

2018 WEBINAR SERIES



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Writing to Win

 **APMP 1 certification CEU**

Webinar Agenda

- High cost of poor writing
- Pre-writing guidelines
- Your questions / Panel responses
- Writing to Win checklist
- Q & A



Think About This...

Josh Bernoff wrote an article -

Bad Writing Costs Businesses Billions

*“Bad writing is costing American businesses close to **\$400 billion every year**. That is a staggering number.”*

Bernoff continues:

*“Think about it. You start your day wading through first-draft emails from colleagues who fail to come to the point. You consume reports that don’t make clear what’s happening or what your management should do about it. The websites, marketing materials (**proposals**), and press releases from your suppliers are **filled with jargon and meaningless superlatives**.”*



Kara Blackburn, a senior lecturer in managerial communication at the MIT Sloan School of Management is quoted saying:

“You can have all the great ideas in the world and if you can’t communicate, nobody will hear them.”

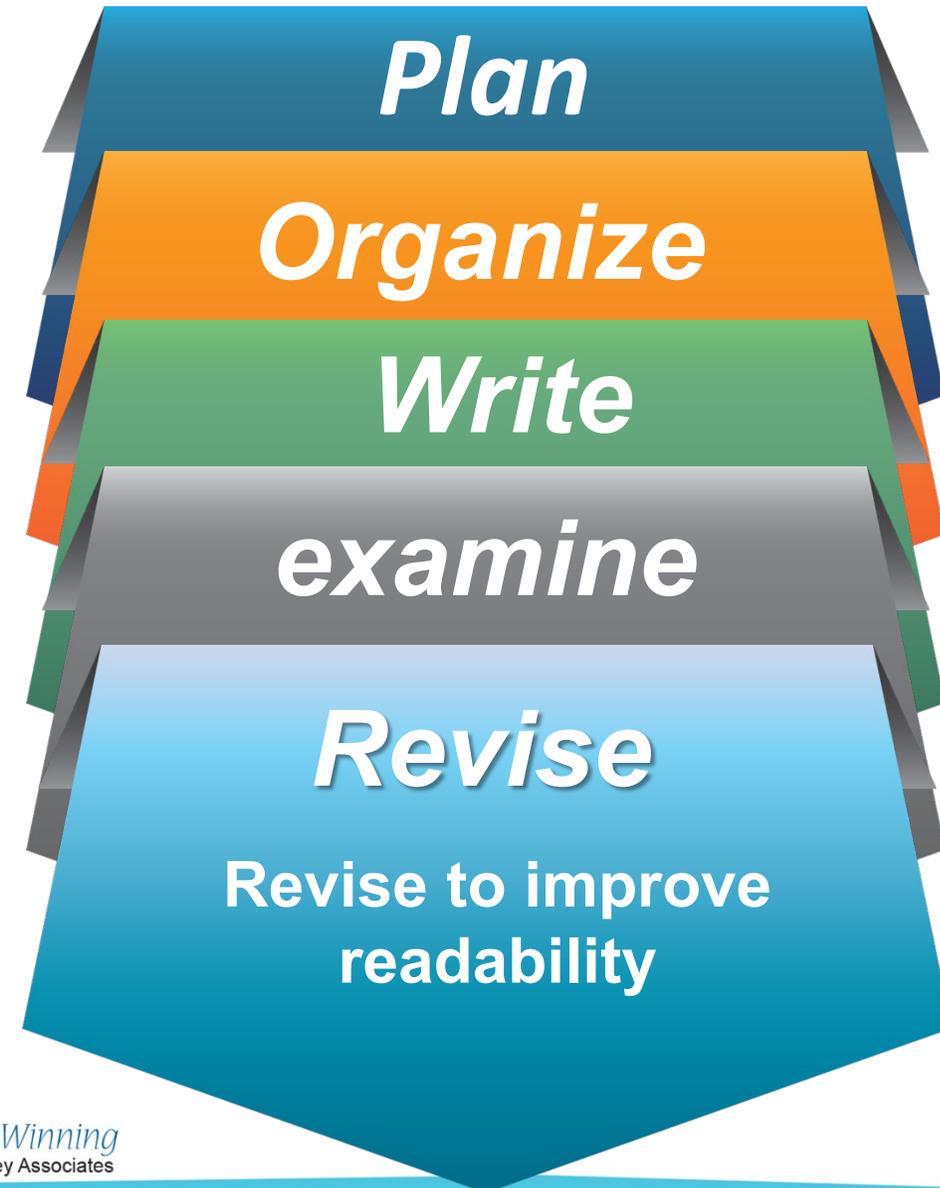


What Leads to Poor Proposal Writing?

- Poor pre-writing and planning
- Misguided win strategy and false starts
- Solution uncertainty or delays
- Lack of “know-how” (writing skill)
- “All about us” syndrome
- Poor reviews/lack of discipline
- “Too many cooks in the kitchen”



Before Writing... What?



Your Topics/Questions

1. *Benefits Focused Writing*
