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How to write a business proposal in 7 steps.

A clean and well-organized business proposal can help you win new clients and business. Learn how to put your best foot forward with a well-structured proposal.

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What is a business proposal?

A business proposal is a written offer of a product or service to a prospective customer. Winning business proposals help secure funding, expand projects, and grow your business.

Why write a business proposal?

Business proposals are huge for new businesses looking to expand. Whether you're an established small business or one looking to grow, a business proposal can help you with everything from securing funding to growing an existing project. A business proposal is a document that helps you:

- Document realistic plans and projections
- Attract new clients and new business
- Bring in investors for funding
- Outline additional structure for growth
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of your current business model
- Showcase new pricing models and other relevant metrics

Sound like something that might be useful? Here's how you create one.



1. Research and outline the parts of your business proposal.

You likely know what you want to do to expand your business already, so you have probably done plenty of research. If you haven't, it's important to come into the process well prepared and informed before you outline. Make sure that you have case studies, pertinent data, and compelling examples of how your proposal will lead to benefits for your client before you begin.

Building a business proposal is a highly structured process, which means that an outline is essential. An outline can be as simple as a one- or two-page document, with bullet points breaking key areas down into quick summaries that you can then expand into full sections.

For a basic outline, writing a small section for each step that follows in this guide is a great way to organize and set up your

proposal. You can use steps 2–6 here as the framework for your outline. You can even build out the entire document in a [PDF editor](#) and you'll be able to [drop pages in](#) and make edits to your proposal on the fly.

2. Build the title and table of contents.

The introduction to your business proposal is always the title. Creating a strong, solid title page gives a prospective client an idea of the value proposition, as well as what is going to follow within the proposal. This is the first step in getting eyes on your work. Especially if the proposal is unsolicited, you have to make sure to excite your audience, assuring them that your proposal is going to solve their pain points.

The table of contents summarizes the remainder of the proposal and helps readers reference where different sections start and end, but it can also be a way of providing additional small summaries of each section — it's up to you. There are many types of proposals — from sales proposals to marketing proposals — and the table of contents can give clues to your audience about what you're selling and how it benefits them.



3. Write your executive summary.

The [executive summary](#) functions as an introduction to your reader. In some ways, it's like a cover letter — a concise introduction and summary of your proposal. You'll want to introduce your company (especially if the proposal is unsolicited), give an overview of your business goals and objectives, show off some milestones you've already hit, lay out what the future path is, and how the proposal you're writing is the first step of that path.

You're talking to decision makers and potential customers, so you want to make sure that you're reeling your audience in

as much as possible with snappy writing that outlines what they can expect in the following sections of the proposal.

4. Get into the project details.

Problem, solution, qualifications. These three words are the mantra of this section. Your proposal needs to identify the client's problem and immediately follow up with a proposed solution. Problem statement plus solution equals a happy client who is excited about coming to work with you.

And, during all of this, you must demonstrate your expertise through qualifications. If your company or business is certified and has a track record of success solving this particular problem, showcase it. If you need additional capabilities to achieve what you need, identify that as well. At the end of this section, your target audience should walk away confident you can meet any client's needs.



Brands that span industries.

The properly nurtured brand brings critical associations and perceptions to the customer's mind. Harnessing, generating, influencing, and controlling these elements creates nearly limitless every top attribute appropriate for the industry including: exceptional, trusted, exciting, and reliable.

The digital communications revolution has led to a customer revolution as well, with consumers bringing their experiences to the forefront and helping to define your brand. How you respond will influence generations to come and be you achieve the unimaginable. Whether you're in retail, manufacturing, services, agriculture, finance, or healthcare, your brand can thrive when you let customers have a hand in your brand.



Projected



Townsend Inc.

"Customer service cannot just reside in a single department-it must permeate the entire company, like Dexnote. It is their shrewd guidance that helped us stop focusing on the competition, so we could focus on the customer."

—Galen Boded, President, Boded Worldwide

5. List deliverables, milestones, and budgets.

After you outline project details, identify specific deliverables this proposal will produce. For instance, if your proposal is to open a new branch of your business in a new region, identify all the steps that will happen in that process, what they'll cost, and what the timeline is. Striving for accuracy and professionalism in this section is key, as it demonstrates that you're serious about what you're trying to do. Coming in with examples of previous successes can also demonstrate proof that your process works.

While a proposal can be a formal document, it doesn't have to be stodgy. A winning proposal has eye-catching headings, is free of typos, and outlines the time frames, scope of work, and payment schedules that a client can expect if they accept.

6. Craft the conclusion and appendix.

End with a strong call to action that lets the reader know what they should do next. That can be a salesperson's number or a contact form online to discover more. An appendix that contains reference materials, definitions, methodology, and other relevant items can also be effective as well.

7. Edit and professionally polish your proposal.

A business proposal is bolstered by two things: solid writing and elegant design. Whether you're creating [a Request for Proposal \(RFP\)](#), a solicited proposal, or a series of case studies, Acrobat Pro gives you the tools to design beautiful and eye-catching proposals — and you don't even have to start from scratch. There are dozens of free business proposal templates available to start working from, and Acrobat makes it easy to add graphics, images, and creative formatting to your proposal.

Plus, if you're sharing your proposal digitally, you can easily [add graphs, pricing tables, links, and attachments](#) to enhance the overall experience for readers. Your table of contents can be hyperlinked throughout the document, and you can send readers to supplementary documents elsewhere.

Creating a compelling proposal and tidy cover page with Acrobat Pro is only a [few more steps away](#). You can start learning how with helpful guides and tutorials, and soon you'll have a business proposal that will grow and enhance your business.



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