

# 4 Ways for Technical Teams to Win Readers Over with Proposals

Proposals are the bread and butter of winning contracts, expanding your customer base, and increasing revenue. Thus, crafting effective proposals is critical for businesses to survive and thrive. Yet, too often proposals are:

- Too technical
- Confusing
- Unfocused
- Unpersuasive
- Too writer-focused

Here are 4 ways by which technical teams can win readers over with their proposals.

## 1. Identify what your target audience needs.

Think about your target readers in terms of their needs and goals. Speak to those needs and goals in your proposal so that you position yourself as a solution to the client's problem. This truth may sound harsh, but people don't care about what you do as a company—they care about how you can solve their problem.

*Tool for Audience's Needs:* My audience's goal is to [insert what problem they want to solve], and I can solve their problem by [list ways to solve their problem].

## 2. Identify how your target reader wants to be talked to.

Get into your reader's head. What do they know and not know about the topic? What is their level of technical knowledge? With what perspective will they view your proposal ( financial concerns, safety concerns, longevity concerns, etc.)?

Your answers to these questions will guide you in what word choice, background, and amount of detail you use in your proposal.

*Tool for Audience Analysis:* Five characteristics of my reader are [list characteristics], which means that I need to [list strategies to speak to the listed characteristics].

### 3. Have a clear outcome statement.

The outcome statement should be what you want the reader to believe or do after reading your document. Be as specific as possible. What would be your ideal outcome?

The outcome statement should guide you as you write your proposal, and everything you include in the proposal should speak to that outcome statement. If you've written something that does not speak to that outcome statement, you have likely veered off course and need to redirect towards your desired outcome.

*Tool for Crafting an Outcome Statement:* I want my reader to [believe or do what?] after reading my proposal.

### 4. Craft a narrative.

Effective proposals often have narratives, because humans love stories. We hook onto stories, we make sense of the world through stories, and we are more likely to remember information if it's attached to a story. So, try to craft your proposal with the following structure in mind:

- *Beginning:* Introduce a problem, show why it is a problem, explain why the reader should care, and give any necessary context (such as relevant background information and key players/characters).
- *Middle:* Explain the cause of the problem, the path to the solution, and an explanation of why the solution will work.
- *End:* Explain the solution in further detail (if necessary), include an impact statement, and offer a call to action.

An impact statement gives cost estimates of the problem and the solution as well as a short explanation of the project's significance. An example of an impact statement is,

- If the University Library does not replace its roof so that it drains properly, the roof could collapse and result in damage amounting to upwards of \$50,000. However, if the University Library does replace the roof so that it drains properly, the roof's safety can be ensured and the roof should last for at least 30 years.

A call to action should spur the reader to do something, even if that's to give your business a call to discuss further details or to let you know their decision about your proposal.

*Tool for Crafting an Impact Statement:* Without [insert proposed change or project], [this negative consequence will occur], which will cost [insert figure]. However, if the client does agree to [brief summary of the proposal's main purpose], then [insert positive result that will occur and any future monetary savings].

## Application Tool

Question	Answer
What does my reader need and why?	
How do I speak to my reader's needs?	
Why am I the best to solve my reader's needs?	
Why should my reader do [list project's steps]?	
Is my word choice, jargon, and sentence structure tailored to my target reader?	
Have I addressed all of the client's requirements?	

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