2. *Win Strategy Development and Articulation*
3. *Customer Focus in our Writing*
4. *Trim the Fat – being concise and clear to improve readability*
5. *Writing Win Themes*
6. *Other Topics*



**FIVE
HOT
TOPICS**

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1. Benefits Focused Writing

If evaluators can't find a benefit in what you're selling then you're of no value to them.



**FIVE
HOT
TOPICS**



What is the most efficient way to prove your point when page limits are restrictive?



*How do you turn company-
focused mission statements
and value propositions into
customer-focused messages
to win business?*



How do you gain the customer's attention when you are coming into the game at the last minute?

The Key... Focus on the Benefits



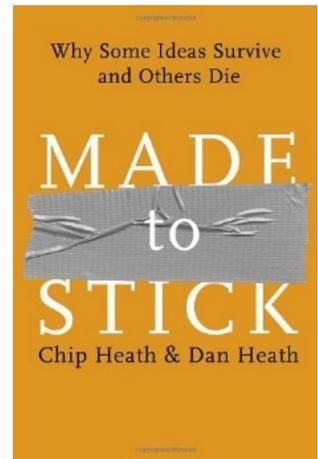
Writing to Win

What makes our writing “stick”?

For an idea to endure, we must generate interest and curiosity.

Naturally sticky ideas are full of concrete images... because our brains are wired to remember concrete data.

Sticky ideas have to carry their own credentials. We need ways to help people test our ideas for themselves – a ‘try before you buy’ philosophy.



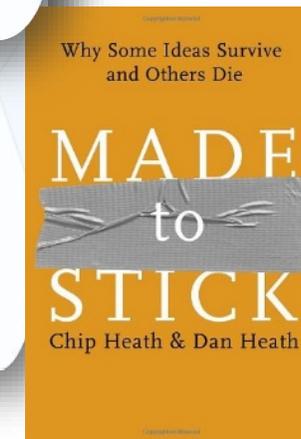
Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die

By: Chip Heath and Dan Heath

“News reporters are taught to start their stories with the most important

*“Our messages **have to be compact**, because we learn and remember only so much information at once.”*

