A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR WRITING PROPOSALS

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The general purpose of any proposal is to persuade the readers to do something -- whether it is to persuade a potential customer to purchase goods and/or services, or to persuade your employer to fund a project or to implement a program that you would like to launch.

Any proposal offers a plan to fill a need, and your reader will evaluate your plan according to how well your written presentation answers questions about <u>WHAT</u> you are proposing, <u>HOW</u> you plan to do it, <u>WHEN</u> you plan to do it, and <u>HOW MUCH</u> it is going to cost. To do this you must ascertain the level of knowledge that your **audience** possesses and take the **positions** of all your readers into account. You must also discern whether your readers will be members of your technical community, of your technical discourse community, or of both, and then use the **appropriate materials and language** to appeal to both. You might provide, for those outside of your specific area of expertise, an executive summary written in non-technical (easily accessible) language, or you might include a **glossary** of terms that explains technical language used in the body of the proposal, and/ or attach appendices that explain technical information in generally understood language.

The most basic composition of a proposal, as with any other written document, is simple; it needs a *beginning* (the Introduction), a *middle* (the Body of material to be presented) and an *end* (the Conclusion/Recommendation).

- The **INTRODUCTION** presents and **summarizes** the problem you intend to solve and your solution to that problem, including the benefits the reader/group will receive from the solution and the cost of that solution.

- The **BODY** of the proposal should explain the **complete details of the solution**: how the job will be done, broken into separate tasks; what method will be used to do it, including the equipment, material, and personnel that would be required; *when the work will begin; and, when the job will be completed. It should also present a detailed cost breakdown for the entire job.*

- The **CONCLUSION** should emphasize the **benefits** that the reader will realize from your solution to the problem and should urge the reader to action. It should be encouraging, confident and assertive in tone.

Proposals are informative and persuasive writing because they attempt to educate the reader and to convince that reader to do something. The goal of the writer is not only to persuade the reader to do what is being requested, but also to **make the reader believe** that the solution is practical and appropriate. In persuasive proposal writing, the case is built by the demonstration of **logic and reason** in the approach taken in the solution.

Facts must lead logically and inevitably to the conclusion and/or the solution presented. Evidence should be given in a ***descending order of importance***, beginning with the most important evidence and ending with the least important.

Any questions that the reader might pose should be **anticipated** and answered in a way that reflects the stated position of your proposal. It is important that the writer, also, considers all sides of the argument --- providing **other alternative solutions** to the problem, but showing how the one chosen is superior to the others included.

Adapted by Xianfeng Mou from http://members.dca.net/areid/proposal.htm 11/18/03