
UNIT 14: WRITING PROPOSALS

Structure

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14.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit, you should be able to:

- * understand a proposal
- * explain why proposals are written
- * describe the features of a proposal
- * identify the parts of different kinds of proposals

14.1 WARM-UP

Activity 1:

What is a proposal according to you? Look at the words given below and choose the words which you think are the examples of a proposal to you.

- a) to marry someone ()
- b) to build a building ()
- c) to develop a catering plan ()
- d) to write a research plan ()
- e) to invest in a book ()
- f) to examine the existing laws ()
- g) to advertise a business ()
- h) to discuss the rationale of a particular policy ()

Please check the answers / hints given at the end of the unit.

Did you choose all the options? Good!! If you did not, then do not worry! We will discuss why all the options are correct.

All the options mentioned above are some of the types of proposals used in different contexts, such as:

- a) a plan to ask somebody to marry you (marriage proposal)

- b) a plan detailing the selling points of a book written for a publisher to publish the book for sale (book proposal)
- c) a plan to construct a building (building proposal)
- d) a plan for a catering business catering plan)
- e) a plan to reform/investigate a specific law (legislation reform)
- f) a plan for marketing (marketing plan)
- g) a plan for a policy on an important issue for the government (policy proposal)
- h) a plan for a research study somebody wants to undertake (research proposal)

As you have seen, in some places, we have used plan instead of proposal, why do you think we did that? Is it different or the same? What do you think?

The word “plan or proposal” is used interchangeably depending upon the context or situation. Both the words convey the same meaning in this context; it means an idea or suggestion put forward in a formal manner (generally written) submitted for consideration of others to think and decide upon the feasibility of that idea or suggestion.

14.2 BUSINESS PROPOSAL

What is a proposal?

A proposal indicates the direction of a future action. Any action begins with an idea. The idea develops into a plan of action. The plan needs to be elaborated upon. The prospects and consequences of the plan need to be visualized. If the plan shows promise of being executed, then it needs to be written down with the costs worked out. This document is called a proposal. The proposal is scrutinized by colleagues, superiors or authorities within an organization or by outside clients and approved or rejected based on its viability and financial implications.

Types of Proposals:

- Written proposals form the basis for projects undertaken by an institution, organization, or a business firm. They serve as blueprints for projects and sources of reference during and after the execution of projects.
- Oral presentations of proposals are also made before a select audience, especially if the project is undertaken for an outside client.

A proposal can be in the form of a short letter or a long document with supporting graphics and visuals.

Check Your Progress 1

1. What do you think is a proposal in the context of business? How is it different from other types? Choose the option/s which convey/s the sense of a business proposal to you.
 - a) The direction of a future action regarding any idea ()
 - b) Elaboration of an idea to be formulated into plan of action ()
 - c) Discussion of prospects and consequences of the plan ()
 - d) Working costs to be included for the execution of the plan ()

- e) Scrutiny of the plan within the organization and the clients for its financial implications and viability ()

How many of these options did you choose?

If you read these options, all these options mention the steps involved in the process of writing a business proposal. These steps need to be included when you write a business proposal.

step a) is known as the executive summary of the proposal

step b) is known as the introduction to the idea

step c) is known as the problem/solution/consequences/prospects regarding the idea

step d) is known as the costs regarding the plan

step e) is known as the evaluation of the plan.

Did you understand what a business proposal is?

Any activity or project undertaken in a business organization needs to be formalized and documented. Before launching a project, all aspects involved in it will have to be visualized in order to arrive at the benefits that will accrue from it. This is documented in a proposal. If the proposal is viable, then the project is undertaken. After the completion of the project, a report is submitted. The report will indicate the success of the project and whether the objectives stated in the proposal have been achieved or not. Reports become the basis for future proposals. Proposals and reports are thus integral to the functioning of any organization.

A business proposal is an unsolicited or solicited bid for business. There are two types of business proposals that can help you get more business to develop your company.

Types of business proposals:

Solicited Business Proposal:

- A corporation or a government body asks for a business proposal from different companies to fulfill a project or complete a task and allows these companies to bid for the project.
- An open bid is placed on the market with other companies competing for an interview spot. The winning candidate is offered the project.

