



Right, Write, Right

When it comes to bid and proposal writing, there are common blunders and wonders.



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Webinar Agenda



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The good, the bad, and the ugly of writing
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Writing Right!
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Blunders of bid and proposal writing
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Tools for right writing
(and the elephant in the room)
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Questions/discussion

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Why good writing matters

Right writing focuses on the customer to help:

- Win more business—achieve higher evaluation scores
- Establish or validate credibility
- Improve our personal and company brand and position
- Reduce confusion, rework, and waste
- Compel the customer toward a decision
- Demonstrate competence

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Right writing characteristics from global practitioners

Keep your answers clear, direct, and short

Don't take your SME content as is – edit to create one voice throughout the proposal

Provide plenty of examples/proof of where the proposed solution has been provided

Make sure to fact-check all figures and any information/data provided quantitatively

Edit, re-edit, and re-edit again to ensure content is clear, concise, and correct

“answer the mail...no more no less”

Planning will save you so much time

“Thread your win themes in throughout”



Always be in 'receiver mode' when getting feedback

Grammar matters!!

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Why so many *bad blunders* in writing?

We know **BAD** when we see **BAD**

Writers try to impress:

- Wordiness, too technical, jargon, complex thoughts
- Not persuasive

Bad writing:

- Confusion (not necessarily wrong)
- Non-compliance (thrown out)
- Hard to score/evaluate (frustration)
- Loss of credibility
- Speedbumps for the evaluator



Bad Writing Costs Businesses Billions

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

- Josh Bernoff
Professional author



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Why the *ugly* writing?

What is *ugly* writing?

- Poorly organized
- No "road maps"
- BORING to the reader/evaluator
- Confuses the reader
- Is painful to even look at
- Cluttered
- Self-centered (seller focused)



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Writing blunders listed by global practitioners



I d l x u h # w r # u h d g # d a o #
e l g # g r f x p h q w w #
d q g # d v v r f l d w h g #
d p h q g p h q w

*Overusing boilerplate
without tailoring*

**Relying solely on
editing software**

Declaring your emotional state as an opening
line – “we are proud” “we are excited”

*Not truly understanding the
solution you are proposing*

**Using big words
to sound
important**

*Writing about your company rather than
your prospect's goals/objectives/pain
points*

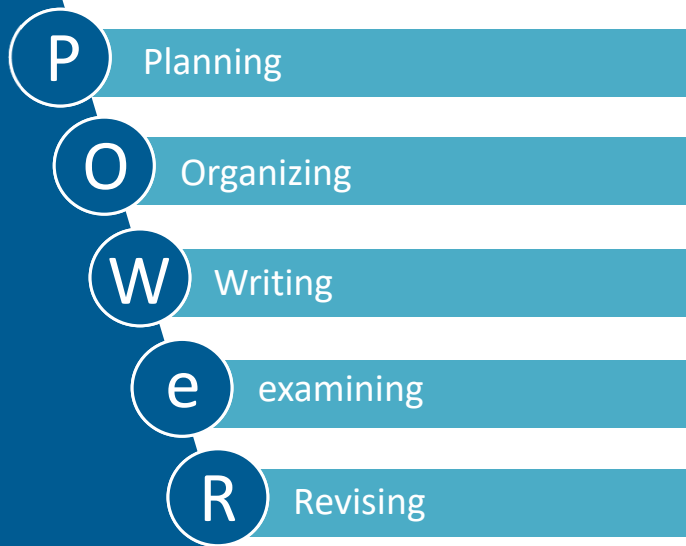
Sentences longer than 20 x words – readers are skimming, assessing –
for speed, adult readers mentally “photograph” sentences to glean the
meaning at a glance.

