

# Persuasive Marketing Proposals

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**While your job as a marketer may be to promote and sell other people's products and services, you probably hate doing it for yourself.** Writing and submitting proposals isn't the most exciting part of marketing and the last thing you want to do is spend your valuable time writing proposals.

Unfortunately, a proposal is a bit like writing a high-school essay, it's not your favorite thing to do, but you have to do it.

You might be completely clueless about where to start, what to write, or even why previous proposals haven't worked. In fact, you'd much rather be creating high conversion content for your clients, not yourself.

The truth is that you need those clients *first*.

And landing the best clients, the biggest names, and the best pay, means writing proposals and doing it well. You have to market yourself before you can market them.

But while writing proposals is an unfortunate fact of life, it doesn't have to be such a pain. You can take steps to make writing and submitting proposals as easy as possible.

How? By creating a proposal writing system, you can reduce the amount of time and effort you spend on each proposal, while still churning out top-quality proposals that land you the clients you deserve.

**Taking the time to learn about writing persuasive proposals now can help you to reduce time investment and hassle in the future.** Once you've learned the basics, it's easy to create your own system and start converting the high-profile clients you've always wanted.

Ready? Let's get started!

# The Anatomy of a Persuasive Proposal

## 5 Essential Elements Every Proposal Should Have

Most proposals will vary in length and style from project to project, but each should follow the same basic structure. You don't have to worry about putting tons of creativity into each one, and that's the point.

**Any marketing proposal should contain the following five elements, regardless of the complexity or length of the project.**

## **1. The Problem Statement**

The client's issues are typically more complex than the listed required services and it is your job to figure out what they are. Prove to your prospective client that you know what they need, and you will get the job. This is your problem statement.

**A winning problem statement tells the client what they need, not what they want. It finds the root of the issue and offers the client a solution rather than a service.**

You may be bidding on a PPC & SEO campaign to generate X number of clicks, but that's not why the client is hiring a marketer. In fact, the number of clicks probably isn't the issue at all.

The purpose of any business, including yours, is to make money. And instigating traffic hardly ever generates revenue. If they just wanted traffic, they could easily buy that for next to nothing. Instead, they're hiring an expensive marketer to generate these clicks for them.

You have to look at the heart of the issue to find the real problem. The reason they want to pay someone money to drive

traffic. **Why is your prospective client looking to increase traffic?**

Your problem statement addresses this issue and explains to the client that you know what they need. Check out this example proposal to get an idea of what it looks like.

*ABC Company is looking to generate 1,000,000 new clicks over the next 12 months through a digital marketing campaign. The campaign should feature SEO, PPC, and Social, and should include monthly research, updates, and analytics reports.*

In this example, the marketer explains what the company is looking for on the surface, explains the skills and services required, but does nothing to explain the results and significance of those services. Importantly, it doesn't describe why a marketing campaign to generate 1,000,000 new clicks would benefit the business in the first place.

This example simply reiterates the client's needs without telling them what you can do for them. It does nothing to sell itself, or you, as a marketer. In fact, it probably blends in with most of your competitors opening proposals.

**Bottom line: this problem statement doesn't address the real issues.**

Now let's say you took the first problem statement, and made it look like this?

*ABC Company has seen a marked increase in the number of online competitors over the past two years. Many of these companies already engage in aggressive social, SEO, and marketing campaigns, and the result is that many of ABC Company's former customers are now moving on to better advertised options.*

*ABC Company could combat this issue by instigating their own digital marketing campaign targeted towards their customer demographic. The resulting campaign would be targeted with keywords researched to instigate high-conversion clicks from those likely to purchase from ABC Company, therefore driving sales up.*

*The campaign should include a multi-prong digital marketing strategy including PPC, SEO, and Social Media, with a minimum of a 12-month management, research, and analytics program to ensure its success.*

This revised problem statement explains not only the problem, but also what you intend to do about it. It's eye catching because

it tells your prospective client that you know their issue, and you know how to solve it. In this case, they don't need extra clicks, they need to compete with competitors and in so doing, drive up sales.

You will have to spend a few minutes researching each company to find their real problems. This is mostly because many clients have trouble voicing, explaining, or even identifying their issues, and some may automatically assume you already know what the problem is.

Present the client's real problem from the very start of your proposal. Doing so will grab their attention and make your proposal stand out from your competitors.

### ***What's really driving the client to offer this project?***

If you use your problem statement to answer your client's needs rather than wants, then your proposal is already off to a good start.

You're ready to move on to part two of building a successful proposal: the solution.

