

Army War Room
By James Collins

In 1972, in Elmhurst, New York City, I was temporarily assigned to a very unusual vice president. I was to act as a technical liaison to him, helping his people solve a couple of different electronic problems. I did. During my tenure with them, I learned that a major proposal, out of Washington DC, for the Army War Room was going out on the street. This was a key monitoring room for the president in the bowels of the White House. Marketing had determined that the government had \$2.4 million available in the budget for this item. The company was considering bidding on this opportunity, but there was a lot of consternation as to what it might really cost us to complete the job. The marketing personnel on the team insisted that the company for the \$2.4 million target could do the job. I had my doubts. I raised my concern to the vice president, Aries Bogozian, and asked him if he wanted me to get a rough estimate from the various departments of the company. Normally, I worked with them on a regular basis; Aries asked how much I needed to get the estimate. I told him I needed a number of people working for 8 hours as a team. However, it might consist of 30 or 40 people. He agreed to commit the cash.

I contacted all of the necessary departments in the company and told them to meet in the major conference room at 8 o'clock the following morning. They were to bring whatever they needed to assist in making a bid on a major contract for the corporation. They all showed up and I gave them a briefing on the contract. It consisted of all the details, the paperwork, the documentation, the reports and drawings needed on a regular basis. Then each had to go back to their facility and come up with an estimate of what they required to do their part of the job. Then I said that they personally had to sign on the top document for their department's estimate indicating they had reviewed it and that the total summation goes to Mr. Bogozian.

Two days later, I had the final compilation of the estimate in my hand. It indicated it would cost the company \$5.7 million to do the job in-house based on the proposal requirements. This went to Mr. Bogozian. I also sent copies to my boss and to each of the department people who signed for the estimates. When Bogozian saw the distribution list, he was furious. He wanted to know how I could send something like that out without going through him first. I explained I did not work for him. That I was there, on loan, and I briefed my boss, Mike Wengryn, who told me to send it. That was what I did. Aries then asked, in a more conciliatory voice, could I please get all of the documents back. I was very suspicious as the VP had a less than salutary reputation. I made sure that I kept few copies in my care, and I told him three to five people could not return the documents because they already disposed of them. He accepted this. At the next meeting, all the marketing people insisted that my estimate was excessive and that the program would not cost more than \$2.4 million. Bogozian listened to them, heard their arguments against my presentation and then said, "Mr. Collins your time with us now is completed. Thank you for all of your assistance. You and your advice are no longer needed."

Two and a half months later, between a quarter of a million to a half million dollars has been expended by the dozens and dozens of people who worked on putting together the proposal, which was submitted on time to the government. The results of the bidding were upsetting. There were seven separate bidders, and we came in seventh with a \$6 million bid

while the winning bid went for \$2.4 million. Mr. Bogozian was furious. On the day, they published the bid results, he fired everyone of the marketing people and those engineers who supported the \$2.4 million cost during the arguments, I was the only member of the original discussion team to survive this debacle. To Bogozian I became a trusted confidant and someone he used every time he wanted to submit a bid. I still did not totally trust the man, but a year later, he died of a heart attack, so the problem was resolved.

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