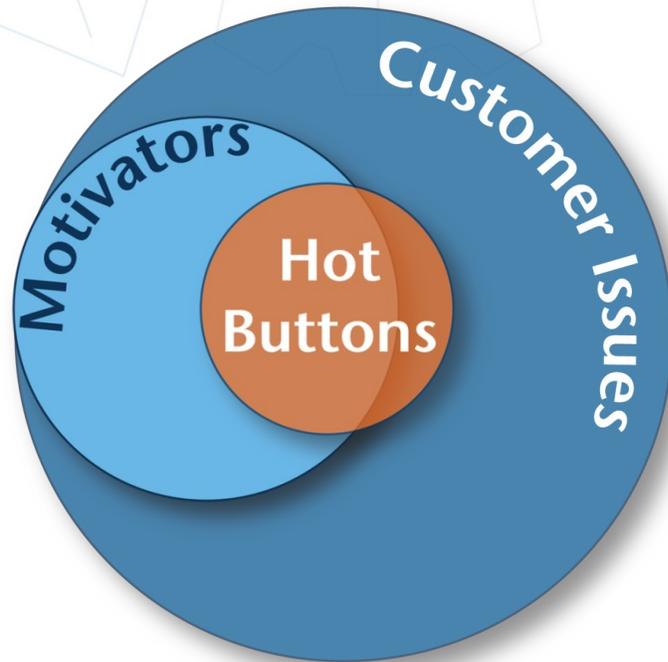
*the ‘inverted pyramid’ structure – the **most important information at the top...** The inverted pyramid is great for the reader...”*



Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die

By: Chip Heath and Dan Heath

Clarify Issues, Motivators, and Hot Buttons with Sales Team



- **Issues** are the customer's concerns. Issues are the *worry items that keep the customer awake at night.*
- **Motivators** are the *objectives that the customer is trying to achieve.*
 - Improve profits
 - Increase sales
 - Reduce costs and redundancy
 - Improve safety
 - Achieve mission – support end user
 - Demonstrate value to taxpayers
- **Hot Buttons** are a *consolidated set of issues and motivators.*

We're Often Left Guessing!

What They Say

What They Mean

Source: Franklin Covey Sales Performance Group. Used with permission.

No Guessing!

They Say “Quality”

They Mean...

Value Predictable Reliable
Flexible Best price Functionality Safe
Convenient Low maintenance Simple
Error-free Efficient etc...
More...

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2. Win Strategy Development

*Writing must align with the win strategy – we must articulate the “how” in our message...
How are we going to solve a problem or save the customer money?*



**FIVE
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*How do you develop
strategies to concisely
and effectively tell your
company's story?*



How do you get out of the weeds of constantly using standard database content?



What is the value of the executive summary? If it's so important, why isn't it scored?



*How do you get sales
people to collaborate
more with proposal writers
rather than writing
their own copy?*