## **2. Your Proposed Solution**

After letting your prospective clients know that you understand the issue, it's your job to present your services as the best solution for their needs. Knowing the motivation behind their

problems puts you at a unique selling vantage because you can market your skills directly towards what they need.

You can figure out how your skills can uniquely address their problems, and hopefully in ways that your competitors can't.

Most businesses use some sort of marketing, but no one is going to hire you just because you're a marketer. Clients will hire you for your unique ability to create high conversion traffic and sales, or essentially, because you can make them money.

**Traffic is an essential part of marketing, but it's sales that generate revenue. Highlight your unique services and their effect or benefits to grab client's attention.**

Now take that idea and turn it into a winning solution by describing not just your 'services', but the cause and effect of your services on the clients business.

Here's an example proposed solution to help you understand the point better. For example:

*The campaign should include a multi-prong digital marketing strategy including PPC, SEO, and Social Media, with a minimum of a 12-month management, research, and analytics program to ensure its success.*

*What's in it for me?*



This proposed solution doesn't do you a lot of favors as a marketer because it doesn't stand out. It blends in with potentially hundreds of other proposals, and it does not sell your services.

All it does is list a couple of proposed actions without saying how they affect the clients business. Essentially, all you're doing is listing your own services.

Now check out this proposed solution:

*ABC Company must implement a marketing strategy focused on recapturing traffic and market sales from competitors. This will start with a traffic and data analysis campaign, customer demographic analysis, and targeted keyword research.*

*Analysis and research will be followed with a content strategy focused on building high-conversion traffic with the intent of making sales. The actuation phase will include SEO optimization for the website, an active social media page, and PPC aimed at the company's sales demographic.*

**In this instance, the marketer explains what services would provide a solution, and how those services benefit the company, by helping to recapture traffic from competitors.**

Providing a detailed analysis of your services sounds difficult, but in reality, it makes them seem more valuable. In some cases, naming options like keyword research and market analysis to the table provide extra value to services that you would have provided anyway.

Make it easy for your prospective clients to see the value you are offering. Most client's won't know anything about marketing or they wouldn't be hiring in the first place. Try outlining what your clients get when they hire you in your proposal.

### **3. Benefits**

Outlining a problem and a solution would be enough in a world with no competition, but that is not the case. Instead, you have to outline the benefits of your specific services so that you can sell those services.

Convincing your prospective client that they need you is half the battle.

The client already knows that you understand their problem and that you have a solution. But what's in it for them? Why are you better than anyone else?

Chances are, your prospective client might not even know what your services are, let alone what they entail. If they do know what your services are, they still might not understand it will benefit their business. "What's PPC".

## **You know what your solutions will do for your clients, but do they?**

Most of your prospective clients won't understand the benefits of your recommended solution on their own. You're the marketing expert, and your job is to make the benefits of your services clear.

Try treating your solutions the same way you treated the client's issues in the problem statement. Go beneath the surface of the solution to come up with the long-term effects and benefits. Show your prospective client exactly what you could do for them in ways they can understand.

Here's an example:

*We'll get to know you and your company so that your marketing strategy represents the real ABC Company. We'll start a social media page that attracts fans, builds long-term customer relationships, and drives repeat-sales.*

*We will research keywords to build a Pay Per Click (PPC) campaign that drives as many sales as possible. We'll use those same keywords in an SEO campaign to help boost your natural search traffic, and overall web visibility.*

Taking the time to write down the exact benefits of each proposed solution or service will help you to communicate those services to your potential customers. Outlining the results and benefits of your solution [separates you from your competitors](#), and it gives clients a tangible reason to hire you. Outlining benefits is a key part to writing persuasive proposals.

## 4. Pricing Information

Once you've outlined the problem, offered a viable solution, and explained the benefits of your services, your prospective clients probably have another important question.

*How much is this going to cost?*

A higher figure is not a deterrent to quality clients, especially if you've done a good job outlining the benefits and effects of your solution. Unfortunately, a confusing pricing section will turn them off.

**Make your pricing chart or system easy for clients to follow.**

This is an essential element of any pricing section.

One of the easiest ways to make pricing easier to understand is to use grid typography to format your pricing. Here's a quick example:

<b>Customized Marketing Solution</b>	<b>\$11,499</b>
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**Market Analysis**– We'll do an in depth analysis on your market potential, competitors, and target demographic to provide you with a complete market analysis that you can use to boost sales.

