

5 Proposal Writing Subtleties



Most people who have participated in a proposal effort or two know the basics of proposal writing. There are some niceties, though, that are usually only learned after months or years of proposal experience.

Here are five subtle but important proposal writing lessons...

tip 1



Your “Benefits” Should Be Related to Cost, Risk, Efficiency, or Ease of Use

The customer wants to know how your features help their organization. It’s great that your solution has low latency or that you’re the incumbent and already familiar with their program, but what do they gain from this? Does your feature cut costs, lower risk, or offer them greater ease of use?

Be explicit when explaining the “so what” so that there’s no ambiguity.

tip 2



Your Past Substantiates, But It Isn't Your Solution

Even though you've implemented similar solutions in the past, just saying this doesn't make for a solution. Your proposal must answer the customer's needs with a unique response and only then use past performance to prove you are capable of delivery.

Doing this substantiates your approach while still answering your customer's specific needs.

tip 3



Link Back to What Matters

Every component of your proposal should tie back to some aspect of the customer's solicitation. The evaluator should feel that every sentence and paragraph they read is directly relevant to the requirements they thoughtfully wrote and compiled.

Their time is precious and limited, so all content should apply directly to something they asked for in Sections C, L, or M. No tangents.

tip 4



Validate, Validate, Validate

Any claim or feature must be married to a (preferably quantifiable) proof point. Big adjectives like “largest” or “best” or promises like “low-risk” or “cost-saving” offer the evaluator no basis for understanding or verification.

Substantiate your points with metrics to back up your statements and give evaluators confidence in your claims.

tip 5



Remember, Only the Proposal is Evaluated—Nothing Else

Your evaluator is only going to grade your offer based on the strength your proposal. Never presume they will take off-proposal or quid pro quo factors into account, and never assume the offeror will know or understand something that's unwritten.

If institutional or background knowledge is necessary to understand your solution, write to it, or your proposal could be DOA!

Want to Learn More?



Check out: “Beyond the Basics: 5 Ways to Take Your Proposal Writing to the Next Level.”

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