Unsolicited Business Proposal:

- At some point, your small business may want to do business with a larger company or forge a joint venture.
- A well-written business proposal can win the hearts and minds of your target audience.

What's the Difference Between Solicited and Unsolicited Proposals?

- A solicited proposal is when the customer asks for a proposal while an unsolicited proposal is when you send them a proposal they haven't even asked for but which is important to develop your business.
- Solicited proposals are usually sent to customers who issue a "Request for Proposal" or RFP. When a customer wants something that is too complicated to pick up at the store or order from a vendor, they often write down a description of it and issue it as an RFP.
- A solicited proposal provides you with a description of what the customer wants. Many also provide you with formatting instructions for your proposal and the evaluation criteria that will be used to make a selection.
- Sometimes you will make a suggestion to a potential customer and they will ask you to submit a proposal so that they can consider your suggestion. This counts as a solicited proposal because they are expecting it and you have a chance to talk to the customer and gain an understanding of their needs.
- An unsolicited proposal is sent to a customer who has not requested it.
- Unsolicited proposals must be especially convincing since the customer has not anticipated, planned, or budgeted for the proposal.
- With an unsolicited proposal you run the risk that the customer won't even bother to read it, since they didn't ask for it. However, the lack of competitive pressure in an unsolicited proposal often makes up for the risk.

Check Your Progress 2

Imagine that you have got an idea of selling milkshakes. You now have to plan and decide how you are going to sell it.

Write out your plan of action giving reasons for selling the milkshake in the manner you have decided.

While doing this activity you need to make some kind of a plan to carry out your action and also find convincing reasons to sell milkshakes.

For e.g., if you decided to buy a car the reason would be that you don't have a car and maybe your parents would also be happy about it as well. Your proposal to buy a car seems plausible. This is an example of making a proposal in real life before launching on the action.

Length of business proposals:

In the business world you need to make different kinds of business proposals for various reasons. It is the length of the proposal which determines its size. A proposal written by one person is generally short whereas a long proposal may have several (6 to 7) authors.

Given below are some basic differences between a short proposal and a long proposal:

Has a single author

Has multiple authors

There's no one else to communicate with and discuss

Every member must be consulted and updated

Decide and write proposal on his/her own

Decide and write collaboratively

Author illustrates, formats and prepares the final copy

Individual develops the proposal

Once writing is completed, illustrators, desktop publishers and production staff complete the work
Group develops the proposal

Now is it clear to you that a business proposal can be of two types - solicited and unsolicited proposals. These proposals can be short and long depending upon who is writing it. Now, we will look at the structure of a business proposal.

Let us first look at the structure of a long business proposal.

Structure of a business proposal

A long business proposal contains these elements:

- cover letter
- title page (title, name of representative & designation with a signature, and date)
- executive summary
- table of contents & list of figures
- introduction
- background
- procedures
- equipment and facilities
- management plan
- appendices

Now let us look at the description and sample of the structure of a business proposal.

Do you know what a cover letter is?

A Cover letter is a document which is addressed to the client and also states the purpose of the proposal. In a business proposal the cover letter indicates the solutions you will provide which will benefit the company. It should also include the proposal title, name of the representative together with the designation, date and signature.

Let us look at a sample of a cover letter:

Applicant's name

Date

Applicant's address

City, State, Pin Code

Name of the Investor/lending officer

Name of Bank/Lending Institution

Address of Bank/Lending Institution

City, State, Pin Code

Dear Mr/Ms. Name of lender or investor,

State the purpose of the cover letter, Introduce yourself, your background, the experience you have in this particular business

Mention the amount you need from the investor and how you will manage the rest of the amount. State your company's importance in dealing with this business.

State how you will manage this business once you get it.

Express your thanks in advance for looking at the proposal. State your mobile/phone no. and mail id for contact or for any doubts/query.

Sincerely,

Applicant's signature

Applicant's name

Enclosure: Business Plan

Title Page

The title page includes the title of the proposal, name of the person or company to whom the proposal is being submitted, the person submitting the proposal and the date of submission. If organisations specify requirement of more information on the title page it should also be included.

