

Six Tricks for Creating the Perfect Sales Proposal

By Marc Wayshak

What would it mean if you could increase the closing ratio of your proposals by just 20 percent? So many salespeople spend so much time in the initial stages of a sale, only to rely on the same weak proposal template to close the sale. By implementing these six easy steps, you will dramatically improve the number of sales that you close.

1. Get to the point. The second that a prospect feels you are making him work, he will shut down. Most salespeople create long proposals that look super-impressive—and their prospects never read them. Instead, keep your proposals as short as possible and get directly to the point. Anything in your proposal that will not directly contribute to a prospect's decision should be removed.

2. Remove any boilerplate. Prospects will immediately skim through any information in a proposal that seems generic, and once they begin skimming, they won't stop. If you simply plug a different name and company into the same template each time, you are hurting your chances of closing a sale. Only include information in the proposal that you've learned in previous meetings with the prospect.

3. Think outcomes. Most proposals focus on what the salesperson intends to deliver to the prospect. However, your prospects are never buying specific deliverables—aka your products or services. They are buying the outcomes you provide. The same is true when someone buys a drill: The buyer doesn't care about the tool—she is more interested in the holes it creates.

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Focus your proposal on what your offering will do to improve your prospect's current situation.

4. Outline value. When your prospect feels sticker shock, it's not because your price is too high. Sticker shock happens when the prospect doesn't see enough value in what you are offering. During the course of your meetings leading up to a proposal, be sure to outline the value, in dollars and cents, of what you are offering. Ideally, you can ask questions that will help your prospect articulate the value of solving his challenges. Then be sure to include this as a value you provide in your proposal. Every outcome should have a corresponding value.

5. Create options. When you give your prospect one option in your proposal, he is likely going to want to shop around for some comparison. But when you offer three different solutions, ranging from the most basic option that will solve his key challenges to a premium one with all the bells and whistles, you are providing some immediate context for his decision. Plus, you increase your chances of closing a larger deal simply by offering that premium, high-priced option for your prospect to consider.

6. Turn your proposal into a contract.

Have you ever had a prospect say that she was ready to move forward with a contract only to have the deal fall apart? This happens to salespeople all the time, and there is one very simple solution: Make your proposal your contract. Your proposal already outlines the scope, so simply include a section at the bottom that allows the prospect to sign if she is ready to commit. This will allow you to avoid any clunky back and forth following a verbal agreement.

Which of these tricks do you think will be most useful for your business? ●

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