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Right writing includes the wonders of the POWER approach



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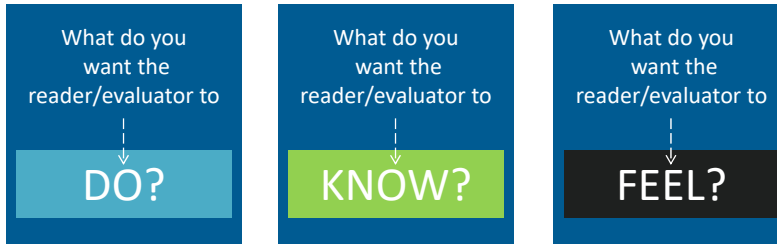
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Any communication needs to answer 3 questions

What do you want the reader/evaluator/audience to...



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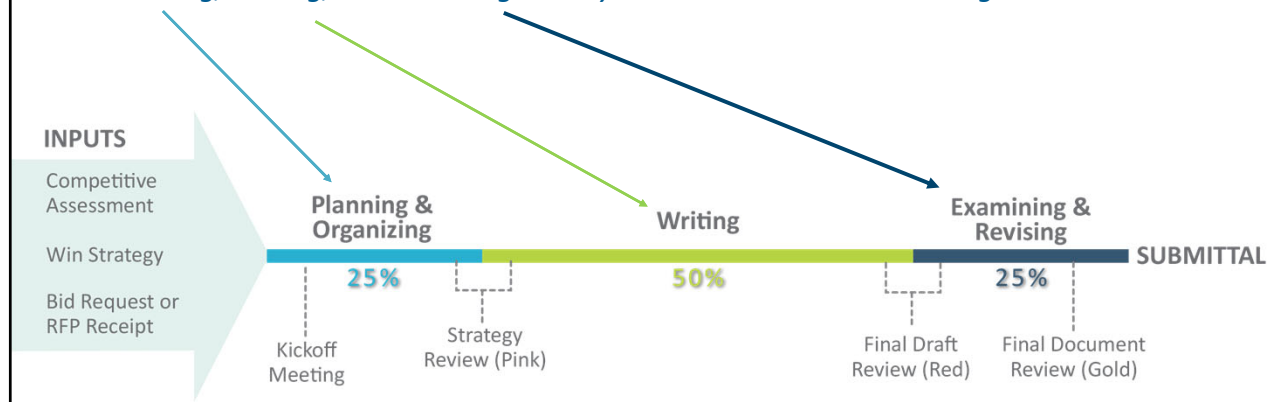
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Right writing with POWER

Prewriting, writing, and rewriting are key activities in business winning



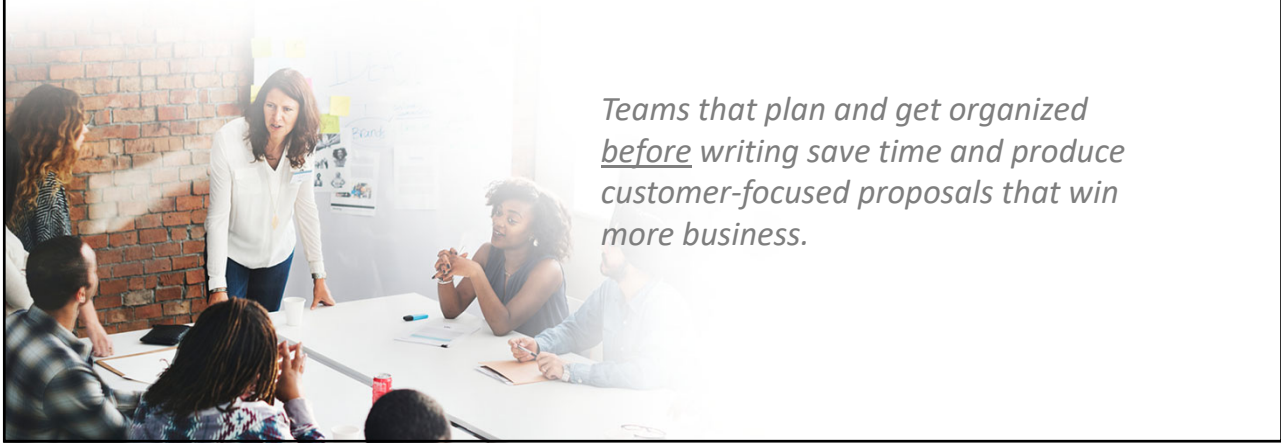
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Plan and organize for your writing




Teams that plan and get organized before writing save time and produce customer-focused proposals that win more business.