Check Your Progress 3

Look at the sample of a Title page and answer the questions given.

- a) What information does this page give you?
- b) What is being proposed?
- c) To whom is it addressed?
- d) By whom is it proposed?

<p style="text-align: center;">Proposal For Acquiring Additional Floor Space for KIDS’ WORLD, Vishakhapatnam Branch</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Submitted to the General Manager</p> <p style="text-align: center;">KIDS’ WORLD</p> <p style="text-align: center;">By the Regional Manager, Visakhapatnam</p> <p style="text-align: center;">12 September 2020</p>
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Executive summary

It is one of the most important parts of a proposal. It consists of the summary of the basic objectives of the proposal, the methodology to be followed, the time span of the project etc. Both long and short proposals need to have an executive summary.

Table of contents and list of figures

It includes organised list of sections of the proposal and is generally found in long proposals. Short proposals do not require this.

Introduction

The purpose of the proposal is stated in the introduction. The introduction mentions that you have understood the problem and know how to tackle the problem. A long proposal also

includes the list of individuals who would be associated with the project together with a brief resume of each individual. Some short proposals also include this kind of a list.

It is generally stated in an infinitive form such as:

To bid for

To recommend.....

To supply.....

Background

In short proposals the background can be omitted, but in long proposals it is pertinent to give the background of the individuals or company preparing the proposal. It mentions the previous work completed by the person/company on similar or identical projects, evaluation of related projects and a statement on how the earlier projects undertaken were similar and how it will facilitate/ help in the completion of this project.

Procedures

It briefly states the plans which meet the needs of the client. Further it also describes how the work will be undertaken including implementation of the schedule and the services to be provided to the organisation.

Equipment and facilities

It discusses the facilities required for the project and the equipment needed to carry on the project smoothly.

Management plan

It describes the actual functioning of the project. It indicates the number of people who will be involved, time bound schedules and utilization of resources. It also includes details of the budget and its rationale.

Appendices

It includes visuals, maps, letters of recommendation and endorsements.

Check Your Progress 4

Look at the paragraph given below. Identify which of the part of the structure of proposal it includes. Give reasons for your answer.

The traffic on the M.G. Road is very heavy from 7am to 10pm. Two schools and three colleges line the 5 km stretch of the road from Police quarters to the General Street Metro station. There is no pedestrian crossing anywhere in between. It is impossible to cross the road during the daytime. School children and college-goers are forced to go by vehicles or public transport even if the distance is within 1 km. Three foot over-bridges at 1.5 km distance from each other should be built to ease the problems faced by pedestrians.

Short Proposals

You have understood what is included in a long proposal and also got an idea of what is not included in a short proposal. Let us look at the structure of a short proposal:

Short proposals generally consist of these elements:

- a) **Cover letter or a letter of transmittal** in response to a Request for Proposal.
- b) **An Executive Summary** which states the intent of the proposal and also elaborates on how the needs/ requirements of the client would be met within a specified period of time.
- c) **The body** of a proposal explains in detail the method of execution, management (personnel, materials, expertise and equipment) time-schedules of phase of execution and detailed break up of costs.

It is clear to you now that long proposals and short proposals are similar but short proposals contain fewer elements compared to long proposals.

But what happens when you write a long/short proposal, how would you know whether it is effective or not?

So let us now look at some tips on writing an effective business proposal.

Some important questions to be considered to write effective proposals:

Before writing a proposal ask yourself the following questions. This will help you to be focused in your approach and thus enable you to write a winning proposal. You can use these tips both as inspiration when writing as well as a checklist for reviewing a draft proposal.

- **Who:** who will do the work, who will manage the work, whom does the customer call if there is a problem, who is responsible for what?
- **What:** what needs to be done/delivered, what will be required in order to complete it, what can the customer expect, what will it cost?
- **Where:** where will the work be done, where will it be delivered?
- **How:** how will the work be done, how will it be deployed, how will it be managed, how will you achieve quality assurance and customer satisfaction, how will risks be mitigated, how long will it take, how will the work benefit the customer?
- **When:** when will you start, when will key milestones be scheduled, when will the project be complete, when is the payment due?
- **Why:** why have you chosen the approaches and alternatives you have selected, why should the customer select you?