**Keyword Research** – We'll research the keywords and high-sales converting phrases that you need for your ads and SEO.

**Pay Per Click Campaign**–We'll run a pay per click campaign for you to directly boost your sales.

**SEO Campaign** – We'll SEO Optimize your website, build backlinks, and increase your Page Rank to grow traffic and search based sales.

**Social Management** – We'll take over and manage your social pages to create a highly engaging community that builds customer relations to provide long term repeat sales, and higher customer satisfaction.

**Project Total**                      **\$11,499**

You'll notice that this outline offers two main benefits to readers. The first is that it's not complicated, you don't have to be a financial whiz to understand what you get for the money. **You're also not pricing each service.** By breaking down prices at a high level, you avoid confusion, and you avoid the impression that any of these services are for sale individually.

While you may be tempted to try to undercut your competitors, keep in mind that [psychological price hacks](#) are often more successful at standing out in a crowd.

For most proposals, a short ‘Fee Summary’ is perfect for explaining the costs of your marketing project. A summary is a short overview of total costs, with information about what you’re getting.

Sometimes you will have longer, more in-depth, and more complex projects that require a longer fee section. A ‘Fee Schedule’ covers portions of the total price, any specific project milestones, and the do break down pricing a little more than your summary. Once again, break down prices at a high level, even for fee schedules, and tell prospective clients what they’re paying for at each milestone.

## **5. Call to Action**

When most people finish reading a proposal, or any other type of email, their first reaction is to set it aside. Usually to go read something else. Not because you didn’t impress them with your proposal, but because they want time to think, and then get back to it later.

Even if you created a killer proposal that convinced your prospect that you are the best marketer for their needs, you can still lose them at this point.

Why? Because inboxes fill up, people forget, and people often quickly confuse one item with another. It's not enough to get them to *plan* to get back to you, because it might never happen.

**Follow up a strong proposal with a direct call to action. Ask your clients to follow through now.**

Yes, it seems like an obvious addition to a proposal, but many people leave it out. Most people don't expect to have to ask for action, but the truth is that clients are just as busy, stressed, and forgetful as you are. Make sure you ask them to respond or act in some way.

You want to make moving forward with the project easy so: 1) tell clients how to contact with you to move forward with the hire and 2). **Make it easy.**

Here's a quick example of a call to action:

*To proceed with this digital marketing plan, ABC Company is required to take the following steps:*

- 1. Accept the proposal as-is or discuss any desired changes. Please note that changes to the scope of the project can be made at any time, but additional charges may apply.*
- 2. Finalize and sign contract.*
- 3. Submit initial milestone payment of \$979.*

*Once these steps have been completed we will begin the project with a preliminary meeting to discuss company policies, and media scheduling.*

This kind of call to action clearly explains what is expected of the prospective client if they want to move forward with you. The call to action lists a clear number of options, and even alternatives, before offering follow-up information, in the form of what happens after the client accepts.

Don't forget the call to action! A call to action makes it easy for clients to hire you. Don't forget it!

# Putting It All Together

## Structuring a Persuasive Proposal

Now that you know the essential elements of a proposal and what they contain, let's put them together to create the basic structure you'll need for templates.

Once you've got a good idea of what goes into a proposal, you can put everything together to create your own. Let's try with the five basic elements discussed above.



The structure for a standard design proposal goes like this:

**1. Problem Statement**

**2. Proposed Solution**

**3. Benefits**

**4. Pricing Information**

**5. Call to Action**

One thing to keep in mind is that you can use different terms or headers in your section. Each of the five elements go by a number of names, and you can utilize most of them, just try to keep phrasing uniform throughout the proposal.

**“Problem Statement”** can also go by “Client Needs,” “Client Goals,” “Client Objectives,” or “Goals and Objectives,” or “Statement of Need”.

**“Proposed Solution”** can also go by “Recommended Solution” or “Recommended Strategy.”

**“Pricing Information”** can also go by “Fee Summary” (for shorter projects), “Fee Schedule” (for longer projects), or “Project Pricing.”

# Making Proposal Writing a Repeatable Process

## Turning It into a System

Writing proposals isn't fun, but it is a highly effective marketing strategy that will put you ahead of your competition. Many people try to save time by sending cost estimates instead of proposals, and this puts you ahead of the game.

**Big clients expect quality proposals from their potential employees.** That means submitting a proposal increases your chances of success before it's even opened. A well-written, persuasive proposal is even more valuable, because it justifies your costs and value to the client.

You can use the five elements of a proposal to create a structural system so that you can more easily churn out quality proposals.

