Removing risk and adding visibility across university

Bonfire & Western University

When supporting the procurement needs of one of Canada's top universities, transparency and efficiency are paramount. The Western University team knew that relying on email and Excel in their competitive bid and RFP process was a source of risk and administrative burden. They chose to centralize their procurement activities in one online location with Bonfire, empowering the team to drive better value for the organization with the confidence of perfect compliance.

🔥 **Bonfire**

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Western
UNIVERSITY · CANADA

Western University is a public research university in London, Ontario. Western is home to 35,000 students across thirteen faculties, including business, law, medicine, and dentistry.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Inefficiencies and risk of human error when relying on email and Excel for evaluation
- Lack of visibility over evaluator progress
- Time-consuming process for decision reporting and vendor debriefs

RESULTS

- Increase in team efficiency & value add
- Greater transparency throughout the evaluation process
- Detailed audit trails for vendor debriefs, accessible at the click of a button

Procurement at
Western University
before **Bonfire**

The procurement team at Western facilitates the best-value procurement of goods and services in support of the research community and the campus at large. Prior to implementing Bonfire, they employed an electronic bid submission tool to post and advertise opportunities and receive submissions. This allowed them to reach an established community of vendors. However, once the submission period ended, they managed the evaluation of bids offline across email and Excel.

The procurement team manually distributed documents to evaluators by email, often dealing with large file sizes and other complexities. They then used Excel spreadsheets for scoring. During the evaluation process, the procurement team had limited visibility into evaluators' scoring progress until the deadline. Not only were these manual processes a source of frustration, they were also a source of risk.

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There was always a risk of missing something. Every step that requires human intervention introduces more risk.

Peter Jeffs, Associate Director, Procurement

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Choosing
Bonfire

With growing project volumes and tightening compliance requirements, the Western procurement team sought a software solution that would allow them to:

Distribute bids securely through an online platform;

Gain more visibility throughout the procurement process;

Collect and aggregate scores without the use of Excel.

They had heard from other Ontario higher education institutions about their successful implementations of Bonfire, and after seeing Bonfire in a demo, they felt that it met their needs.

"Finally seeing that there was a product available that would meet our needs, was user-friendly, efficient, effective, and affordable — that's how we summed up the decision," explains Jeffs.

Bonfire complemented their existing process; they continue to post opportunities using their electronic bid submission tool, while managing the process from document submission to award through the Bonfire platform.

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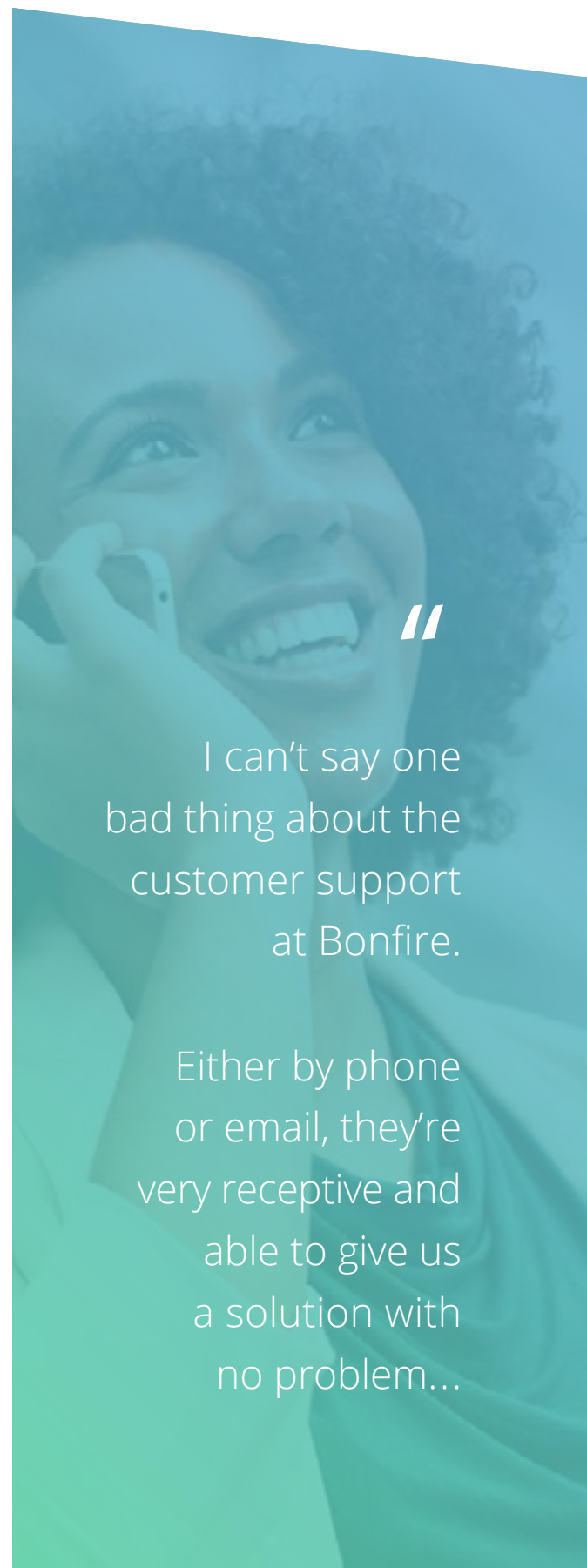
Implementing
Bonfire