14.3 READING

Check Your Progress 5

Read the text and answer the questions given. This is the Executive Summary of a proposal.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This proposal is submitted for the renovation of the Heritage Well at PNR College, Erode.

The feasibility of renovating the old well in the PNR College premises has been studied. The well, identified by the Archaeology Department of the Government as a heritage site in the precincts of the college built in 1826, is currently in a state of severe disrepair and the structure needs extensive renovation measures and landscaping. It can be transformed into an ideal site for open-air concerts, literary evenings, dramatic presentations and pop music concerts. Drainage and water connections will need to be replaced.

The work will be entrusted to a civil engineer, assisted by two junior engineers and a landscape architect after the primary phase of structural repairs are completed.

The project will commence 45 days after approval and will take about 90 days to be completed from the date of commencement of work. The cost has been estimated at about Rs. 500000 for the renovation of the site and landscaping of the surroundings at present and a further Rs. 50000 yearly for maintenance of the structure.

1. Why is the summary placed before the actual proposal?
.....
.....
.....
2. What are the main items mentioned?
.....
.....
.....
3. Is the summary concise, clear and complete?
.....
.....
.....
4. Does it create interest in the reader?
.....
.....
.....
5. Find words from the text which mean the same as the following:
 - a) Repair
 - b) Suitability
 - c) Boundary
 - d) Absolutely changed
 - e) Start

14.4 VOCABULARY AND OTHER TIPS

Do you know how important it is to write appropriately when attempting a proposal? Let us look at the tips which might be useful:

It is important that you use appropriate language while writing a proposal.

- Keep the reader in mind while writing a proposal.
- Write clearly, briefly and proceed in a logical manner.
- Avoid jargon while writing the proposal.
- The proposal should reflect your personality.
- Make cogent arguments in your favour and deal with potential obstacles honestly.
- Strive to communicate not to impress.
- Ensure that the proposal is error free.
- Use visuals and graphics intelligently. Use politically correct language.
- Write the proposal for a global audience so that people in other countries who may evaluate it can understand it.

Last but not the least the document should be printed on good quality paper and packaged professionally for a good visual impact.

14.5 GRAMMAR

Let us look at some grammatical items which will be useful in writing proposals:

In business, we may sometimes have to report the important information that we have received to someone in the office. When you report the information given by somebody to others, it is called Reported Speech. There are three important rules to be followed when you report the information.

- The verb in reported speech is always in the past form.
- The time expressions are always changed.
- The information is stated in the third person, unless you are talking about what you said yourself.

For e.g.

- 'I will not come to office tomorrow.' → She said she will not come to office the next day.
- 'Can we send you these cheques today?' → She asked whether she could send us those cheques the same day.

Check Your Progress 6

- Change these words and expressions into reported speech.
 - Tomorrow
 - Now
 - Today
 - Last night
 - Yesterday
 - At present
 - The day after tomorrow
 - Thus
 - Ago
 - Next week
- Identify the errors in these sentences. These sentences are written in reported speech. There is only one type of error in these sentences.

- a) The manager said his secretary that he would not come to the office the next day.
- b) Rajesh told me that he was waiting for the proposal since yesterday.
- c) Radha informed her colleague that she designed the proposal herself.
- d) Harsh said LNT calls for proposals every year.

3. Read the conversation between Anita and Ravi. Imagine Ravi has to give this information to a third person. You have to transform this conversation into reported speech:

Anita: Good Morning! I'm just calling to ask about the delivery of computers. Have they arrived yet?

Ravi: Well I'm not really sure.

Anita: Do you think it could have been delayed?

Ravi: I don't know. I have no delivery note so far.

Anita: Well the problem is we have no record of payment.

Ravi: And is that the reason why you are calling today?

Anita: Yes, you've always been such regular payers in the past, haven't you?

Ravi: Actually we have a cash flow problem at the moment.

Anita: So what do you propose to do?

Ravi: Couldn't you let us have just ten days?

