

THE SCAFFOLDING PLAYBOOK!

WHAT'S REALLY WINNING TENDERS IN 2025



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KEY LESSONS:

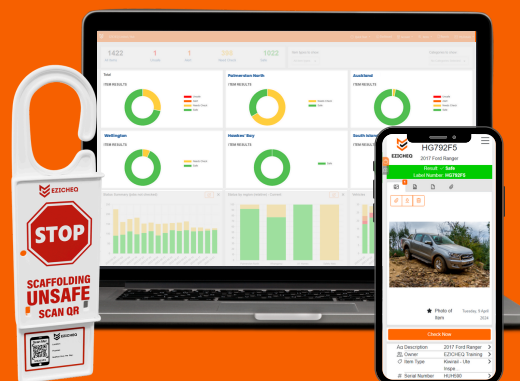
- 1 Trust Beats Price:** Competitive rates matter, but trust and track record close the deal.
- 2 Spot Gaps Early:** Identify scope gaps to show competence and help everyone price accurately.
- 3 No Room for Variations:** Bid accurately from the outset to avoid future pain.
- 4 Lift Your Engineering Game:** High standards for design and inspection are the new normal.
- 5 Lead with Documentation:** Bring everything to the table from the start I.E. insurance certificates, registry, designs etc.
- 6 Stand Out Through Innovation:** Embrace digital tools, system scaffold, and smarter workflows.

SUMMARY

Beyond Price: The Real Currency Is Trust and Value

In today's competitive construction market, tendering is no longer just about numbers. That was the clear message from this edition of The Scaffolding Playbook, where Andrew King and David Crowley explored what truly drives subcontractor selection in 2025.

While pricing still plays a huge part, it is trust, proven capability, and the ability to deliver real solutions that contractors value most. Andrew King, drawing on decades of experience across Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects at Hawkins and Sommerset, shared a pointed insight: "Yes, we still look at numbers. But we look harder at who we are partnering with. Because a low bid that misses key items costs us more down the line." David Crowley echoed this, emphasizing that winning teams focus on relationships, credibility, and being genuinely solutions-focused.



Do More Than Quote: Be the Partner That Solves Problems

One of the most practical takeaways was the importance of spotting and raising omissions in tender documents. Andrew explained that identifying missing lift shafts or loading bays not only adds value but builds confidence. "It shows you know your stuff and are thinking beyond your scope," he said.

David reinforced this by sharing examples where early engagement and clear communication helped prevent delays and created stronger delivery outcomes. It is this level of insight and care that sets long-term partners apart from transactional suppliers.

Variations Are No Longer a Safety Net

The strategy of bidding low and relying on variations to recover costs is no longer viable. Andrew and David were aligned in warning against this approach, highlighting that tighter scopes and more oversight mean little room for surprises. “We are expected to deliver on budget,” Andrew said. “If you underquote and hope to fix it later, it simply will not work anymore.”

Raising the Bar: Temporary Works and Professional Standards

The webinar also highlighted growing expectations around engineering and temporary works. Andrew shared how a challenging tented scaffold project led Somerset to strengthen their internal engineering standards, including requiring PS4 sign-off as a baseline. David credited professionals like Susan Temple for raising awareness in this space, noting that robust engineering is now seen as a risk management necessity. “It is not just about safety. It is about delivering what was designed, with zero surprises,” he said.

Certifications Count: But So Does Your Approach

When asked about prequalifications, Andrew acknowledged that some frameworks, like Totika and ISO, are not yet key to Somerset’s process. However, SARNZ, Site Safe and SiteWise are increasingly important, with Somerset now requesting credentials and encouraging contractors to move up the rating bands.

The panel agreed that while certifications carry credibility, it is how companies show up that really matters. As Andrew put it, the difference is in arriving ready: with insurance certificates, training logs, toolbox talks, and safety records on hand. That level of preparation shows professionalism beyond the paper.

What Main Contractors Really Want: Relationships are critical.

As Andrew noted, site teams remember those who communicate clearly, are easy to deal with, and deliver consistently.

The scaffolders who win repeat business are the ones who:

- Communicate early and honestly
- Offer smart, practical solutions
- Submit complete documentation without delay
- Stay proactive and adaptable on site

When pricing is comparable, it is the intangibles that matter—attitude, teamwork, and a history of doing what you say you will do.

Fixing the Tender and Delivery Disconnect

A question from the audience brought up a common issue: the disconnect between those pricing tenders and the teams that deliver the work. Andrew acknowledged this challenge, particularly in his early days at Somerset. “We had silos. Now, we have a pre-construction team that connects development, tendering, and delivery early in the process.”

He also shared how at Hawkins, he acted as the link between teams, ensuring knowledge was shared and lessons were looped back into future tenders. David added that scaffolders can support this alignment too—by turning up prepared, informed, and ready to contribute meaningfully.

Scaffolding: Still Offering Strong Value

In response to whether scaffolding is overpriced, Andrew stated: “From our view, it is good value. Companies are hungry for work and pricing fairly.” David noted that scaffold hire rates have barely shifted in 20 years. Efficiency improvements through digital systems and workflows allow for better planning and are helping scaffolders stay sharp, even as costs rise elsewhere.

Conclusion

David summed it up well: “A good partnership is about showing up, even when it is tough, and doing what you say you will do.” As expectations rise, scaffolders who succeed will be those who build trust, bring smart thinking, and follow through. That is what is really winning tenders in 2025.