours does not. Their marketing is the preferred pick before the tender drops. Their rev ops has captured what the best reps know and made it available to every rep. Three things compounding into one. This is what the next eighteen months look like if you do not move.

You have eighteen to twenty-four months. The AI adoption debate is over. Your question now is whether you lead the orchestration yourself, or the CFO hires someone who will.

What most firms are doing. What the winners are doing instead.

Every commercial director has had the AI conversation by now. Most are making the same four decisions. A smaller group is making different ones. The difference is whether AI is being treated as a tool to roll out, or as the set of levers that reshapes how the function operates.

THE DEFAULT PATH

Run sales, marketing, and rev ops as three teams

Three plans that never meet. A copilot for reps, a campaign refresh for marketing, a dashboard for rev ops.

Buy a sales copilot and declare the AI strategy done

Every competitor has the same copilot within six months. The tool is the commodity.

Push marketing for more MQL volume

More campaigns, more leads, more dashboards. The leads convert worse every quarter because the buyer already chose a vendor.

Wait for your best KAMs to retire, hope the handover works

The accounts they built decay twelve to eighteen months later.

THE WINNERS' PATH

Run one commercial motion across all three

Marketing in the pipeline review. Rev ops in the tender meeting. Shared data, tools, and metrics.

Build the tools your team actually uses

Tuned to your accounts, your tenders, your product lines. Yours to keep, compounding with every meeting your team runs.

Build marketing authority where buyers actually research

Original research answer engines cite. Customer stories with specific outcomes. Your brand becomes the preferred pick before the tender drops.

Capture what they know now, while they are still there

The knowledge moves into a system every rep uses. Rev ops owns it. Retirement becomes a zero-impact event.

Same technology. Same twelve months. Opposite outcomes. The difference is the operator, not the AI.

Tenders. Discount. Retirement.

Three questions every commercial director is tracking. None of them used to be the same question. They are now.

01 · TENDERS

Why are we losing tenders we should be winning?

The tender went to a firm you do not respect. They did not price you out. They showed up better prepared. They had been in the buyer's conversation earlier. Their reps walked in knowing things your reps had to ask. This is happening more often than a year ago and the trend is in one direction. Your reps are not losing talent. They are losing the preparation race.

02 · DISCOUNT

Why are our wins increasingly on price?

Half the wins in your pipeline this quarter closed after a margin concession your rep was not authorised to plan. The customer said the price was too high. Your rep gave ground. Two to five hundred basis points of operating profit per deal walks out of your firm every month. It is not a training problem and it is not a tougher buyer. Your reps are outgunned in the margin conversation.

03 · RETIREMENT

What happens when our best KAMs retire?

Your top three KAMs carry a third of your revenue between them. You have never found a way to pass what they know to the rest of your team. Two of them are over fifty-five. Once they leave, the accounts' order frequency drops twelve to eighteen months later. There has never been a way to capture what they know. There is now. The retirement conversations are already on your calendar.

What the firms winning this play are actually doing

Four concrete moves any commercial director can start this quarter. Each touches one function. Pulled together, they fuse your function into one commercial system.

1

Sales: get your reps into the tender earlier, and better prepared

The rep who walks in knowing the customer's installed base, last year's budget pattern, the competitors the buyer has used, and the political dynamics of the buying team closes at around sixty-five percent. The rep who walks in cold closes at twenty-five. They also hold pricing at twice the rate. Four to six hours of prep compresses to fifteen minutes once your team is set up. Your best reps already do this mentally. The rest needs the tool.

2

Marketing: shift from lead volume to specification-stage authority

Your MQL pipeline is degrading because the playbook is ten years old. Buyers research in answer engines, industry publications, and peer forums, most of which your marketing team does not track. The answer is not more MQLs. It is building authority where the buyer is researching. Original research the answer engines cite. Customer stories with specific outcomes. Senior voices in trade press. Your brand becomes the preferred pick before the tender is scoped.

3

Rev ops: move from reporting to architecture

The rev ops function that used to run CRM hygiene and forecast dashboards is the new center of gravity for your commercial engine. In the leading firms, rev ops owns the tools every rep uses, the data flowing between marketing and sales, the agents capturing what your best people know, and the metrics that prove the transformation to the CFO. This is the hardest move to hire for and the highest-leverage. Without it, the other three moves stay siloed inside their own functions.