***What do I do to ensure the
“how” isn’t left out of a
proposal, especially the
technical approach?***

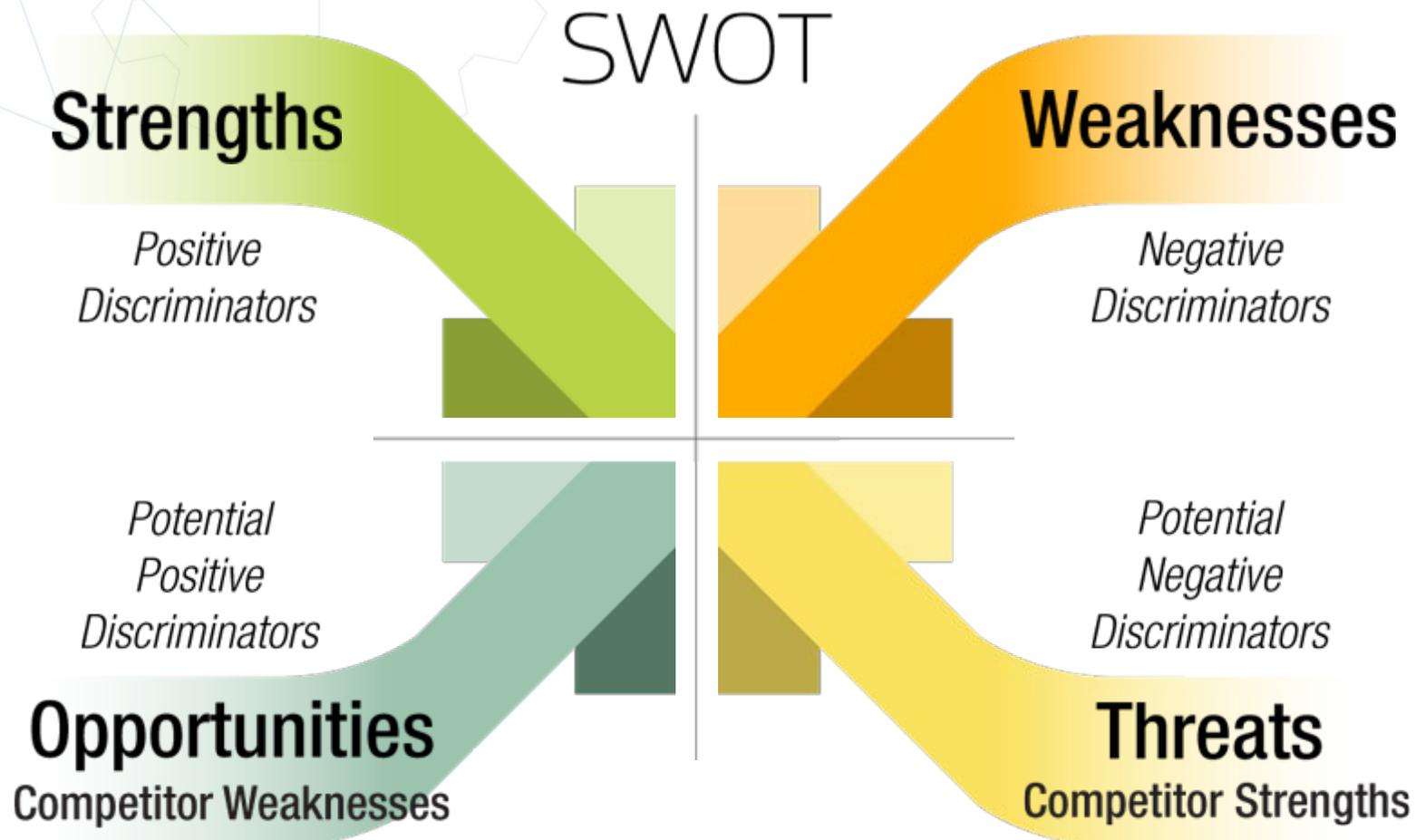
Win Strategy Focuses on Strengths and Discriminators

Competitive Focus

Is it obvious why our offer is better than competitive offers?



