Letters to the Editor

I should like to add to the comment by Malcolm King (*OR Insight* Vol. 3, No. 1). He warns that, in competitive tendering situations, real decision-makers are rarely seeking purely to maximise expected profit. He highlighted several other factors that bidders are observed to use in practice.

To his admonitions I would observe that another naive view of the world is included in Friedman's model. As a consultant I have often been asked for impartial advice by clients seeking to compare the merits of computer systems and their suppliers. My recommendation that system performance and quality, supplier reliability and support reliability should be the governing criteria is no more than accepted wisdom. I would be surprised to find many business sectors for which price was the sole governing factor when selecting amongst tenders.

I therefore suggest that the danger of assuming purchasers base their decision upon price alone is at least as great as assuming bidders seek to maximize profit alone.

There is clearly a need for a more realistic model if OR is to make a useful contribution in this area. It will need to include a number of important management factors such as trust, credibility, reliability, desirability, political expediency and personal safety. Oh, I almost forgot ... simplicity!

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