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Source: "How to Write a Client Proposal", 23/05/2016

While I was pretty happy on how to write a business proposal and had quite a good idea how I was going to plan the first draft for my proposal, this website caught my eye.

How to Write a Client Proposal

You want the computer consulting gig, but the client wants a written proposal first. What do you SAY?

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Software developers, web designers, and other IT professionals who are trying to build up a consulting business are often asked to provide the prospective client with a formal proposal explaining how they'll serve the company's needs. If you're new at this, you may be amenable but also unsure what to actually say. Let me give you a little guidance.

Anybody can use open source. You might depend on open source software if you're responsible for IT in a large enterprise or as a consumer who prefers FOSS apps for her own personal computing needs. That's true whether you're simply a software developer contributing code to the open source project, a techie who customizes software that just-so-happens to be open source (such as a web developer building sites using Drupal), or an end user who appreciates the price (free!) and quality of FOSS apps.

Unlike any of my other sources of information on proposals, this one distinctly talks about proposals from the Information Technology point of view. While they may just relist information that I have already gained, not only will any additional point probably be IT specialised, it would also serve as perfect validation to see if the information I have researched about business proposals will apply to my computing orientated project.

There's a few distinct parts to a proposal. Length is rarely an issue — the proposal can be four paragraphs, four pages, or forty pages — but it usually covers the following:

- Identify the problem.
- Describe the solution, and the steps to get there.
- Explain why you're the right person to do it.
- Tell them what it costs.

The key part is to figure out what your prospective client wants — a matter of empathy and research. What problem do they want to solve? In the proposal, you restate the problem in your own words, backing up how you'll help them achieve their goals. In other words: "You say you want a site to serve left-handed beer brewers with editorial content that'll draw them to your e-commerce site where you sell left-handed equipment; here's what I'll do to help you succeed."

With the introduction out of the way, I finally reached useful information. I was wondering what would be the acceptable length of such an important document- it seems that the document will be as long as needed to properly convey the solution I am trying to "sell" to my client.

Once again, ignoring the final point made (unless we're talking about time it would take and non-monetary costs), similar points are being stated. This feels me with confidence that all the information I have researched about proposals are valid. This allows me to continue with the plan I have designed for my proposal.

The hard part is to get into their heads. If you understand what success looks like to *them*, then it's mostly a matter of explaining what the steps are to get there (and pointing out how each step, or component, helps move the site towards their goals). There's several good reasons to include the problem description. One of them is to show the client that you were listening and that you understand their pain. After all, if you got the wrong idea in your head about the problem to be solved, you probably can't deliver something that will make the client happy.

If you can't write that "problem statement" then recognize it as a danger sign. It may mean that they blathered for an hour but you never understood the goal ("What does 'success' look like to this client?"). It may mean that the client doesn't actually know what they want — an extremely common situation. (Determining what the client actually wants is a mysterious subject best left to another discussion. One that includes a lot of beer.) But this is not only about client cluelessness; it's also a way for you to establish your own project guidelines. If you find that it's hard to answer, "What's the problem here?" you may need another round of user interviews, which is why I recommend that you don't write the

Finally, this point caught my eye- I performed massive amounts of research into stress and depression for the problem aspect of my client brief. I can't help but wonder what would be a suitable amount of information to include in the brief highlighting these issues, as the task overall doesn't have too much in relation with them directly.