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One way to plan is to create a *Proposal Playbook*



Customer Profile & Hot Buttons	Proposal Strategies and Themes	Bidder Comparison Matrix	Solutions Document	Compliance Matrix
Proposal Schedule	Proposal Outline	Writers' Information	Style Guide	File & Content Management Guidelines

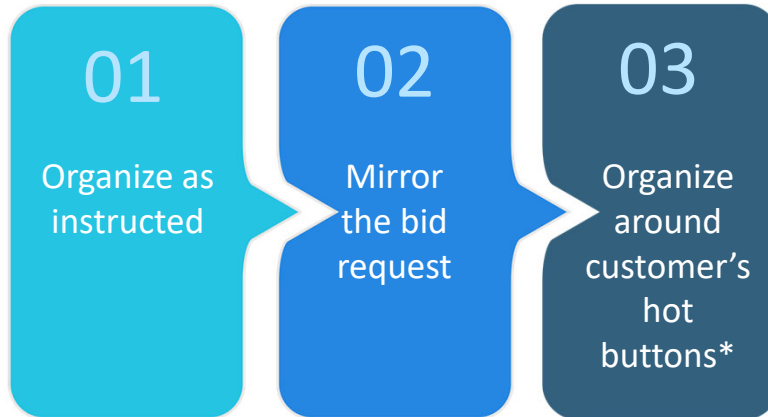
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Organize your message for easy understanding



***Hot Button:** A major customer issue, problem, or objective accompanied with the motivation to improve or change.

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Right writing for the evaluators



Make it easy for evaluators to select you by writing clear, concise, correct, and compelling content.

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Proposal writing differs from technical writing

Technical Writing

Technical writing starts with the details and subordinates main points.

Proposal Writing

Proposal writing starts with the main point and subordinates detail.

Main Point

DETAILS

DETAILS

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Right Writing: Tips for customer-focus

- 01** Name the customer before us.

06 List benefits before features.
- 02** Name the customer more often than us.

07 Validate all claims and **leverage your strengths.**
- 03** Mention and address the customer's buying objective.

08 Organize as instructed.
- 04** Link the buying objective to our offer.

09 Make our value proposition apparent to the customer.
- 05** Address customer "hot button" issues in prioritized order.

10 Be consistent, clear, and concise.

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Examine and revise to improve scores



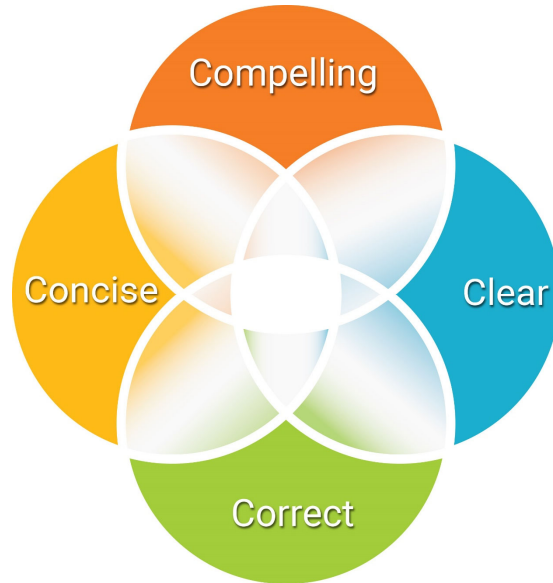
*Use reviews to make sure the focus is on the **customer** and their needs, not just your strengths.*

Use the feedback you receive to revise for a winning proposal.

