Quantifying proposal quality

If you're not measuring it, how do you know when you've got it?

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Speaker

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to continue the dialog…

Do you have a definition for proposal quality?

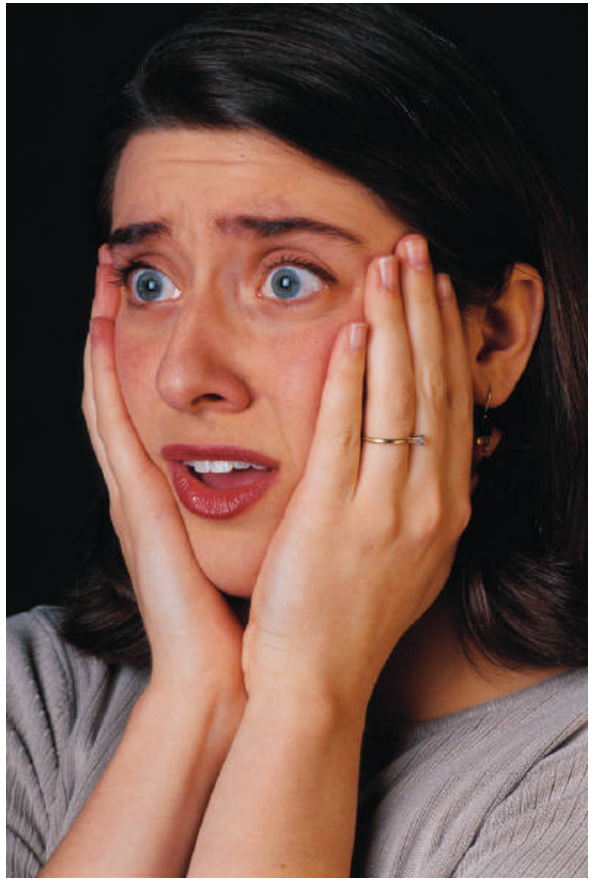
- Does everyone involved agree?
- Is it objective?
- Is it written down?
- Is it referenced during proposal reviews?

How you DEFINE quality DETERMINES whether you will win

- It defines what the proposal should be
- It tells you what you need to accomplish
- It provides the standard for reviews

This is a BAD definition for proposal quality:

I don't know how to define it,
but I'll know it when I see it…



I don’t know, but I’ll know it when I see it…

- Forces proposal writers to guess at what the reviews want
- Makes quality subjective
- Results in rewrite after rewrite until you run out of time and submit what you have

Another BAD definition for proposal quality:

Anything that wins!

Anything that wins!

- Doesn’t tell you what to do when writing your proposal
- Ends up making quality subjective
- Results in rewrite after rewrite until you run out of time and submit what you have

Start with a written definition of proposal quality:

Proposal Quality:

The degree to which a proposal implements all of the things you have determined are part of what it will take to win

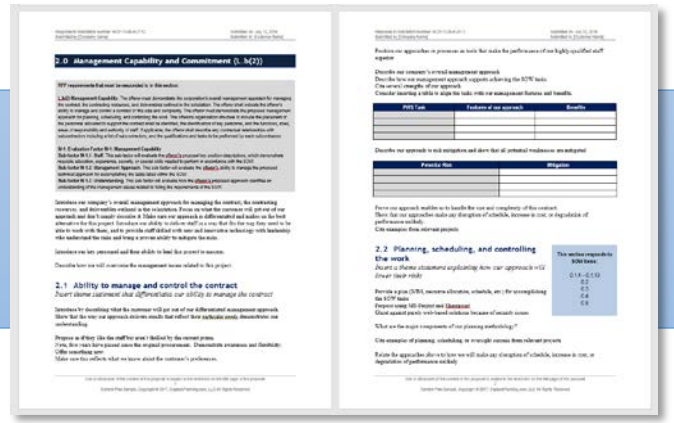
This definition forces you to:

- Discover what it will take to win
- Build your proposal around it
- Review your proposal to make sure you achieved it
- It also means that what you review is more important than how you review it

WHAT vs. HOW

- WHAT you review is more important than HOW you review it
- DON’T quantify quality by:
  - How many reviews you’ve had
  - Who has signed off
- DO quantify quality by:
  - How many quality criteria it has fulfilled

How do you know if you have a quality proposal?

