

5 Ways Not to Botch Your Chances of Winning Work

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You can blow your chances of getting work with a bad proposal.



Finding prospective clients is hard, but actually *landing* the case can be even harder.

While receiving an RFP from a prospect may fill you with hope and excitement, the process itself is riddled with **potential pitfalls**. So many in fact, lawyers have a real chance of blowing their chances of winning that new work.

Here are **five of the biggest mistakes attorneys make** during the proposal process.

1. Lawyers isolate themselves.

Lawyers have a tendency get behind closed doors and begin creating their proposals in "objective" isolation. They research the client and the project and truly believe they can make all of the pieces of the puzzle fit together themselves.

Big mistake.

Great proposals are conceived through **active lawyer-client participation**. Prospects need to be a part of the proposal process - including research, identifying objectives, potential benefits and, of course, fees.

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2. The proposal begins with the firm's qualifications.

Attorneys often like to begin their proposals with a recitation of their firm's background and qualifications. What these attorneys don't realize, however, is that their prospects already *know* these qualifications.

Instead, start every proposal with a **focus on the client's issues and objectives**, not your firm's illustrious history.

3. The executive summary is left out.

No executive summary? No deal.

Many decision-makers only look at two items on a proposal: the executive summary and the price. Yet, surprisingly, many lawyers don't include executive summaries in their proposals!

Clients rely on executive summaries to make sure *you* understand what they are trying to accomplish. A proposal that doesn't include an executive summary may very well end up in the trash.

4. The proposal is long and full of jargon.

Studies show that, given a choice, **clients will pick up and read a shorter proposal** before they'll wade into a tome loaded with legal jargon and buzzwords. **Keep your proposals as short as possible**, while meeting the requirements your client has established.

Also, **keep a close eye on your language**. Did you use phrases like “organizational transformation” or “seamless transition?” If so, see an editor. Your proposal has a greater likelihood of being accepted if you write using plain terms that people will understand.

5. Missed deadline.

A proposal submission is your time to shine. So, don't miss the boat by submitting a proposal after the deadline. Get everything done on time!

Don't blow your odds of winning work with a bad proposal. Avoid these common lawyer mistakes and your odds of being awarded new projects will soar!

Article adapted from [There Must Be Fifty Ways to Lose a Sale](#) by Michael McLaughlin.

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