DAVIS
BUSINESS CONSULTANTS

Making Your Business Work Better For You

HIGH-CONVERTING PROPOSALS & EMAILS

INTRODUCTION

Many professionals spend a lot of their time writing proposals. The difficulty with this is the fact that they leave a client meeting with the headache of knowing that they've got to put a proposal together when they get back to the office – and where do they start!

The attached fee proposal structure is one that I've developed over years of testing and has proven to achieve a far greater conversion when used by my clients. Where typically clients have been achieving conversion rates of 3 out of 10, meaning the win three clients/projects for every ten they submit a proposal for. With the structure I outline here, that conversion rate increased to converting 8 out of 10. This is a very high conversion rate and has resulted in winning contracts worth anything from €50,000 to €400,000.

It is structured in such a way as to bring the client through the current issues that they face – the ones that they're looking for you to provide a solution for. Then it brings them through your fees, how you're going to solve their problem, and then finally the benefits they will obtain as a result.

Most professionals place their fee at the end of the document. And that's what clients have come to expect. So the first thing they do when they receive a proposal is to jump to the end of the document to find the cost. Then upon seeing the cost, they will either accept or reject the proposal.

This suggested structure purposely puts the costs in the middle of the document. The client then has to read through the proposal and by doing so gets to remember their pain points.

Secondly the benefits are placed after the costs are outlined. The reason for this is that if you tell someone the benefits first, and then the costs, they remember the costs the most. It sticks in their mind. Whereas when you mention the benefits after the costs, they receive the information in the format of "*here's the costs*" and for that cost, "*here's the benefits*". In that way they understand more what difference they're going to receive for paying those costs.

In my book, "*MORE – How You Can Get More Clients, More Fees, And More Time*" I go through what I call a 'Value Conversation'. This is a suggested conversation that you always have with a potential client. If you conduct this value conversation, then it will give you all the information that you need to complete the proposal for them, along with the benefit that are important to them.

INTRODUCTION

If your client or potential client has asked you to prepare a proposal, don't just say yes and leave the meeting.

Confirm to them that you will prepare a proposal, but then follow it by saying what would you like contained in the proposal. When you've got them answering this question, work through a draft proposal with them.

That is, ask them how many pages should it be, one page or longer – this will determine whether they are looking for a lot of detail or just a summary, what are the main headings they want in the proposal, how many copies of the proposal do they need – will they be distributing the proposal to other people in their company.

When you've worked through the draft proposal with them, you have a much closer relationship with them. Unconsciously they have now made themselves part of your proposal and if it is being compared to other proposals there will be a higher sense of ownership on their part to your proposal.

STRUCTURING YOUR PROPOSAL

So how do you structure a proposal?

First of all start with the heading. Your heading will summarize the hot buttons that they expressed at your meeting. It won't just simply state 'accounting services' or such like. It must be in a language that they use and refer to the pain that they want to get rid of. It must very quickly grab their attention and bring them back to the problem.

After the heading you'll have an opening paragraph which might refer to your meeting or particular items you've enclosed with the proposal.

Then you need to have a heading called 'Summary'. In this, you will describe your overall thought processes for the proposal so that the client can get a quick synopsis of what it's all about.

Next heading – 'Current Situation'. Here you're going to describe the pain that the client is feeling by being in the current situation. It's important that you use the same words that your client described at your meeting. By doing so, you're getting the client to once again revisit the position and how desperately they want to have it sorted.

Next heading – 'Our Philosophy'. In order to separate yourself from the crowd, this is where you're going to include a brief paragraph about your values or approach to dealing with clients.

Next heading – 'Proposal'. In this section you'll go into full details as to what your proposal is to solving the problems the client has.

Next heading – 'Costs'. Highlight here what the costs are, and importantly how you expect to get paid.