Anita: Very well, but not beyond that.

4. Complete the passage with the correct comparative form of the adjectives in brackets.

Orange Computers and Apple Machines, two giants of the computer industry, have decided to merge. Orange is a much (a) ----- (young) company than Apple but it has had (b) ----- (fast) growth in recent years. It is now slightly (c) ----- (big) than Apple. Orange's sales team is (d) ----- (competitive) than Apple's. It is (e) ----- (large) and plays a (f) ----- (important) role in the organization. The Orange management team feel that they are (g) ----- (hardworking) and (h) ----- (innovative) than the Apple team.

Apple, on the other hand, is a (i) ----- (traditional) company. The managers are generally (j) ----- (old) than the managers in Orange and they have worked for the company (k) ----- (long). The Apple managers feel they are (l) ----- (experienced) and that the company has (m) ----- (good) reputation for the product quality. They feel they may be (n) ----- (slow) than Orange, but they are right more often.

14.6 WRITING

Check Your Progress 7

Your organization wishes to send a short proposal in response to a request for a proposal from the Commonwealth Games Committee for maintenance of sports venues in Delhi. Draft a short proposal indicating why the services provided by your company are better than that provided by others.

14.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit you have learned about:

- What a proposal is
- Solicited and unsolicited proposals
- Long and short proposals
- Kind of language to be used in proposals

14.8 ANSWERS

Activity 1

Suggestions: All of the options are the examples of proposals.

Check Your Progress 1

Suggestions: All of the options are examples of proposals but each option refers to different parts of a proposal.

Check Your Progress 2

Suggestions: In the proposal, you may include the reason for selling the milkshake, strategies or plan of action to sell milkshake, where to sell it, how to sell and the pointers to increase the sale of milkshakes regularly.

Check Your Progress 3

- a) It gives information about the title page and about submission of proposal.
- b) Acquiring additional Floor space for Kids' world
- c) It is addressed to the General Manager of the company.
- d) It is proposed by the Regional Manager of the same company.

Check Your Progress 4

The paragraph introduces the problem of the traffic on M.G. road and the problems faced by the people. The end of the paragraph suggests how to tackle the problem. Therefore, this paragraph is the introduction part of the structure of the proposal.

Check Your Progress 5

- a) Renovation
- b) Feasibility
- c) Precincts
- d) Transformed
- e) Commencement

Check Your Progress 6

1.

- 1. The next day/ the following day/ on Sunday/ today
- 2. Then/at that time
- 3. the same day/that day
- 4. the previous night/the night before
- 5. the day before/the previous day
- 6. that week, last week
- 7. in two days' time
- 8. the month before/ the previous month
- 9. one hour later
- 10. the following week

2.

- a) The manager **told** his secretary that he would not come to the office the next day.
- b) Rajesh told me that he was waiting for the proposal since **the day before**.
- c) Radha informed her colleague that she **had** designed the proposal herself.
- d) Harsh said **that** LNT calls for proposals every year.

3.

Anita greeted Ravi and told him that she was calling to ask about the delivery of computers. She enquired whether the delivery had arrived then or not.

Ravi replied that he was not really sure.

Anita asked him whether it could have been delayed.

Ravi replied that he did not know. He had received no delivery note till then.

Anita told him that the problem was that they did not have any record of payment.

Ravi enquired whether that was the reason she was calling him.

Anita agreed and remarked that Ravi's company had always been regular payers in the past.

Ravi told her that they actually had a cash flow problem at that time.

Anita asked him what was it that he proposed to do.

Ravi requested her for ten more days.

Anita agreed but asserted that this issue should not extend beyond ten days.

4.

- a) younger
- b) faster
- c) bigger
- d) more competitive
- e) larger

- f) more important
- g) more hardworking
- h) more innovative
- i) more traditional
- j) older
- k) longer
- l) more experienced
- m) better
- n) slower

Check Your Progress 7

Suggestion:

You can start by introducing yourself and your company, your work so far in maintenance of buildings, how Commonwealth Games sports venues were maintained earlier, what changes are going to be brought about, how the government is going to profit from it and why the government should select your company.



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