

Write a Winning Proposal!

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Smart Steps to Make Your Proposal OUTSHINE the Rest



All of us know that getting new business isn't easy. It takes smart marketing, diligent networking, and, yes, more than a few perfect proposals. Of course, pitching and proposing to new and existing clients takes a certain knack. Sometimes lawyers will overwhelm their prospects with material touting why their firms are the best. The reality, though, this isn't the best way to pitch.

Perfect pitching and proposal writing takes **active listening** and **simply showing the client why your firm is able to meet his or her needs**.

Sounds simple enough, right?

Well, it is if you're familiar with the following basic practices of writing a perfect proposal.

First, you have to understand the prospect and what he or she wants. Selling work is all about matching the client's needs with your solutions – and you can't sell very well without understanding the client's needs.

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Ask your marketing department to get involved. The professionals there can help with basic research, including finding corporate Websites, annual reports and financial documents, news articles, litigation and deal histories.

Don't be afraid to pick up the phone and call the prospect yourself. Listen closely to what he or she has to say. You should get insight into his or her situation and needs, and how the decision will be made to hire counsel. All of this is **valuable information** you **MUST** find out before writing a winning pitch or proposal!

Second, understand your firm. Make sure you know the history your firm has with the prospect, including any prior work, who did the work, who at the firm knows who at the company, etc. Knowing this information will help you gather even more information about the prospect, and help you assess business opportunities.

Third, target your approach. Here's when you DON'T want to bog the prospect down with heavy marketing information and dozens lawyer bios. Target your proposal based on all the information you've gathered from your research and conversations with the prospect.

Remember: The proposal isn't about you, it's about the client – how *the client's* problems will be solved and how the client's budget will be met. You also need to show that you not only understand the client's need, but that you're qualified and capable of doing the work! Try listing the results the client can expect and make the case for why you're different (if not better) than the competition. If you must include lawyer bios, be sure they are targeted to the points listed higher in the proposal.

Finally, follow up! If a meeting is requested by the client, go prepared to talk about your proposal and to answer any questions. Also, be prepared to listen! **You should spend far more time listening and asking questions than talking about you or the firm.** If your pitch or proposal is rejected, ask for a brief follow-up call to review how your proposal was received.

Successful rainmakers put tremendous thought and preparation into the proposal process. Don't burden yourself and your business by letting little details fall by the wayside. Take the time to listen to your prospects' needs. If you do, chances are you'll **close more deals** and build **better client relationships** than you've ever have in your career.

Adapted from article [A Brief Primer on Pitches and Proposals for New Partners](#) by Jim Austin.

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