



What really needs to go into a proposal?

Given the choice of reading a 10-page, 40-page, or a 200-page proposal or capability statement, which would you choose to read first?

For most of us, it's not a hard decision to read to the short document first.

Which raises a question we're often asked: "what should we include in our proposal?"

Many are tempted to throw everything in, hoping something strikes a chord with their prospective client.

So, what to include and what to leave out? To make it easy, ask yourself if your proposal content addresses one of these four key questions that your client will be asking:

- Is this the right solution?
- Can they really do it?
- Is it a fair price?
- Will it deliver a good return on our investment?

These questions will help you determine what to include in your proposals by deciding what matters to your client and what doesn't. If an item doesn't compellingly address one of the four key questions, leave it out.

4 types of content to include in services proposals

In most service business contexts, you need to include the following content in your proposals:

1. **A clear restatement of your client's needs, issues, challenges or objectives.** For example, a short set of bullet points in the Executive Summary. The more specific and tailored your restatement's insights, the more helpful it will be. Restating your client's needs lowers decision maker anxiety about wasting money, wasting time, and losing reputation.
2. **A recommendation for a solution** that will eliminate their problems or meet their objectives. Strangely, many proposals do not recommend anything – they merely describe products or services. Tie the features of your solution to your client's needs, showing why each is important or relevant to them.
3. **Evidence to support your claims that you will deliver the solution on time, and on budget. Good evidence** includes references, testimonials, case studies, third-party evaluations, certifications or accreditations, and reviews. It may also be appropriate to include project plans, methodologies, team resumes, details of facilities and resources, and summaries of experience.
4. **A reason to proceed with your recommendation. Without some kind of value proposition – ROI, payback,** total cost of solution – the buying decision may come down to price. Base your value on your differentiators, or your competitors will be able to say "me too".

When deciding whether to include specific content, ask yourself whether it fits clearly into one of these four key areas. If not, leave it out.



Get in touch and find out more about how we can help you.

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