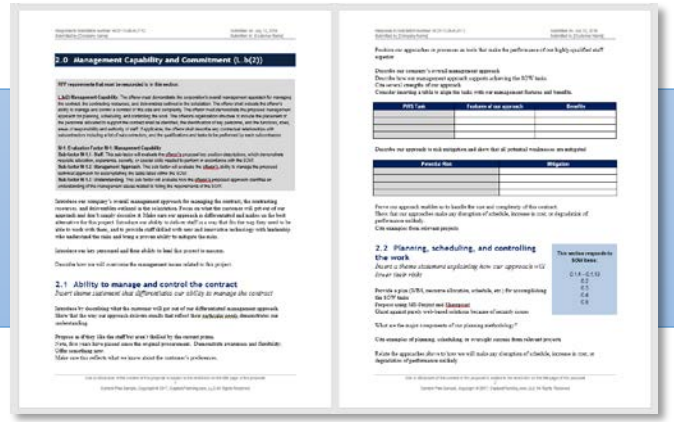


The instructions, goals, requirements, etc. of your Proposal Content Plan become the quality criteria for your reviews

Does your proposal reflect what it will take to win?

According to how you've defined it...

How do you quantify proposal quality?



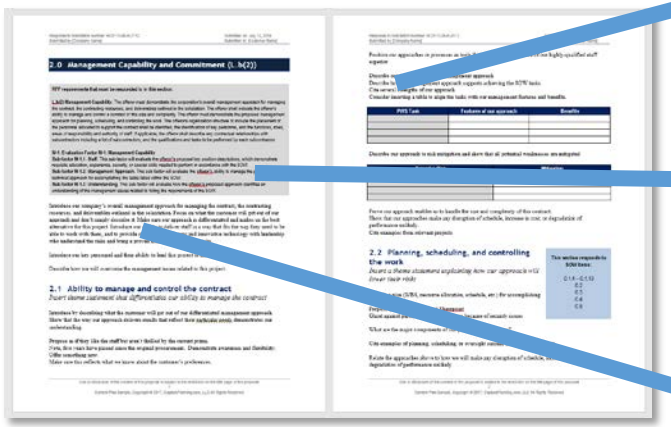
The instructions, goals, requirements, etc. of your Proposal Content Plan become the quality criteria for your reviews

Does your proposal reflect what it will take to win?

According to how you've defined it...

1. Have quality criteria
2. Score your document based on them

Where do proposal quality criteria come from?



Instructions

-
-
-

Requirements

-
-
-

Goals

-
-
-

Some proposal quality criteria can be standard, while others are bid-specific

Since the items in your content plan are all based on what it will take to win, you can turn them into quality criteria

Proposal quality reviews should validate that the draft proposal reflects them — that the draft achieves what it set out to do

This not only gives you a written definition of proposal quality, but it also ensures that writers and reviewers have the same expectations

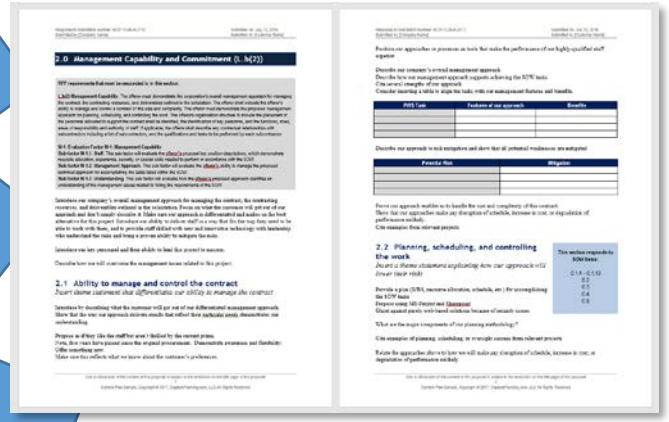
Does your proposal reflect what it will take to win?

