

Welcome to this issue of *The Sales Solution*, the semi-monthly sales tip from Sales Solutions, the one stop for all your sales training and coaching needs.

What makes an Effective Proposal?

Do you think you write effective proposals? Do you believe it's important to do so? Many of us answer "yes" to the first question, and "not really" to the second. Let's look at both of these

For Whom

Do you structure your proposals in a logical format that includes the following sections?

1. Executive Summary	YES	NO
2. Specific Problems/Objectives	YES	NO
3. Proposed Solution	YES	NO
4. Investment Details	YES	NO
5. Responsibilities of each party	YES	NO
6. A "pitch" for your organization	YES	NO
7. A call to action	YES	NO

Do you address:

- Why you and the company are talking – what the issue(s) is/are YES NO
- Why the issue is important – more important than other issues at the company YES NO
- A demonstration of your understanding of the bigger issues facing the company, whether or not your solution directly addresses them YES NO
- Why it is so important that it needs to be addressed now (the implications of doing nothing) YES NO
- Your solution to the issue – benefits, and features only as needed to support the benefits YES NO
- Investment and *return on investment* figures YES NO
- Who you are and why doing business with you will not be a mistake/is a good idea YES NO
- An offer to provide references YES NO
- Implementation schedule and timeline (if applicable) and/or next steps YES NO
- Have you written the proposal for consumption by the widest possible audience? YES NO

This first and last points are key – and could sink your case if you answered "no" to either of them. A proposal should be written not only for the person who's been your primary contact, but for the person who's even more important than he or she is – *the one who will make the decision*. Why? Well, think about it. What's going to happen after you hand-deliver your proposal (you *do* hand-deliver your proposals, don't you?)? Your contact is going to send a copy to - among other people – the decision maker. Someone you may or not have ever met. Most likely someone with whom you have not had the opportunity to establish a strong, day-to-day relationship. Someone who is most likely not familiar with the details of your solution, or even what problem it's intended to solve. What's this person going to do when your proposal arrives in his inbox along with 30 other pieces of interoffice mail? Is he going to feel the intensity of the pain, the sense of urgency you know he or she should have? No, *not unless you make him feel it*. Which is what makes the Executive Summary so critical. It's the first thing this person is going to see – before turning to the Financials section. So it had better grab him with a message of such urgency, of such gravity,

that when he does turn to look at the numbers, they look small in comparison to what could happen if the problem is not addressed – now.

I hope it's clear by now that for a proposal to be effective, you need to have answered yes to all the questions above. And I hope it's also evident why a well-written proposal is important

Action item:

Dig out some old (or better yet, current) proposals. Print out this Tip, and make copies for each proposal. Then go down the list, answering yes or no to each question, for each proposal. How'd you do? For the olds one, there's not much you can do. For the current ones however, revise them so that you do cover the points above. Then reread it, and have a colleague read it. You'll be surprised how much more powerful your proposals will be by asking these simple but important questions.

Good selling!

Craig