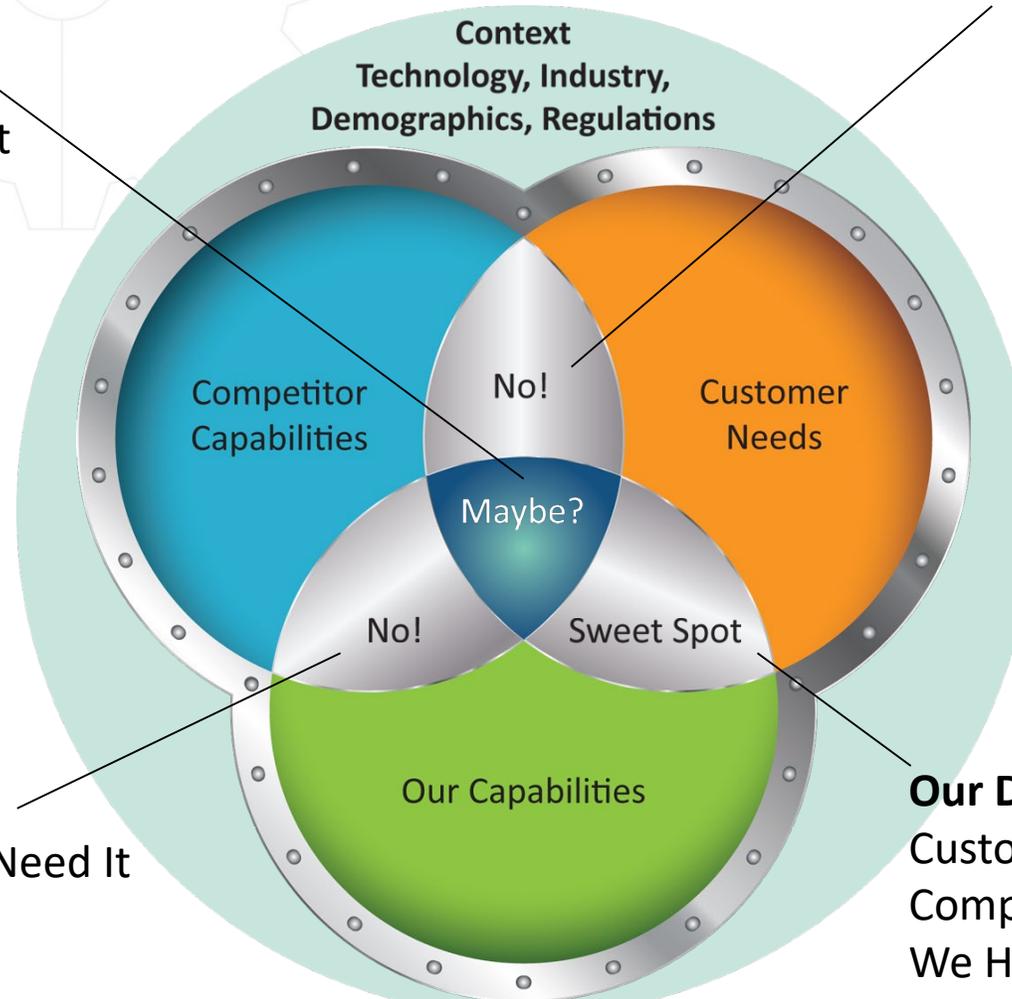
SWOT Helps us Develop Strategy



Discriminators Help Us Write to Win

Neutral Position
Customer Needs It
Competitor Has It
We Have It

Our Weakness
Customer Needs It
Competitor Has It
We Don't Have It



Irrelevant Position
Customer Doesn't Need It
Competitor Has It
We Have It

Our Discriminators
Customer Needs It
Competitor Doesn't Have It
We Have It

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3. Customer Focus in Our Writing

Focusing on the customer helps us ensure compliance and be responsive in our writing.



**FIVE
HOT
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***How do we entice the
customer and appear
friendly?***



***How do you ensure
compliance while
communicating customer
focus?***



How do you write unique lead sentences in cover letters, concise executive summaries, and translate complex information into infographics?



What methods are available to train technical staff and SMEs on proposal writing techniques?



How do you stand out to an individual and not just blend in? How do you improve the content of your proposals?

Customer Focus Starts with Compliance

Compliance

Have all bid requests requirements been addressed and all instructions followed?



Compliance

The practice of obeying a rule, law, in accordance with established guidance to fit specified standards set do meets the requirements of accepted prescribed regulations, policies, law or the terms of a contract.

Responsiveness Sets Us Apart



We provide 24/7 support.

You benefit from 24/7 support at four locations around the world, **in each language required**, with a response time of three minutes or less.

RESPONSIVENESS

Customer Focused Writing Guidelines

- 01 Is the customer named before us?
- 02 Is the customer named more often than us?
- 03 Is the customer's buying vision (objective) evident?
- 04 Have we linked the buying vision to this bid – the how?
- 05 Are the customer's hot buttons prioritized?
- 06 Is hot button ownership explicit?
- 07 Are proof statements directly related to customer's hot buttons?
- 08 Are the benefits of the solution(s) listed before the features?
- 09 Is the content previewed? Did we follow organization instructions ?
- 10 Is the *value proposition* clear and are next steps defined?