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Right writing examines the 4Cs



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Revise to improve readability

Right writing improves readability

“Think of your (proposal) like a puzzle. You want your readers to be able to solve your puzzle as easily as possible.


That’s readability.”

Source: Tips for Improving Readability, Grammarly

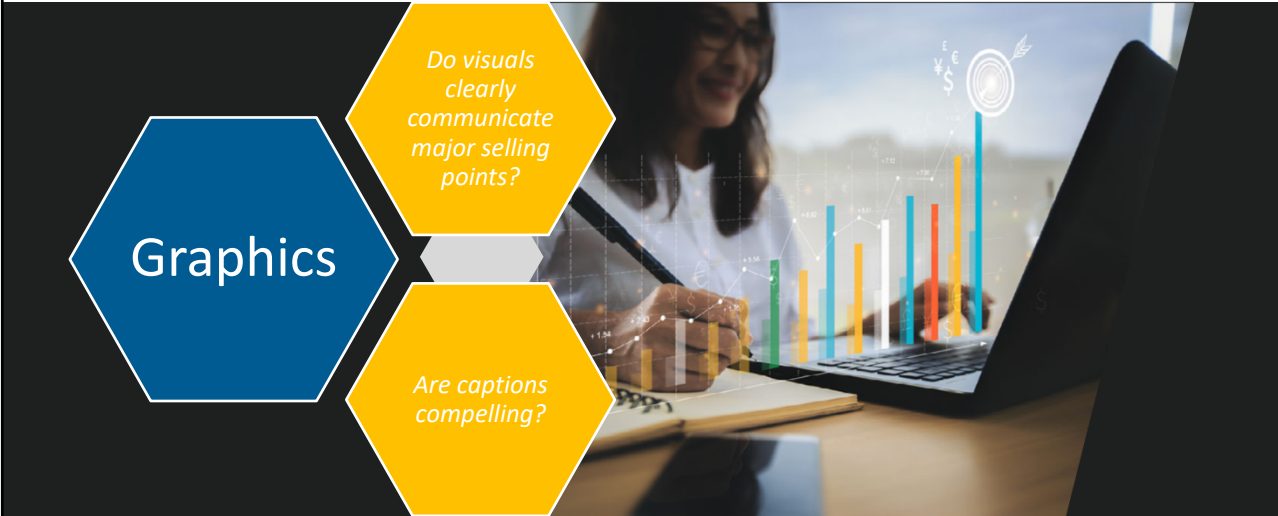
- Leverage *lists* in the proposal
- Use graphics that support your message
- Use headings to guide the reader
- Use simple, concise words – avoid wordiness
- Use active voice vs. passive, when possible
- Avoid technical jargon and clichés
- Be consistent (one voice)

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Right writing incorporates good graphics



Graphics

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

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The elephant in the room



BOF BYLINE

CNET IS QUIETLY PUBLISHING ENTIRE ARTICLES GENERATED BY AI

"THIS ARTICLE WAS GENERATED USING AUTOMATION TECHNOLOGY," READS A DROPDOWN DESCRIPTION.



HOW WILL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CHANGE THE WAY WE WRITE?

JOHN SPENCER



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Pros and cons of AI and language modeling in writing



Pros and benefits

- Quick, easy, and broad access to content
- Source to brainstorm ideas
- Quick first drafts with industry terminology
- Customer and competitor research
- Multi-source data

Cons and cautions

- May be dated or wrong – needs verifying
- May contain biased content
- May lack contextual knowledge
- Could shirk responsibility (accountability)
- Could lead to over-zealous, reckless, and inadvertent misuse and mistakes
- Could conflict with reality/truth



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An example of an AI-generated response

“What are the benefits of owning an umbrella?”

The primary benefit of an umbrella is to provide protection from the rain or the sun. By shielding you from precipitation, it keeps you dry and helps to prevent you from catching a cold or getting wet clothes. And when it is sunny, an umbrella can provide shade and protect your skin from harmful UV rays.

