

# ***PROPOSAL WRITING***

***Prepared and Presented by:***

***The Robcan Group  
31 Meridian Road  
Sherwood Park, Alberta  
T8A 0N5  
Ph. (780) 467-4112  
Email: [robcan.mail@shaw.ca](mailto:robcan.mail@shaw.ca)  
Website: [www.robcan.ca](http://www.robcan.ca)***

## **Writing Proposals:**

When people are faced with writing a proposal, the immediate reaction generally is:

*"I know what we want, but do I know how to write it down?"*

By definition, a proposal is a suggestion, request, recommendation or justification for a project, activity or in many cases for money for the funding of one.

The proposal report is often the basis for decision making and must therefore be practical and useable. Proposal reports must be user-oriented. The whole basis of evaluating a proposal report is how well it meets the reader's needs and answers the reader's questions.

**There are certain requirements which characterize a proposal report:**

**1. *It Must Stand Alone.***

The reader should be able to make a decision based on your report. He/she should not have to contact you for additional information or to do further research on the proposal. Be clear, complete and accurate in your presentation.

**2. *It Should Be Interesting.***

Because your reader has to read your report, try to make it as interesting and enjoyable as possible.

**3. *It Should Be Neither Too Long Nor Too Short.***

A common complaint about reports/proposals is that they are either too long or too short; that is, they have too much (unnecessary) information or they do not have enough. Too much information is distracting and annoying and will stop your reader from getting your point just as surely as inadequate information will.

**4. *It Should Be Thorough.***

Make sure, that depending on your project or subject, the reader, and the purpose, you have taken everything into account. For example, if you make recommendations that they have negative effects as well as the positive ones you are aiming for, it is important to deal with those negative effects as well.

5. **It Should Be Unbiased And Objective.**

Your report should be based on facts wherever possible. Hearsay and non-expert opinion for example, have no place in a report. Similarly, you should be unbiased and not use reports to “grind axes” or prove points of view you favor before you begin your research. If you have an opinion to state, clearly say that it is just an opinion.

6. **Show Your Confidence.**

A hesitant and reluctant proposal receives hesitant and reluctant review. Say what you want, show your passion for and belief in the project.

**Four Major Considerations in Proposal Writing are:**

1. Determine your purpose or objectives.
2. Know your audience or reader.
3. Choose your correct format.
4. Choose an effective organizational pattern.

**Report Writing Objectives Chart:**

→ Why am I writing this report? - Action? - Information?

→ Why is this report important?

→ What am I trying to convey information about?

→ Am I going to suggest that action be taken? – By what date? – Why?

→ Am I solving a problem?

- What is the problem?
- When and where did the problem occur?
- What is the extent of the problem?

→ What key data is required to achieve my purpose? What do I need to know to achieve my objective?

→ Who will read this report/proposal?

**Audience:**

**READER GUIDELINE CHART**

- Name of main readers
- Relationship to main readers: Personal? – Professional? – Superior? Outside Agency?
- What questions will the main reader ask about the subject?
- What background does the main reader have? How much does he or she need?
- What are the main reader's biases, preconceived notions?
- Who are the secondary readers? Who else may make use of this report/proposal?

**WHAT MANAGEMENT MAY WANT TO KNOW:**

- Problems? What is it? – Importance? – What is being done? – Suggested solution? – Best solution/other solution (s)? – Who should handle it? – How long will it take?
- New Projects: Importance? – Cost? – Scope of application? – Will it mean more work? – What facilities are needed? – What equipment needed? – What schedule? – What are possible problems?
- Tests / Experiments: What was tested? - Why? – How? – Who? – Results? – What does it mean? – What applications? – Benefits?
- Field Troubles / Design Problems: What trouble? – History of problem? – Whose responsibility? – Most practical solution? – What's needed? – How long will it take? – Suggestions to prevent future problems? – Suggestions for changes?

### **Define Your Reader:**

- Reading level
- How much they know about the subject
- Are they technical people?
- How much detail will they require?
- Where do their main interests lie?
- What they do with my report/proposal?
- How will my report/proposal be used?
- Who else is likely to read my report/proposal?

### **Proposal Reports:**

Everything has to begin somewhere with someone, and in business the beginning is usually a proposal report. Proposals are usually written for one of here reasons:

1. To get a project / idea accepted.
2. To get it accepted to perform work.
3. To get action stated in some direction. (This often leads to a feasibility report.)

Every item, point, display and even the format must be designed to accomplish your goal. Know your target and take dead aim for it.

### **The basic plan for a proposal follows this form:**

#### **Introduction:**

Identify the letter or report as a proposal. Explain how the idea came to you. State the subject of the proposed research. Comment on the importance of the project. Present your company's or your own qualifications. Set down all information your reader's will need to know about the plan or project.

### **Discussion:**

Here you develop the substance in detail. It is, obviously, the longest part of the report/proposal and may contain any number of the following items:

- Reference to earlier association
- Purpose
- Definition of request/problem
- Background
- Need for solution
- Benefits of outcome
- Feasibility of solution
- Scope
- Methods used
- Task breakdown
- Time and work schedule
- Facilities available
- Previous experience
- Personnel and qualifications
- References
- Likelihood of success
- Cost
- Method of payment
- Descriptive and/or advertising literature

### **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

Consolidate the information. Encourage acceptance and urge action. Perhaps stress the importance again or suggest an interview. Show your willingness to meet and discuss to modify if necessary.

### **Attachments / Appendix:**

May include display or backup materials. Other suggestions are: testimonial letters from other related beneficial sources, flow charts of intended work programs, descriptions of past projects or anything useful to support your goal. It may also include any qualification support references (resumes etc). These are set up as appendixes at the end of your report/proposal

*A proposal or report is only successful when it has been read and understood. Readability is the rate with which your reader can read and understand your writing.*

*Our writing instruction was almost always from the writer's point of view. How about the reader? Readability is the key to the success of your report or letter.*

## **Readability Test**

Many studies have been made on the readability of written material. One of the most reliable and simplest to use is the "*Fog Index*" originated by *Robert Gunning*. The *Fog Index* is based on the belief that short words and short sentences result in clean writing. Many of you will have a readability tool in your computer to do this job for you.

### **Gunnings Fog Index:**

1. Take a 100 word sample.
2. Count the number of sentences within the 100 words.
3. Divide 100 by the number of sentences = average sentence length.
4. Count the number of three syllable words or more than three syllable words in the passage

### **Don't Count:**

- II Proper nouns
- II Verbs ending in "es" or "ed".
- II Compound words made up of two simple words
- II Words used more than once.

5. Add average sentence length to number of three syllable words = X
6. Multiply X by .4 = personal fog index.

Generally speaking, you want your writing level to match the reader's reading level. You can also test your readability by using your computer software in MS word.

