

# How to Construct Proposals That Sell

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**Q:** *While the proposals I provide for my prospects do a good job at spelling out the details of the project and pricing, I'd like to present a proposal that's more effective at selling my solution. Is there a way to leverage my proposal as an actual selling tool?*

**A:** You're in luck!

Proposals can make or break a sales deal; a well-written proposal can help cinch the deal. The proposal should absolutely be used as a selling tool. It is your opportunity to demonstrate that you truly understand your prospect's needs, you have listened intently and that you will provide a compelling solution.

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Notice I used the word "compelling." Not only do you want your proposal to give your prospect details of the solution and pricing information, it is also your final chance before asking for the order to make a lasting impression on your prospect. So you want to be sure it's a good one.

There are 10 key elements to writing a proposal that will help you make a favorable final impression before closing the deal--and will help improve your close ratio as well.

1. **The header testimonial.** This is a quote from an existing client who has used your products and services the same way you are now proposing that your prospect use them. The quote should include a statement that speaks to the results your solution has provided, as well as statistics to back it up. The quote should not be more than one or two sentences. The function of the header testimonial is to grab the attention of your prospect so he will read the rest of your proposal, and not just skip to the pricing/investment section, like many prospects tend to do.
2. **The opening statement.** The opening statement should include a sincere thank-you to your prospect for the opportunity to present your proposal, as well as an enthusiastic statement from you regarding your interest in providing a solution that will meet the prospect's needs.
3. **The scope of work statement.** This is a one- or two-sentence description of your understanding of the prospect's needs, and the solution you are proposing to address those needs.
4. **The scope of work detailed description** is where you provide details of the project--including the solution itself--and any relevant scheduling details, including time frames and deadlines. This portion of the proposal also speaks to items the prospect will be responsible for, if any, to make the project a success. It is important to set expectations early so your prospect knows exactly what he is agreeing to upfront, before you close the deal.
5. **The project deliverables description.** It should include the tangible items you will deliver as a part of your solution. The best way to present this portion of the proposal is to use bullet points to present clear, concise action items associated with your solution.

6. **The investment details.** This is where you address the pricing details of your solution. Notice it is called the investment details section, not the pricing details section. This is done purposefully because the word "investment" indicates something of value in exchange for the money spent, or invested, in your solution. Stay away from words like "price" and "cost" as they suggest only that money will be spent, as opposed to an exchange of value.

Whether you choose to itemize your proposal is a personal choice. One nice aspect of an itemized proposal is that if the client balks at the total investment, you can ask the prospect which items to remove from the proposal in order to lower the price. In other words, you can come down on the price, but only with the understanding that the solution will be different than what you originally proposed.

If you're going to give a little, your prospect needs to give a little, too. Too often we drop the price of our solution in order to win the business. However, this can create the perception that you don't see the value in your own solution, as well as send a message to your prospect that you didn't start with your best price. Coming down on your price also sets a precedent, and your clients may come to expect it after you do it once.

7. **The return on investment statement.** This is a section many salespeople miss. Maybe it's assumed the prospect will immediately see the return on her investment, without you explaining it, but that is unlikely. If you can, spell it out so the prospect has a clear understanding of how your solution will either save her money, make her money or save her time. If you can show a return on investment for your solution that makes sense, you will win the deal the majority of the time.

8. **The call-to-action statement.** This is where you tell your prospect exactly what will happen next, such as, "I will contact you next Tuesday to review the proposal in detail and answer any questions you may have."

An even better approach is to have a commitment from your prospect before you submit the proposal for review. In other words, before you prepare the proposal, ask your prospect for a specific date and time you can review the proposal together, rather than just send it to him to review on his own. This will prevent you from losing the sale because you had no follow-up commitment from the prospect.

9. **The thank-you statement.** It may seem obvious, but many people forget to thank their prospects for the opportunity. Just as important as the thank you is tying it to the results your solution will create for the prospect. Showing some enthusiasm for the project doesn't hurt, either.

10. **The footer testimonial.** This is your final chance to leave the prospect with a quote or testimonial from a client who has experienced a favorable outcome as a result of your solution.

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