

WRITING A GOOD BUSINESS PROPOSAL LETTER AND PROPOSAL

By Sandra Enwesi

Getting a contract is like fishing in a way, first of all, you need to know how to fish, then you must have good fishing gear, you know your, lines, net, lures, reels, rods etc and of course your fishing ground. To get a contract you must have the capability to deliver your skills and experience, equipment and a proposal which shows in one document that you are in fact perfect for the work.

Writing a good business proposal is as important as getting the contract itself. The key word is **Simple**; keep it straightforward. A good proposal must clearly show a thorough understanding of the objective of the work and intent to provide a valuable solution to it.

A business proposal letter is like a cover letter which accompanies a CV, it is a very brief summary of who you are, what your company does, contact details, what you intend to deliver. Not so many people include this as part of their business proposal which is a shame because it shows professionalism; by sending a good cover letter you inspire the reader to read the proposal.

I have come across lots of business proposals while working in project management, some very good, and some not so good, from the good ones, I have been able to put together what I think a good business proposal must have.

1. A cover page

- This should include the title of the project and a date
- Prepared for-(The customer name here)
- Prepared by- (Your Company name here)
- Proposal number (if any)
- Your company logo (to make it more professional)

2. Table of content

- Please ensure that this is updated before sending out the proposal

3. Executive summary

- This is the most crucial part of the proposal and usually the most difficult, here you have to state the objective of the project, define the problem, and show that you clearly understand what the issue is.
- Please note that, ideally this should be one page max.
- State the objective of the project or work

- The goal of the work- (what do you hope to achieve at the end)
- The solution (How do you intend to achieve the goal - diagrams would be helpful here, when used correctly diagrams help to break down the work so as to aid understanding of how you intend to go about it), also include how suitable you or your company is for the job, if you have done a similar work before now is the time to include it.

4. Cost summary and Contractual considerations

- This should be clear and simple, also do not forget to state somewhere that the figures are estimates only.

5. Benefits of using your company (Now here's the part where you sell your company)

- Highlight your experience and expertise within this field
- What basically do the customers gain by employing you for the job – ability to meet deadlines, cost efficient , quality , confidentiality etc
- State why you are better than your competitors now is your chance to tell the customer why you should be given the opportunity.

6. Testimonials

- Always a good idea to include in your proposal a few sentences on what your past clients say about your work. Be sure to include a brief summary of what kind of work you did especially if it relates to the work in question and give contact details, preferably email addresses with permission of course from your past clients.

7. Introduce your team (if you are not going to be working alone)

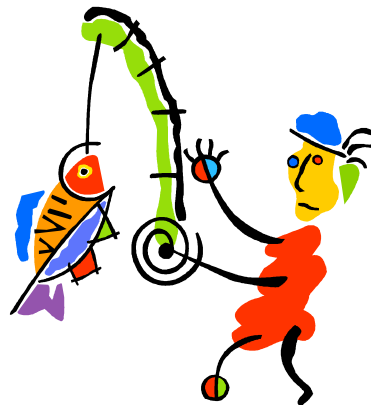
- Who makes up your team?
- Include names, pictures, educational background-, qualifications-, experience of similar work which qualifies them to do the work

Lastly remember, to use appropriate jargon, spell check, and ensure that you can deliver what you claim to be able to deliver.

A winning proposal is much more than "cutting, copying and pasting" information to encourage the business to appoint you. Don't forget to look at your own timetable, ask yourself; is it realistic for you to do this job? Check the risks of taking on this work if you were successful and steer clear of over committing. Do not forget your reputation is on the line. It is better to refuse work than accept and not be able to deliver.

A good business proposal is not a guarantee that you will get the job just like a good fishing rod does not guarantee that you will get a good catch but it is usually wise to make the effort

to have a good one so as to give yourself the best possible chance of getting the fish job.
Good luck!



Links to samples of good business proposals and further reading

<http://www.captureplanning.com/articles/25326.cfm>

<http://www.writinghelptools.com/proposal-sample.html>

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/business-proposal-with-cover-letter-format-TC001018550.aspx>

http://www.captureplanning.com/!view.cfm?id=template_configure

http://www.morebusiness.com/running_your_business/management/Crafting-Impressive-Proposal.brc