- *Umbrellas can also be useful in high winds, as they provide stability and can help you maintain your balance. They can also be used as a tool for self-defense in emergency situations.*
- *Additionally, umbrellas can be fashionable accessories that can complement your outfit and make a style statement. They come in a variety of designs, colors, and patterns, making it easy to find one that suits your personal taste.*
- *Overall, umbrellas are versatile and practical tools that can offer a range of benefits, from protecting you from the elements to adding a touch of style to your look.*

What’s missing?

Customer focus – so what?

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Another example of an AI-generated response

“Why should I consider buying an electric car?”

Benefits to consider when buying an electric car:

1. *Environmental benefits:* Electric cars are much more environmentally friendly than traditional gas-powered cars, as they produce zero emissions and don't contribute to air pollution. This is especially important if you're concerned about climate change and reducing your carbon footprint.
2. *Cost savings:* While the initial cost of an electric car may be higher than a gas-powered car, electric cars have lower operational costs, including lower fuel costs and lower maintenance costs. Additionally, many governments offer incentives and tax credits for buying electric cars, which can further reduce the cost.
3. *Performance:* Electric cars offer a smooth, quiet, and responsive driving experience, as they have instant torque and acceleration. They also have lower centers of gravity, which makes them handle better on the road.
4. *Convenience:* Electric cars can be charged at home or at public charging stations, so you never have to visit a gas station again. Many electric cars also have longer ranges than they did a few years ago, so you can travel further on a single charge.
5. *Future-proofing:* As the world moves towards a more sustainable future, electric cars are becoming more popular and are likely to become more mainstream. By investing in an electric car now, you'll be future-proofing your transportation needs and contributing to a cleaner planet.

Using customer focus guidelines would help you prioritize benefits

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The AI paradox

“You might work yourself out of a job only to create new and more rewarding work.”

- Marty Humm,
Senior Proposal Quality Manager, Proposal Center of Excellence



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Validating Marty’s quote



“Workers have used OpenAI’s ChatGPT for dozens of tasks since its November release.

While some fear the chatbot is already eliminating jobs, it has also introduced **ways to help make work more efficient**, allowing users to shift their energy toward other tasks and projects.

One example is by using the generative AI for help with data processing programs workers often struggles with, like Microsoft Excel and Google Sheets.

We asked ChatGPT how it can help alleviate spreadsheet woes — here's what the chatbot had to say about how it can help make your Excel experience easier...”



BUSINESS INSIDER **Aaron McDade**
Sun, April 30, 2023 at 9:16 AM MDT

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Ai and writer-related job postings

Analyst, Proposal and Capture

Costa Mesa, CA

Remote

\$88K To \$132K Annually
Full-Time

family of systems is powered by Lattice OS, an AI-powered operating system that turns ... Strong **writing** skills with the ability to present ideas in a clear and logical manner * Ability to ...

Content Writer (Remote)

Dallas, TX

Remote

Contractor

Writers re-write and improve **AI** generated responses, adhering to specific persona, **writing** guidelines (factuality, creativity, style). These will be creative long-form outputs that could come in the ...



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Right writing formula



AI CONTENT + CUSTOMER FOCUS
= **RIGHT WRITING (WINNING)**



AI WITHOUT
CUSTOMER FOCUS & POWER
= **DISASTER**



AI + CUSTOMER FOCUS + POWER
= **OUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

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Right, Write, Right Webinar Summary




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Avoid the common writing blunders

- Customer positioning – too little or too late
- Not enough planning
- Inefficient processes
- Non-compliance
- Lack of customer focus
- Non-responsive to needs
- Poor use of automation and re-purposed content (AI)



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Apply *right* writing tips

- Understand and recognize the good, the bad, and the ugly of writing
- Leverage *writing wonders*
 - POWeR approach
 - Customer focus
 - Improve readability
- Apply best practices
- Use AI wisely and cautiously
- Write right on your next proposal or document

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Questions and Discussion

APMP
Approved Training
Organization

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