

Do Your Proposals Sell?

By Roger Bostdorff

Recently I was hired for a Client Engagement to review many things relative to their sales/marketing materials and programs. I reviewed my client's brochure, website, customer follow-up process as well as their proposals.

This engineering firm's proposals included project deliverables, any assumptions, the price, payment schedule and the standard Terms and Conditions. My evaluation and comments to my client was that if they had already secured the agreement of the customer mentally or verbally, and they were dealing with the decision maker and not an influencer, this proposal approach might be satisfactory.

I suggested to my client and I submit to you that in most cases this is not reality. First, most customers request a proposal from multiple solution providers. Secondly, many times the person who you or your sales team are interacting with may not be the final decision maker. He may subsequently need to take your proposal (price quote) to the person who has the authority to sign the check. If that final decision maker is evaluating your quote as compared to your competitor's, don't you want your prospective customer to understand what makes your company and your solution the BEST answer for their needs. Otherwise, the item that gets the most focus is the price and only the price. Now if you always have the lowest price then maybe that is fine. However, if you have the lowest price but your competitor uses a selling proposal, you too are at a disadvantage.

A selling proposal should have the information that was in the previously described price quote plus the following:

1. What is the customer's problem that needs to be solved or addressed?
2. What is the current situation and why does the status quo need to be changed?
In other words, what is the customer's problem and why does it need to be fixed?
-If the current situation is changed to the process or product the customer has in mind- what \$\$ benefits will be derived?
-If the current process is NOT changed, what negative ramifications financially will occur to the customer?
3. How does your solution address all of #2?
4. What makes your company unique?
5. Why do business with your company?
6. Customer references

Items 4-6 are boiler plate, meaning they should be created and used with every proposal. If you deliver a selling proposal and your contact needs to take your proposal to the decision maker that you have not been able to connect with, your odds of getting an audience with that decision maker increase immensely. Thus your odds of getting the business increase dramatically as well.

What are you/your sales team delivering to your customers? Could utilizing a selling proposal increase your sales? Are your competitors reading this article?

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