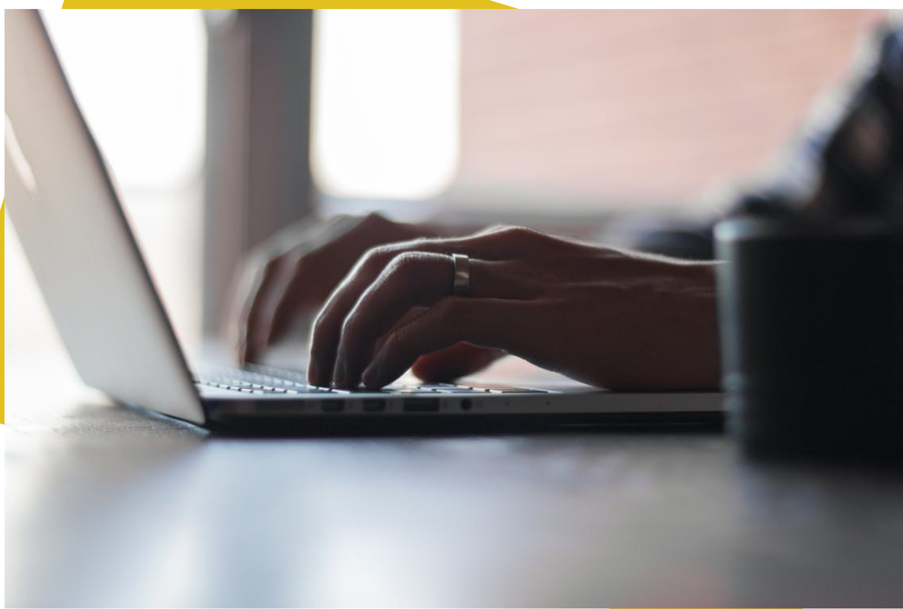
Next Heading – Relevant Commercial Experience. This is where you need to demonstrate your relevant experience in solving their problems, what you've done in the past and what other aspects that are relevant to why they should choose you. This is not a section where you go through all the history of "About Your Firm" or your "Curriculum Vitae / Resume". It will be bullet points of the main headlines of why you're the best fit for the project.

Next heading – 'Benefits or Return on Investment'. Now that you've reminded them of the pains and the cost of removing those pains you're now going to go through what are the benefits that they're going to derive. Again you will use the language that your client used at the meeting so that he can relate to it immediately. This is where you will remind them of the 'value' they described during your initial meeting.

Next heading – 'Conclusion'. This in effect will repeat somewhat part of what you stated in the summary section above. In other words tell them again what you've just told them.

Next is the closing section.
This won't have a heading but this is where you are going to ask for the business. Give them a call to action in order to get the business. Answer for them - what do they have to do now. Don't just leave them hanging without knowing what their next action is.

Lastly, after your signature have a 'Postscript' i.e. a PS. This is an essential piece of the jigsaw. Research shows the benefits of having a PS in your proposals. Look at this yourself – when you receive a letter from somebody, your sequence of reading typically will be – heading, signature, PS, costs, letter and in that order. That's why the PS is so important. Your PS has to grab their attention to include the major benefits your client will receive and it reiterates the call to action.



FEE PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

Name
Title Position
Address 1
Address 2
Address 3
Address 4

Date

Heading that describes what the proposal is relating to

Dear [First Name]

Following my discussions with [name] regarding your requirement for [type of services requested] for your business, I have outlined below a summary of my understanding of your requirements, and how I would approach this project.

Current Situation

[Describe in this paragraph the information that you gathered that has led to the client requesting your services, what the main issues and pain points are, and what the client is looking to achieve.]

Our Approach & Philosophy

[Describe the philosophy of your business, what's important to you and how you approach client relationships]

Example: Our philosophy is simple – to deliver real value to our clients. We provide a planned approach to all projects and keep the client informed at all stages ensuring they are fully briefed and in agreement with next planned steps making sure there are no surprises or hidden costs. We approach all our projects as a partnership and endeavour to treat our clients as we ourselves would like to be treated by being open, honest and dealing with all matters in a fair way.

Proposal

From the information that we have surrounding this project, we suggest the following:

[Using paragraphs or bullet points, in this section describe what you are going to do, how you're going to deliver your service, and the different phases if relevant]
At regular intervals throughout the project we will review our progress and make any adjustments that are necessary in order to be able to deliver on the objectives.