An easier way to handle proposals is to use [Bidsketch proposal software](#), which creates the system and the proposal for you so that you have very few manual steps to complete. The end result is that you save time so you've got plenty of it for making marketing magic happen once clients accept your proposal.

Software lets you quickly and easily design professional proposals without the time or monetary investment of doing it yourself, or hiring an actual professional.

The research and solutions are still up to you to find, but you'll be able to use that information in a beautifully structured proposal that makes clients want to hire you.

If you can't use proposal software, then you still want to make sure that you use templates to save time. You can create your own system manually if you choose.

# Creating Your Own Proposal Templates

## **A Manual Alternative to Proposal Software**

Even if you can't use software to save on labor, you still want to use systematic templates to save time when creating your proposals. A basic template will give you a guide that you can easily fill out whenever you need a new proposal, which speeds up the entire proposal writing process.

Microsoft Word and alternatives like [OpenOffice](#) are both suitable for creating templates. Most markets require at least two templates, one for smaller proposals, and one for large or complicated projects.

Ready? Let's get started.

## Small Proposal Templates

A small template design is great for any smaller clients who need short term, part time, or minimal amounts of work. While some marketers might not feel the need to submit a full proposal for this sort of work, you can build credibility, and make your application stand out by using one.

Try not to make your small proposals too long. This template is for around two pages of proposal, which is about perfect for telling smaller clients what you can offer without droning on, or becoming boring. You want to be succinct.

If you don't know how, check Microsoft Word's basic instructions for creating a Template [here](#). Or visit the OpenOffice Wiki [here](#) to do the same in Open Office.

### **Here's a basic structure for a small proposal template:**

- **Client Needs** (problem statement)
- **Recommended Solution** (proposed solution)

- **Benefits**
- **Fee Summary** (pricing information)
- **Next Steps** (call to action)

## Large Proposal Templates

Large proposal templates are perfect for long, complex, and involved projects where your potential clients may want or need more information to make a decision.

You'll want to have a large proposal template around for any sort of marketing project that includes more than one type of work, or that runs for a longer period of time.

**Here's a basic structure for the large proposal template:**

- **Goals and Objectives** (problem statement)
- **Recommended Solution** (proposed solution)
- **Benefits**
- **Fee Summary** (pricing information)
- **Fee Schedule:** Outlines different points where you'll receive partial payments of the total project cost for completed work

- **Estimated Project Schedule:** gives prospective clients an estimated timeline for marketing results, how many hits they should expect per month, and details about expected ROI, SEO results, and any other ad or social campaign that might be included.

Here's a quick example of a project timeline, taken from the [free marketing proposal template](#):

## Project Timeline

We offer the following timeline for the development of an original corporate identity and marketing package:

Phase	Activities	Completion
Discovery	Analysis of Highwire Snowboards Inc.'s design needs and preferences.	09/30/XX
Logo Development	Three concepts in rough draft, one concept in two color schemes and the final logo.	10/19/XX
Business Card Development	You will receive the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two concepts in rough draft</li> <li>• One concept in two color schemes</li> <li>• Final business card design</li> </ul>	10/30/XX
Brochure Design	Three concepts in rough draft, one concept in two color schemes and the final brochure.	11/07/XX

- **Next Steps** (call to action)
- **Terms and Conditions:** Terms and conditions are more important on larger projects where more money is at stake. These are typically also included in any contract or NDA signed by either party.

Here's a quick sample of an appropriate Terms & Conditions taken from our free proposal template.

## Terms and Conditions

- Once project fee is paid in full to Bidsketch any elements of text, graphics, photos, contents, trademarks, or other artwork furnished to Highwire Snowboards Inc. for inclusion in website are owned by Highwire Snowboards Inc..
- Bidsketch assumes Highwire Snowboards Inc. has permission from the rightful owner to use any images or design elements that are provided by Highwire Snowboards Inc. for inclusion in the website, and will hold harmless, protect, and defend Bidsketch from any claim or suit arising from the use of such elements.
- Bidsketch retains the right to display graphics and other Web content elements as examples of their work in their portfolio and as content features in other projects. Bidsketch also retains the right to place a text link on the bottom of every page.
- This agreement becomes effective only when signed by agents of Highwire Snowboards Inc. and Bidsketch. Regardless of the place of signing of this agreement, Highwire Snowboards Inc. agrees that for purposes of venue, this contract was entered into in WA and any dispute will be litigated or arbitrated in WA.
- The agreement contained in this contract constitutes the sole agreement between Highwire Snowboards Inc. and the Bidsketch regarding all items included in this agreement.

