

The logo for COPAF CONSULTING is displayed on an orange background. The word "COPAF" is in a large, bold, dark blue sans-serif font, and "CONSULTING" is in a smaller, all-caps, dark blue sans-serif font below it.

COPAF
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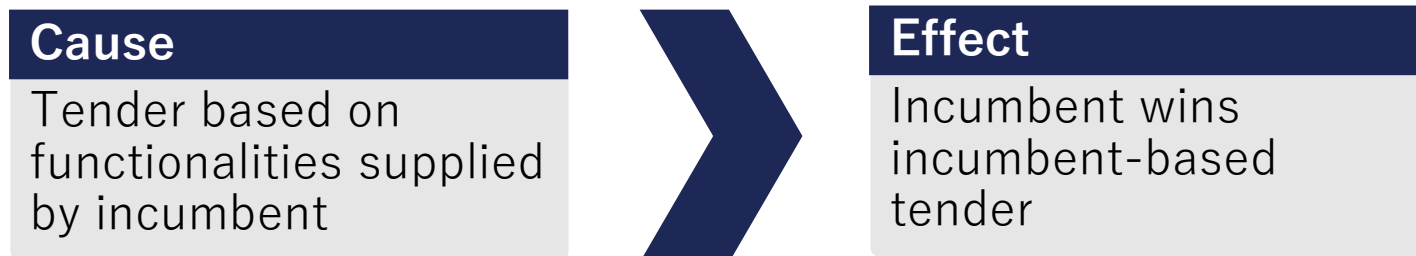
The tender was unwinnable. We won anyway.
How to win tenders designed for the incumbent

Cause and effect of incumbent-based tendering

Public institutions are legally required to issue a tender if:

- Current tender contract is due expiry
- New tender exceeds budget threshold

Buyers often lack knowledge to assess the tendered product / service. Their baseline is the current supplier:






Why compete if the outcome is already decided?






Business case for incumbent-based tenders

Organisations participate because tenders provide:



Pro's

-  Steady revenue
-  Inbound Sales opportunity
-  Market presence

Con's

-  Biased towards incumbent
-  Sales finds tender unfair
-  IT doubts feasibility

What pattern do you see?

-  No technical blockers
-  Alignment issues



When paper meets reality...

All requirements pointed back to the incumbent. Developers had doubts. Management wanted their routing software for garbage collection to compete.

Reality set in:






Decision-makers were not end users of the product.



...and when reality meets paper

We stopped debating requirements. We got on a garbage truck to discover the *actual* end user requirements:

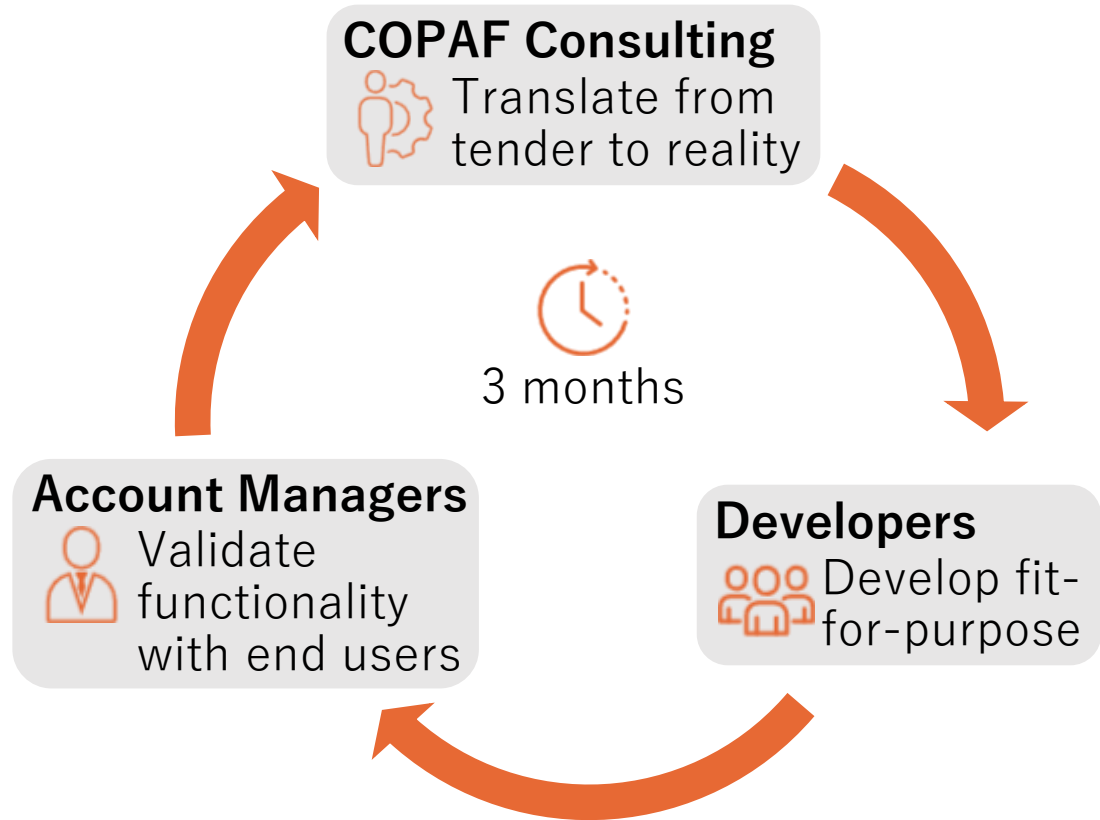
	 Wrong route	 Impossible manoeuvre	 Poor incident reporting
Observation	The system assumed taking a left turn for the next pickup	Routing software assumed turning around is possible	Garbage truck crew encounters aggressive driver
Failure	Garbage truck crew finds it's a pedestrian-only zone	Garbage truck crew finds no room to turn in the alley	Incident report requires photos, risking escalation



Treasure found on a garbage truck

End user requirements provided a treasure trove of valuable insights.

In three months, we developed what the end user actually needed.



How incumbent-based tenders work

Lessons learned by our client:



Incumbents do not win because they are better. They win because the system accommodates them.



Facing an incumbent head-on by blindly implementing tender requirements is a surefire way to lose.



Interpret, translate, operationalise and validate requirements with all stakeholders.



Food for thought

Is your solution compliant with a checklist or with reality?

Have you met the end user, or are you hiding behind the tender portal?

When was the last time you battle-tested your product's documentation against reality?



Provide structure and practical validation

We are typically brought in when organisations discover that their solution works on paper, but not in reality.

No end user had been consulted. By actively involving the end user, we learned the *actual* requirements.

It enabled our client to deliver a fit-for-purpose solution. They were awarded the tender.

The journey demonstrated here, from paper to winning the tender, is what we call the **Field Reality Gap**: where tenders are won or lost.





This insight is part of a broader body of thinking on ownership, interpretation risk and delivery trade-offs.

www.copaf.nl/insights

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Make Complex Change Work