4

Knowledge: capture what your best people know, before they retire

Every top KAM carries fifteen to twenty years of application knowledge in their head. Customer politics, competitive near-misses, pricing history, which technical positions win. It has always been biographical, which is why your ramp for new hires is eighteen months. AI now extracts that knowledge from call logs, tender responses, CRM notes, and emails, into a system every rep uses. Ramp compresses. When the retirement lands, the knowledge stays. Longest lead time. Start now.

The only firm that joins the sales-floor conversation to the working tools

The commercial director in 2026 has four places to go for help. None of them can do what we do, and each of them for a specific reason.

Conversation-intelligence vendors record your meetings and give you dashboards. They do not sit down with you and talk about what to do with what they recorded, and they do not build the tool that puts your best rep's knowledge in every rep's hands. They sell dashboards.

The big consulting firms will write you a two-million-euro strategy deck. They cannot put a working preparation tool in your reps' hands in three weeks because their cost structure requires them to bill analyst hours. You can have their deck or their tool. You cannot have both.

The AI platform from your CRM vendor wants to run an eighteen-month implementation project that installs an agent inside their platform. Their business needs you dependent on that platform. That is not our business.

Sales-tech vendors will sell you another tool. Your reps will not use it. You have seen this before.

The market offers four things you have already said no to. GRAIL is the fifth option.

WHAT YOU GET

Senior advisory that speaks sales-floor, not strategy-deck

Working tools your reps use the same week

Custom agents built on your accounts, your tenders

The start of a knowledge system your best reps feed

No vendor lock-in at any phase of the engagement

WHY IT MATTERS

Founded by operators who have sold and led commercial teams

Business first, technology second

Three weeks from first meeting to working tools

Your reps keep the tools, you own the IP

Every next step earned by what just shipped, never assumed

Three sessions with your commercial leadership team. Working tools from week one.

We start with your commercial leadership team because the change cannot outrun the team's personal understanding of what is possible. Three workshops. Each delivers standalone value. Each earns the right to the next.

WORKSHOP 01

How to think

Walk through what is happening in your industry and on your sales floor. Build the first working tool in the room: a pre-meeting prep agent for one of your reps, on one of your real accounts, for one of your real tenders. Your leadership team leaves with a shared view of what to do next and the first working tool already in their hands.

WORKSHOP 02

Your team's tools

A half-day activation. Each member of your commercial leadership team leaves with five to ten working tools tuned to their accounts, their competitors, their tenders. Pre-meeting prep. Live meeting capture. Follow-up drafts. Tender response acceleration. Expansion signal tracking. Tools your reps are using the same week, not slides about tools.

WORKSHOP 03

Ready to roll

Refined tools based on real use. The rollout plan to your wider sales and marketing teams. The knowledge-capture plan for your best KAMs. The pricing-defence playbook for your middle reps. And the CEO and CFO conversation with numbers they can check, not a deck they cannot argue with.

Three weeks. No IT project. No board approval needed to start. The tools your team is already using when we finish.

For your next leadership team meeting

The questions where your leadership team cannot agree on an answer are the ones worth an hour on the agenda. Ask these honestly.

Of the last ten tenders you lost, how many went to firms that showed up better prepared, not better priced? If you do not know, how would you find out?

What is your average discount from list price, and how does it compare to two years ago? Which reps discount the least, and what do they do differently in the room?

If your top three KAMs retired next year, what would happen to the accounts they own? What have you actually transferred to the rest of the team in the last twelve months?

Where is your average rep spending their Monday morning today, and where would they need to spend it to close one more deal per quarter?

Which of your reps is already doing what the rest of your team will need to do by 2027 to keep winning? What would it take for that behaviour to be the default across the team?

If any of these produces a disagreement in your leadership team, that is the conversation worth having before the board asks.

IN THIS SERIES

There's a version of this briefing for every seat at the table.

GRAIL has produced industry briefings calibrated to the specific reality of each C-suite role.

CEO

Revenue. Margin. Valuation.

Three numbers your board reads. AI is rewriting all three in your industry.

CFO

Capital. Forecast. Story.

What you allocate this year is the story your board reads next year.

COO

Cheaper. Better. Faster.

The triple threat that used to be a tradeoff is now table stakes.

CHRO

Capacity. Capability. Promise.

The biggest talent transition of a career. Compete on capacity, not headcount.

CPTO

Moat. Speed. Allocation.

The platform moat that survives 2028 is being chosen this year.

CCO

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The whole GTM playbook is being rewritten in real time, across every commercial team at once.

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