Costs

[Outline here what your costs will be, how you charge your fees, and any potential extra costs like expenses, and how you expect to get paid i.e. by standing order, upon presentation of invoice, 30 days after invoice.]

Relevant Commercial Experience

It is important to note some of our commercial experience as a backdrop to this project:

Relevant point 1
Relevant point 2
Relevant point 3
Relevant point 4
Relevant point 5

Return on Investment

[Describe here what the expected return on investment will be, or the benefits to the client of having their problems sorted.]

Conclusion

The key objective is to [insert what the objective is so that you can clearly demonstrate that you are aligned to what your client wants to achieve.]

The above is based on our conversation which I hope I have taken on board all that was discussed and have an understanding of your requirements. If the above is agreeable to you, the next step would be to arrange [state what the next step that needs to be taken i.e. to arrange a meeting, gather information etc.] If further clarification is needed or queries arise please don't hesitate to contact me on [telephone number].

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

____

[Name]

P.S. The purpose of this proposal is to provide clarification and a road-map to you achieving [enter here your clients desired outcome].

EMAIL TEMPLATES

Email to send to a potential client that you've been referred to

When you are successful to be given a contact name from a trusted referral partner, sometimes it can be difficult to know what to write to the person you are being introduced to.

Here are two email templates for you to use in such circumstances and have proven to get that all-important meeting that you want.

The first email is to initiate the interaction. If you don't get a response from the person you are sending the email to, then on that occasion I suggest you send the second email as a way of moving it along.

Email to send to a potential client that you've been referred to

Email 1

Send

To...

Cc...

Subject: Ref: John Doe, XYZ Limited

[Enter the name of the person that gave you the contact details, and the name of the company they are from. For example "Ref: John Doe, XYZ Limited". The reason why you put this in the subject line is because the person you are sending the email to already knows that person and will want to open your email, as opposed to just receiving a "cold" email from you.]

Hi [First Name]

I recently met with [enter the name of the person who gave you the contact] to discuss business as he is a valued client of mine. As part of our discussion your name came up. [name] spoke very highly of you and believed, based on what we were discussing, that there is some benefit in the two of us speaking to explore how potentially we can benefit one another also.

As such when would be a good date and time to arrange to meet with you briefly?

I look forward to speaking with you.

Kind regards

[Your name]

Email 2

Send by forwarding your previous email that you sent.

To...

Cc...

Send

Subject: Fwd: Ref: John Doe, XYZ Limited

Hi [First Name]

I'm writing to follow-up on my email. When I sent it you may have been away on vacation or are extremely busy.

If you're interested in meeting up to see how we could potentially benefit one another, will we put something in the diary for the middle of [suggest a month] or shall I close the file?

Thanks for your help.

Kind regards

[Your name]

Email to follow up on a previous enquiry from a prospect client

There are many times you get enquiries from potential clients, you may even give them a proposal, but then you never hear from them again. A couple of months go by and you're still wondering if they're going to turn into a client at some point or whether they've found somebody else.

This situation is never good either for you or for your potential client. As a way of following up with such prospects when a couple of months have gone by, you are better to get a definite Yes or No, because nobody moves forward with a Maybe!

This email gets prospects off the fence to make a decision, while allowing the professional to have a chance to reconnect. Typically this email will convert 25% of prospects that professionals consider as being dead potentials.

Email 3

To...

Cc...

Subject: Permission to close your file?

Send

[The reason we use this terminology and heading is firstly, any recipient will want to know what file is going to be closed and will therefore open your email, and secondly it conveys the fact that you value them enough that you went to all the effort of setting up a file for that potential client.]

Hi [First Name]

I'm writing to follow-up on our last conversation.

I'm in the process of closing files for the month ahead. Typically when I haven't heard back from someone it means they are either really busy or aren't interested. If you aren't interested, do I have permission to close your file?

If you are still interested, what do you recommend as a next step?

Thanks for your help.

Kind regards

[Your name]

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