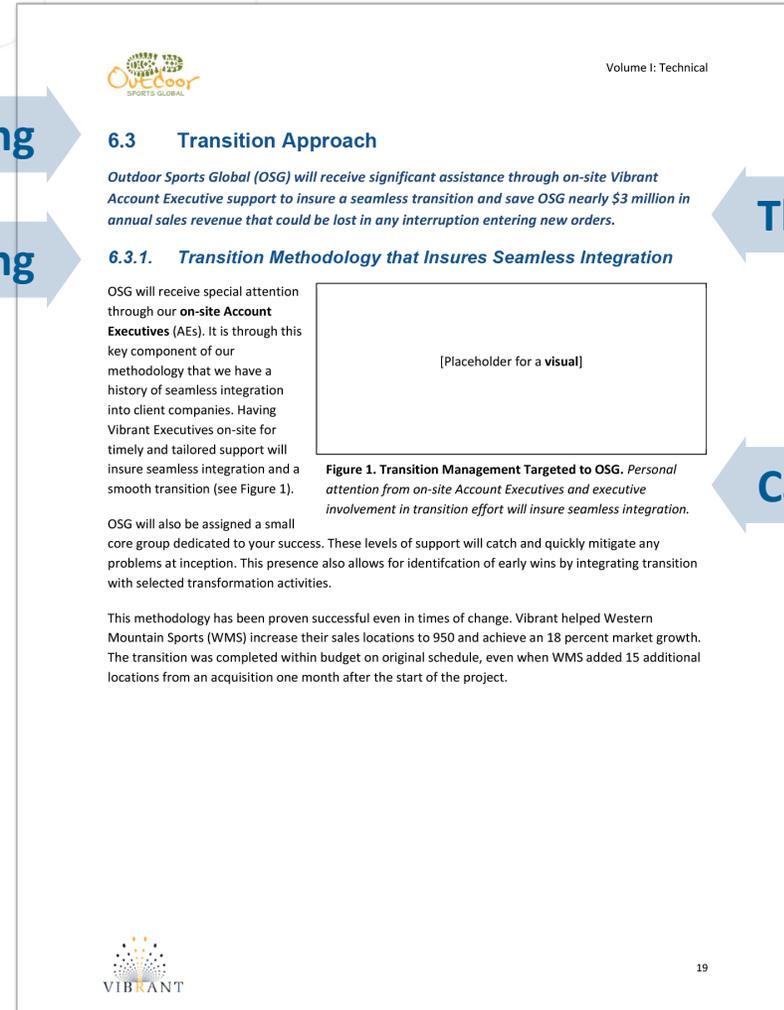
Good Page and Document Design

Section Heading

Subheading

Theme Statement

Caption Text



The screenshot shows a document page with the following elements:

- Page Header:** "Volume I: Technical" in the top right corner.
- Logo:** "Outdoor Sports Global" logo in the top left corner.
- Section Heading:** "6.3 Transition Approach" in blue text.
- Text:** "Outdoor Sports Global (OSG) will receive significant assistance through on-site Vibrant Account Executive support to insure a seamless transition and save OSG nearly \$3 million in annual sales revenue that could be lost in any interruption entering new orders."
- Subheading:** "6.3.1. Transition Methodology that Insures Seamless Integration" in blue text.
- Text:** "OSG will receive special attention through our on-site Account Executives (AEs). It is through this key component of our methodology that we have a history of seamless integration into client companies. Having Vibrant Executives on-site for timely and tailored support will insure seamless integration and a smooth transition (see Figure 1)."
- Figure Placeholder:** A rectangular box containing the text "[Placeholder for a visual]".
- Caption Text:** "Figure 1. Transition Management Targeted to OSG. Personal attention from on-site Account Executives and executive involvement in transition effort will insure seamless integration."
- Text:** "OSG will also be assigned a small core group dedicated to your success. These levels of support will catch and quickly mitigate any problems at inception. This presence also allows for identification of early wins by integrating transition with selected transformation activities."
- Text:** "This methodology has been proven successful even in times of change. Vibrant helped Western Mountain Sports (WMS) increase their sales locations to 950 and achieve an 18 percent market growth. The transition was completed within budget on original schedule, even when WMS added 15 additional locations from an acquisition one month after the start of the project."
- Page Footer:** "VIBRANT" logo in the bottom left corner and the number "19" in the bottom right corner.

