

Ref: 0023 Analysis

Source: "7 Steps To A Winning Business Proposal" by Sue Clayton, 25/05/2016

1. Study the Requirements. Writing a winning proposal begins with a clear understanding of the client's requirements. Read the RFP thoroughly. As you're reading, ask yourself, What are this company's goals? What is my role in achieving these goals? Is the time frame, budget and scope of work reasonable? And if we're awarded the contract, does my company have the time, expertise and resources to complete the project?

Next, decide whether you want to proceed. Preparing this proposal will require a lot of time and effort in research, analysis of the client's needs and writing, and you may decide to wait for a better opportunity.

Wakefield examines every RFP carefully. "We don't send everybody a proposal who asks for one, because researching and writing a proposal is a fairly expensive process," admits Wakefield. "First, we decide if we can design a good program for them. Then, we look for projects that have some potential for us strategically, contracts that offer continuing relationships and good networking possibilities."

After confirming that I did know what a proposal was, that I have never written one before I decided that I would have to do further research in order to not only know how to write a proposal, but how to make it good.

As I was expecting a list, I skipped the introduction to the page and focused on the list that was hinted at by the title of the article. The first step was common sense- but I decided to read the rest of the paragraph in case I missed something. After finishing that paragraph, I decided that it would be useful to have my interview analysis and client brief on hand when it came to writing my proposal.

2. Understand the Client. "If you don't understand the client's problem, you certainly can't propose a methodology that is going to solve the problem," says Shervin Freed, coauthor of *Writing Winning Business Proposals* (McGraw-Hill). "Many times a client or potential client will say, 'This is what we're looking for.' But when you start researching, you find out that isn't what they're looking for at all."

I stated that I thought it would be a good idea to have both my client interview and analysis on hand when writing my proposal. This caused me to skip the next section as after I read the heading, as I already figured out I would review the client as one of the requirements.

3. Develop a Methodology. Once your client's goals are clearly identified, it's time to develop the steps, or methodology, necessary to reach them. If you're having difficulty with it, use Wakefield's suggestion of brainstorming sessions.

"My partner and I get together and discuss what kinds of things our clients need and in what order," Wakefield says. "It's going to be different for each of our clients, depending on whether they focus more on customer service or on cost savings. We then custom-design an intervention that is specific to their organization."

To ensure that your methodology is practical, analyze its costs and benefits, as well as the time and resources it will require.

Compared to the first two sections, this was more useful to me as someone who had a vague idea on how to make a proposal, this information not only started to give me a clear direction to take for this task, but a few tips on areas to look.

The quote in the middle starts off repeating points made by the sections before this one- the final sentence also happens to summarise the point and the end, therefore the useful information I got out of this is that I should develop a plan that should be practical and then analyse its pros and cons, starting with the criteria given.

4. Evaluate the Solution. You may have developed a brilliant methodology, but if it's unacceptable to your client, you'll need to find an alternative solution. "You have to understand the decision maker's orientation," explains Freed. "You have to know precisely what their background is, and how they look upon this particular project. For example, find out whether the person is financially oriented or operations oriented." You should then describe the benefits of your solution in a way that will receive the most favorable evaluation from the decision maker.

You should also evaluate your solution according to criteria outlined in the RFP. For example, if your proposal is being evaluated on price and completion time, a lengthy, expensive solution is unlikely to win your company the contract.

At this point the article seems to just point out information that has already been stated by George Pólya. The article itself was also becoming increasingly business orientated- hence the reason I cut off after the mention of the RFP (I have no idea what that means, nor do I feel that I need to know what it means). I read this paragraph and all I took from it was that I needed to review and edit my work if needed.

6. Write the Proposal. Now that you've completed the first five steps, most of the work is done. All that's left is assembling the information into a proposal format, so we'll be referring back to the work you completed in the previous steps.

After reading this I decided that this article had served its purpose in helping me start a proposal. I had a direction to take and was already forming a mental checklist of things I would include in the proposal. I also now knew that I would have to constantly refer to my client interview notes and the brief while creating the proposal, I would then have to critically edit it after.