



FREE REPORT

A **reputation study** (image study) identifies how key users of an organization's services compare the firm with other firms.

A **client satisfaction study** identifies how clients evaluate your service as compared to their individual expectations.

In 2010, The Longview Group conducted a national study on these two powerful tools.

If you would like a copy of the survey results, email: dennis@longview-group.com



10 rudiments of superior proposals

by **Dennis Schrag**

Superior proposals have a number of common elements. Here are 10 essentials to keep in mind when preparing your proposals.

First, here are some proposal basics: Proposals are sales documents. You can and should sell hard in the proposal.

- Superior proposals clearly state the customized/personalized benefits derived from doing business with you.
- Be credible. Have award-winning projects? Tell the readers. Have glowing endorsements? Provide them to the readers.
- Be short, direct and cut the crap. Proposal readers are busy people. They do not want your boilerplate language. Less is better.

- If you have not pre-sold the buyers with plenty of personal interaction, forget about writing the proposal at all. You don't have a prayer.
- Marketing materials are used in the early stages of project business development. Proposals are the late stage. Don't market people who are ready to buy. Never.
- Clients only care about how you can solve their problems.

Ten rudiments of superior proposals:

1. Open powerfully. Educate the prospect about his or her problem/issue. Build empathy by

The Longview Group, LLC
3 Longview Knoll
Iowa City, IA 52240

Tel: 319.351.6510
Free: 866.351.6510
Fax: 319.351.6520
info@longview-group.com

www.longview-group.com



explaining that you understand the impact that problem has on the prospect's mission. Be very specific. "The citizens in the Brookhollow area are upset with the city. Their basements flood every spring. The mayor and council are feeling pressure. When elected officials feel heat, you feel heat."

2. Address their condition early. Use one or two paragraphs (or a table) to detail the prospect's specific problems. Clearly state the critical success factors of the project. This information proves that your organization has a good understanding of your prospect's problems and concerns. You cannot bluff this stuff. If you don't know the critical success factors, do not propose.

3. Show the value. Clearly, simply and directly explain what your solution does for the client. Be specific. "Our approach will trim three weeks from the construction schedule." "Our solution will qualify you for matching state funds. That means less stress from your budget." Convince the prospect that you have the competence to deliver what is needed. Use bullet points. Can't clearly identify the benefits? You don't know the client or the project. Put a "no-go" on the proposal.

4. Be clear. Superior proposals are written in easy-to-understand language. No corporate claptrap. None. No marketing gibberish. Never. Be direct and easy to understand.

5. Less is better. Decision makers are busy. Help them do their job. Be brief. Long proposals almost guarantee the prospect will skim through it... and then set it aside. It takes much more time to prepare a short proposal. It is much more effective.

6. Use the prospect's name or "you" often. When you reference the prospect frequently, the focus is on their problem and their solution. Remember, they really don't care about you unless you can help solve the problem fast, cheap and hassle-free. Re-write most sentences that use the words "we" or "us" to YOU. Focus on them.

7. Use sub headlines. Headings make it easy for your prospect to find information. Headings also break up the page and make your proposal easier to read.

8. Use testimonials. Testimonials are powerful. Incorporate them into your proposals. You can insert testimony in a text box almost anywhere in the proposal. The more specific the testimony, the more powerful it is. Use real names and real language.

9. Summarize. Many proposal readers cut to the quick... they read the last page or two only. Condense your proposal into a few packed paragraphs. Superior proposals contain a bullet-point macro list of the proposed services and their benefits.

10. End with a call to action. Tell the prospect what to do next. "Let's get started!" is my favourite.

Superior proposals demonstrate that your company has the best solution for the prospect's problem. They are simple, short and direct sales documents. They are personalized and customized. They always show value for the prospect.

Go win some work!

WHAT IS THE LONGVIEW GROUP, LLC?

Seeking more efficiency and effectiveness in your professional service business? The Longview Group, LLC provides you INSIGHTS through training, on-the-job coaching, expert counsel, and extra-hands services.



INSIGHTS...IN SIGHT

A publication of

The
Longview
Group, LLC