All of the ingredients for your proposal should go into a content plan

Customer, opportunity, and competitive awareness

Offering Design

RFP Compliance



Your quality criteria should be based on what you discovered about what it will take to win

Having a content plan helps convert what you must do into quality criteria

This enables you to evolve from subjective proposal reviews into criteria-based proposal quality validation

What is a Proposal Content Plan?

- A document shell
- An annotated outline on steroids
- A container for proposal ingredients
- A blue print
- A description of what the proposal will be
- A way to visualize what the proposal will
- Instructions for proposal writers
- Quality criteria for reviewers
- A collaboration and management tool
- A way to speed things up
- A way to manage a page limitation

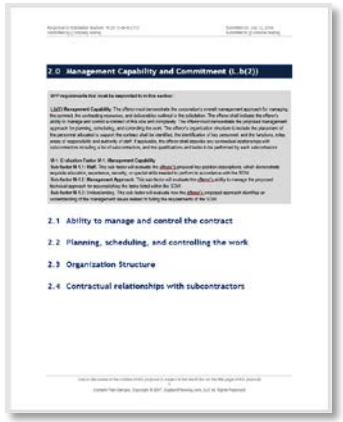
A Proposal Content Plan is a container that holds things you want to make sure go into your proposal

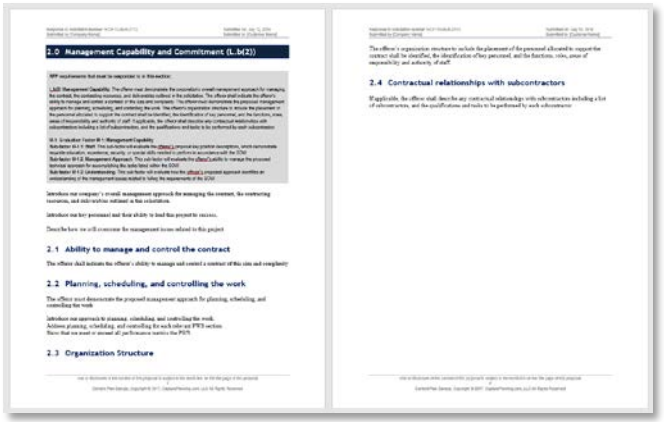
What does a Proposal Content Plan look like?

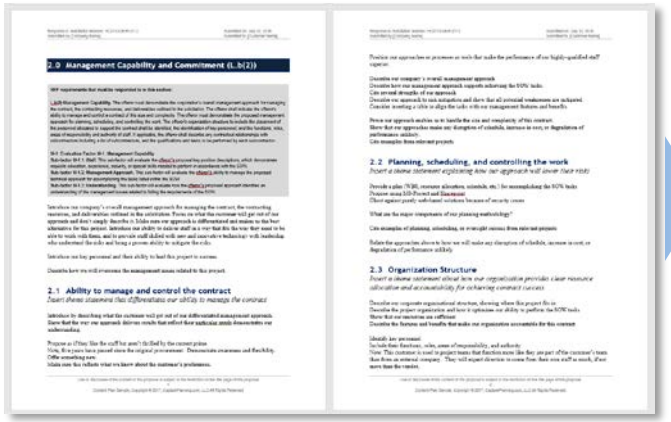
Through a series of iterations...

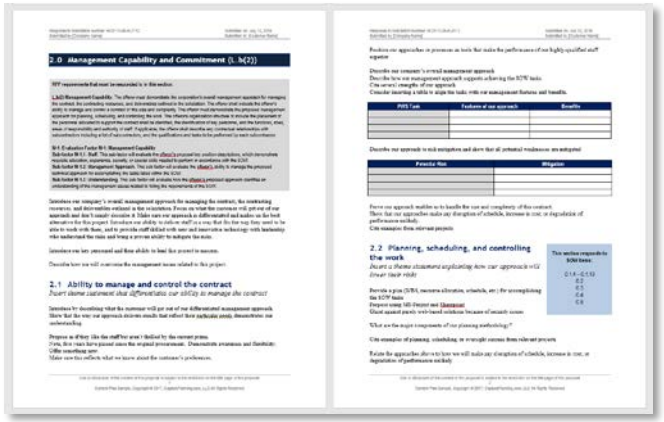
You add more instructions and address more topics, all at the bullet level with placeholders

