



# Writing winning proposals

## Introduction

Your clients are more focused than ever on making intelligent supplier choices in the current competitive environment. You want them to understand that you are the best option for them. Effective proposal writing is key to achieving this.

This course gives you the key to convincing potential clients that you are the best strategic choice for their business. You gain the skills to quickly create more effective business proposals that are customer-focused and persuasive.

The course is practical. It is structured so that your own templates can be integrated into the course flow, and it can be customised to your exact business needs.

## You learn how to ...

- ▶ Achieve your selling objectives by aligning your proposals with customer needs and objectives.
- ▶ Develop a clear, persuasive and appropriate writing style.
- ▶ Make your proposal work for a wide range of decision makers.
- ▶ Establish and build rapport with your readers.
- ▶ Improve understanding of your proposal by structuring information in ways that are helpful to your customers.
- ▶ Establish your credibility by presenting concrete, triangulated evidence.
- ▶ Produce compelling proposals that are easy to read, easy to understand and easy to act upon.

## Duration

One day.

## Who should attend?

Anyone who wants to significantly improve their chances of getting their proposals accepted.

The course is particularly appropriate for managers at all levels, management-track professionals and employees who have to prepare proposals on a regular basis.

## Activity-based training

In this course you will carry out exercises that focus on specific issues related to creating proposals. This activity-based experience can be customised to include exercises to deal with issues specific to your business. The course exercises include:

- ▶ Analysing and prioritising the audiences for your proposal.
- ▶ Selecting and implementing an idea generation technique.
- ▶ Developing a customer-focused structure.
- ▶ Identifying key client-focused messages in your proposal.
- ▶ Writing persuasively at the heading, sentence and paragraph levels.
- ▶ Writing a great Executive Summary – your one page proposal.
- ▶ Using checklists to focus your revision process.

## Resources

Included with the course are checklists and job aids to focus each stage of the proposal writing process and a CD containing course exercise materials, checklists and job aids for use back in the workplace.

A proposal template is included, incorporating best practice design and structure as taught in the course.

## Course outline

- ▶ **First-class proposals: the value to your business**
  - Adding value to the public image of your business
  - Making your business more effective
  - Increasing profitability
- ▶ **The challenges of great proposal writing**
  - Ineffective proposals
    - Cloning previous proposals
    - The 'brain dump'
    - Boilerplate – proposals on autopilot
    - Avoidance
    - Six failures of proposal writing
  - Effective proposals - the customer's viewpoint
    - Customer focus
    - Customer values
    - Connecting content to the customer's focus and values
  - Effective proposals – your business's viewpoint
    - Selling on value not price - improving the bottom line
    - Demonstrating your professionalism
    - Influencing your customers

*continued...*

► **Planning for your customers and your objectives**

Focusing on your customer, not yourself

Understanding your customer's:

- Communication styles
- Experience
- Role in the decision-making process
- Knowledge and expectations

Politics and sensitivities

Determining the proposal objectives

► **Writing persuasively**

The structure of persuasion

How decisions are made

- How long does a decision take?
- Familiarity and recognition
- Single-issue decision making
- Return on investment

Optimising your proposal to support how people really make decisions

Establishing credibility

- Your ability to deliver what you promise
- Your qualifications for the work
- Pre-framing potential customer objections
- Aligning your message with the customer's beliefs
- Using data from multiple credible sources

► **The proposal writing process**

Managing the process

Planning

Pre-writing

- Collecting and organising information
- Identifying winning themes
- Modelling
- Brainstorming
- Outliner tools

Testing the theme of your proposal

Analysing your information – spotting what you missed

- Kano's requirements
- Tacit knowledge and ignorance
- Gap analysis

Drafting

Revising

► **Using a proposal template**

Front matter

Executive Summary – your one page proposal

Proposal body

- Business case
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Solution and substantiation

Back matter

- Appendices and attachments
- Glossary of Terms

Other proposal types

- Letter proposals
- Grant proposals

► **Writing the proposal**

The Proposal Paradox:

- Customers don't take short proposals seriously
- Customers don't want to read long proposals
- Overcoming the Proposal Paradox

Building a pyramid of information

Presenting a compelling value proposition

Customer-focused structure and style

- Dovetailing your information with customer requirements
- Adopting a style that works for your customers

Effective conclusions

Recommending action

How to overcome writer's block

► **The Executive Summary – your one page proposal**

How to succinctly express *all* of the advantages of the proposed project

Using persuasive language to connect audience needs with value-added results

Asking the customer to take action

Good and bad Executive Summaries

Creating a great Executive Summary

► **Building readability**

How customers read documents

Creating an attractive 'look and feel' for your document

Page layout

Structuring the page for clarity

Breaking your document into readable sections

Using sentences to signal to the reader

Using images to convey information

Presenting statistics and graphs

► **Avoiding common pitfalls**

Reviewing your writing

- Critical elements in grammar and punctuation  
...and why they are critical
- Indispensable editing techniques
- Spelling and typographical errors
- Checking and amending your document
- Proofreading tips
- Fused and fragmentary sentences
- Homophone and homonyms
- Commonly misused words and clichés

Accuracy

Saying what you mean

Time management

- Avoiding deadline doom