The Western team was up and running with their first project in approximately a week, with end users in the software right away. Janice Verhagen, Procurement and Contracts Specialist, is the Bonfire power-user at Western and a resource to the five other Bonfire users on the procurement team. She had created a training document to help orient new users to Bonfire's use in the context of their processes at Western, and with that, they have been able to onboard new users easily.

They also have the support of Bonfire's Customer Success team to answer questions as they arise.

"I can't say one bad thing about the customer support at Bonfire. Either by phone or email, they're very receptive and able to give us a solution with no problem," Verhagen notes. "They're absolutely amazing to deal with."

Vendors appreciate that there is no cost for document distribution and submission through the platform. The ease and speed of submission has also been a benefit. With the average first-time vendor submission taking only eight minutes, it is straightforward for vendors to get their documents uploaded within the deadline.

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Impact of **Bonfire** at Western

Since implementing Bonfire in 2015, the team has run over 200 projects on the platform, involving over 350 internal users and over 1,400 vendors. The total paper savings averted from as a result of streamlining their competitive bid and RFx process online on the Bonfire platform is around 135,000 pages (which equates to a 40-foot stack of paper!) Even more important to the team is the time-savings they have realized.

"For me, it's a real benefit to not have to be mailing the documents. It's a huge time saver to be able to share documents instantly," explains Verhagen.

They also have greater control and visibility over the evaluation process. Evaluators log into their own Bonfire account to review and score documents, ensuring that they are scoring individually and providing adequate justification in the comments. Procurement team members can view evaluators' scoring progress and set up automatic reminders to ensure the project stays on track. Scores are automatically collected and tabulated in Bonfire, removing the risk of spreadsheet oversight.

After the decision, the team is able to access complete and thorough reports capturing every step of the decision. In the case of vendor debriefs, they can quickly view the scores and comments to see how a decision unfolded, cutting down on what previously was a time-consuming process.

"In one case, I had a vendor debrief with an unsuccessful vendor. The information I was able to pull out of Bonfire was phenomenal," explains Verhagen. "I didn't have to go back to evaluation team members for more information — I could find everything I needed on my own. I could provide feedback that was constructive and satisfying."

In the case of a bid protest, the procurement team is backed by an airtight audit trail. They can even view the system logs and see exactly what activity has occurred.

"From the perspective of risk reduction and convenience, the investment in Bonfire has been absolutely worthwhile." - Peter Jeffs

200	350	1,400	135k
Projects	Internal Users	Vendors	Pages Saved

See **Bonfire**
for yourself

Learn how our intuitive, powerful, and easy-to-use platform can help you **make better, faster sourcing decisions.**

Request a Demo

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