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4. Trim the Fat to Improve Readability

Customers do not want excess or complex words – they don't want FLUFF.

They want your writing to make it easy to evaluate.





*How do we frame groups
of technical requirements
without restating the
requirement?*



What are the best practices for writing customer-focused proposals and how do we trim the fluff?



***When writing technical proposals,
are there any tips for keeping
readability statistics below that of
advanced education levels?***



How do you convince a SME that simple, concise language without jargon/technical overspeak is better in a written proposal?

Good Graphics Help Us Be More Concise

Visualization

Do visuals clearly communicate major selling points? Are captions compelling?



Improve Readability

Simplify Wordy Phrases

Wordy

have the ability to

conduct an investigation of

make a modification to

make use of

with the result that

Simple

can

investigate

modify

use

so that

Use Active Voice to Trim the Fat

In **passive** voice,...vague.

- Mistakes were made by Terry.

In **active** voice,...action

- Terry made some mistakes.

Improve Readability

Use Effective Proposal Headings

Telegraphic

Informative (2nd Level)

Introduction

An Overview from Improving Sales Performance

Organization

**Flat Organizational Structure
Reduces Overhead Cost**

Design

**A System Designed for Tailoring to
Retail Market**

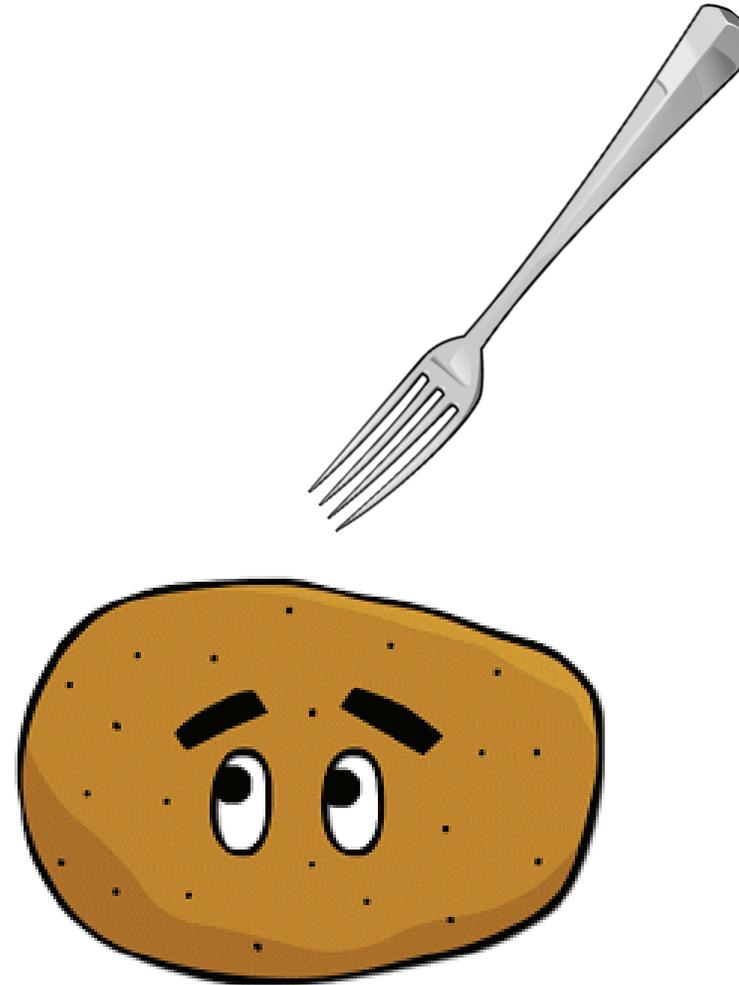
Implementation

**Continuous Support Through a
Three-Phase Implementation**

Avoid Unnecessary Technical Wording

"I utilized a multi-tined tool with quadruple points of entry to process a starch resource."