*Note:* You can modify your Terms and Conditions depending on the client and your situation. You can also run it by an attorney if you have any doubts about language, implications, or agreements listed within.

**Don't overdo it!** You don't need a small book to make a good impression. A proposal that is four or five pages long is about perfect for offering the right amount of information to the client.

# Making It Look Professional

## First Impressions Are Everything

First impressions create a lasting brand image, especially when you're in marketing.

Your proposal is the first representation of your brand that your clients will see. If you want them to let you manage their brand, you have to impress them with yours. Your proposal is your chance to make an unforgettable first impression.

The presentation and layout of your proposal are just as important as your content. No one will be hiring someone who sends a proposal that is sloppy, poorly designed or confusing. You need every element of the presentation to speak for you, to show your professionalism, and your attention to detail.

How do you create a great looking proposal without software?

### 1. Elegant Design

Your proposal effects how prospective clients see you as a creative, and as a marketer, especially if you're also offering graphic design services.



If you're using proposal software, design isn't an issue. If you're using a template, try creating a subtle design for the header and footer of your proposal pages.

**Don't be too bold.** Big clients will expect an elegant and often understated proposal. Therefore, take the time to create something subtle that enhances, rather than detracts from, the proposal.

Try to aim for something that says detail oriented professional without saying "trying too hard". It's harder than it sounds, but that's the drawback of doing things yourself.

## 2. Helper Text

If you don't have proposal software when you first start writing proposals, you're not going to automatically remember what to put between your subheadings. Use placeholder text to remind or help you with filling out information.

Some of the paragraphs from the 'Anatomy of a Persuasive Proposal' in this eBook should work for the purpose. Feel free to copy and paste them. This should give you a basic checklist of what to go over when filling out your template.

**Pay attention!** Make sure you delete your placeholder text before sending it to your prospective client. Accidentally sending

unedited parts of the document, or the proposal with placeholder and real text still in place can be a disaster.

You'll also want to make sure that you only cover information about the specific project the proposal is for. Using general marketing language on an SEO based project is sure to lose you the bid.

**Irrelevant information is a waste of time. If it's not about the client's needs, skip it.**

The result is that your proposal is all about the prospective client's needs, which is sure to grab their attention. You want your proposal to be specific, not 'universal'.

### **3. Should I Say Something about My Company?**

You're probably proud of your work in marketing, especially if you've worked with big clients in the past. Many marketers spend time talking about their history, their previous clients, and their skills when they should be talking about the client's needs.

Most companies only care about this information to the extent that it can benefit them. If working with your big client gave you experience that can solve their problems, then it may be relevant, otherwise, probably not.

**Your proposal template already includes everything you need to persuade your client** (problem statement, proposed solution, pricing information, etc.).

You can also direct prospective clients to your website to find out more about you, your history, and your previous clients. A [website that showcases your work](#) is the perfect addition to a proposal, without talking too much about ‘you’.

If you decide that you need an “About Us” or “Clients” section in your proposal, try adding it at the end of the proposal, and importantly after the pricing information. Adding it sooner interrupts the flow of your proposal, which reduces the professional appearance and layout of your document.

By leaving the ‘Company’ section at the end of the page, you make it ‘optional’ for clients who are interested in reading about you. This way, clients who don’t want to read about you don’t have to.

## **Tools, Resources, and Next Steps**

Hopefully you have a better understanding by now of: 1) what a compelling marketing proposal looks like; 2) how to create one that will separate you from your competitors; and 3) how to make

proposal writing as painless and efficient as possible by turning it into a system.

**You'll have to keep writing and submitting proposals—that's just the name of the game—but you can make it easy to get them out to clients quickly and save you time and trouble.**

The easiest way to do this is to use [Bidsketch proposal software](#). This gives you the structure and presentation you need to get your proposals out quickly and effectively.

You could also follow the directions above to create your own proposal templates manually. It'll take a time investment, but you'll set yourself up for more free time to focus on clients going forward.

If you are going the template route and don't quite know where to get started, we've made a [free marketing proposal template](#) available. You can model it or use it for a little inspiration to get started.

Another thing you can do to help grow your marketing business is to check out [the Bidsketch blog](#). There's a ton of free, actionable content available—whether it's about negotiating higher rates with clients, being more productive, or promoting your marketing business—and we update it often.

Finally, if you haven't done so already, hop on to the Bidsketch email list. You'll receive a free eBook about marketing strategies

to get more clients, along with fresh new content delivered straight to your inbox as soon as it's released.

**Best of luck in creating winning marketing proposals!**