"I used my fork to eat a potato."



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5. Writing Good Win Themes

Customers will generally always read two parts of the proposal:

The executive summary; and theme statements.



**FIVE
HOT
TOPICS**



Can you provide tips for writing win themes and describe what call to action goes in a proposal cover letter?



What is the best way to address theme statements when there are unclear or weak discriminators?

Theme Statement Success Formula

<Customer> <Quantified Benefit> <Specified Feature> <Discriminator> <Proof>

Develop a Customer-Focused Theme Statement

Feature

The Vibrant CRM system provides long-term support of your objectives. Outdoor Sports Global will reduce the cost of both sales tracking and lead nurturing campaigns by selecting Vibrant as its partner.

Benefit

How would you re-work this theme statement to show the benefit before the feature?

Customer and Benefit First

Customer

Benefit

Outdoor Sports Global will **reduce the cost** of sales tracking and lead nurturing campaigns by selecting Vibrant to implement a **CRM system** that promises immediate results and long-term support of your objectives.

Feature

<Customer> <Quantified Benefit> <Specified Feature> <Discriminator> <Proof>

A Theme with a *Value Proposition* is Stronger

Customer

Benefit

Outdoor Sports Global will **reduce the cost** of sales tracking and lead nurturing campaigns by selecting Vibrant to implement a **CRM system** that reduces overall marketing **costs by 35 percent**.

Feature

Quantified
Return

<Customer> <Quantified Benefit> <Specified Feature> <Discriminator> <Proof>

A Detailed Value Proposition is Stronger Yet

Customer

Quantified Benefit

Outdoor Sports Global will **reduce marketing costs by 35 percent** over **two years** by implementing Vibrant's CRM system at cost savings of over **\$225,000 per year** compared to the current OSG system and support personnel.

Timed Return

Cost

Feature

<Customer> <Quantified Benefit> <Specified Feature> <Discriminator> <Proof>

Turn a Feature into a *Discriminator*

Customer

Quantified Benefits

Outdoor Sports Global will **reduce the cost** of sales tracking and customer nurturing campaigns **by 35 percent** by selecting Vibrant to implement our **CRM system** that includes global, **in-country support** to help achieve OSG's strategic growth plan.

Feature

Discriminating Characteristic

Theme Statement Litmus Test

**CAN I USE THIS
THEME TO
JUSTIFY A HIGH
SCORE?**



	Fair	Good	Exceptional
	3	4	5
<p>Requirements: A system that provides global support for international growth</p>			X
<p>Justification of Score from Evaluator: <i>Vibrant uniquely provides in-country support personnel for global implementation of a CRM system that supports online and retail sales expansion.</i></p>			

Writing to Win Checklist

- Is the theme or value proposition stated first? Is it specific and quantified?
- Do you name the customer before your company?
- Did you state benefits before features?
- Is your solution tied to the customer's hot buttons?
- Did you preview the content for the reader?
- Is content organized around the customer's hot buttons?
- Do you clearly identify how your solution benefits the customer?
- Are your discriminators obvious?
- Did you substantiate your approach and claims?
- Did you use clear visuals with action captions?
- Did you use telegraphic and informative headings on proper levels?
- Is information organized logically?
- Did you use active voice?

Questions



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2019



Shipleys Webinar Calendar

- Jan 16** Money Wasted!
- Feb 20** Keys to Effective Proposal Management
- April 3** A Value Proposition...*What is it, really?*
- May 15** Characteristics of Winning Proposals

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Thank You!



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