When complete, you can really see what the proposal is going to become









Content planning for Q&A format proposals

(don't just start writing)

Customer, opportunity, and competitive awareness

Offering Design

RFP Compliance

Q1: blah, blah, blah

A1: Positioning

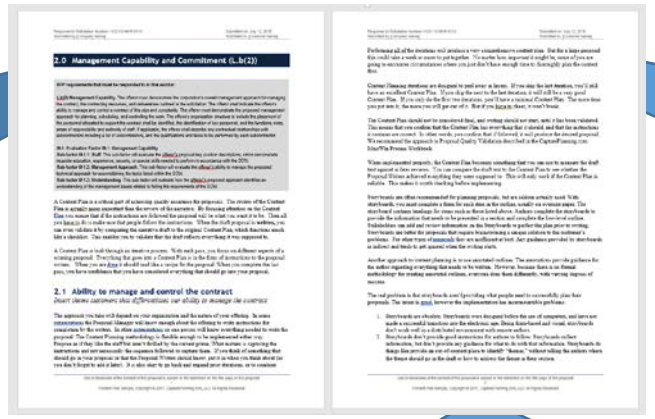
A1: Insert from database

Plan and validate your positioning

Plan and validate what to offer and whether it meets the specs

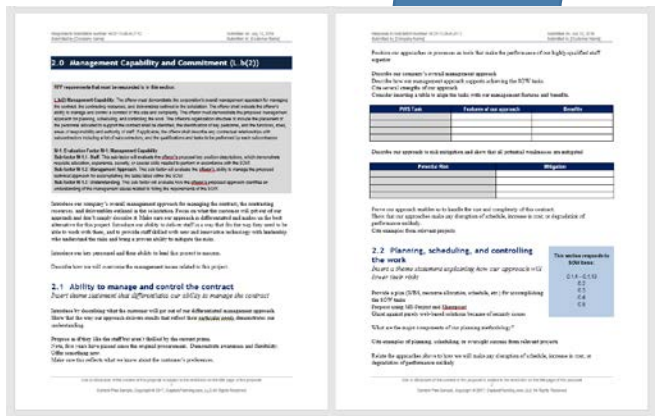
Proposal Content Planning leads to better Proposal Quality Validation

The draft proposal
How do you know if it's right?

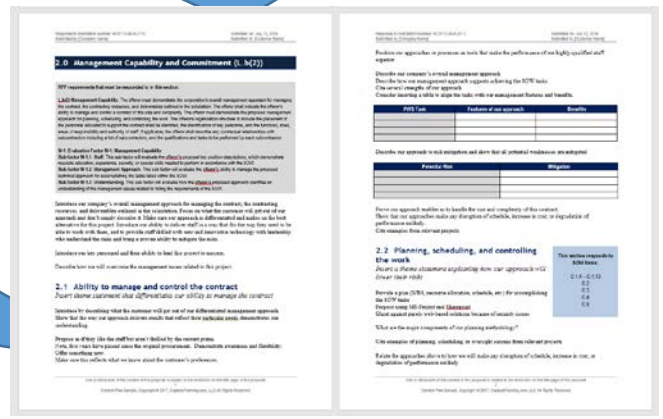


Instructions for writers easily convert into written quality criteria

Proposal Content Planning gets writers and reviewers on the same page, before the draft is even produced



The Proposal Content Plan
Is used to plan the writing



The Proposal Content Plan
Is used again during proposal reviews to ensure that the draft is everything it was supposed to be

Quality Criteria for Q&A format proposals

Customer, opportunity, and competitive awareness

Offering Design

RFP Compliance

Q1: blah, blah, blah

A1: Positioning

A1: Insert from database

Does each answer:

1. Reflect the full customer and competitive awareness?
2. Position according to plan?
3. Provide the right offering?
4. Comply with the RFP?
5. Is it written from the customer's perspective?
6. Does it answer their unasked questions?
7. Did it pass Legal?

Quality criteria for Q&A formats

- Does each answer:
  - Reflect the full customer and competitive awareness?
  - Position according to plan?
  - Provide the right offering?
  - Comply with the RFP?
  - Is it written from the customer’s perspective?
  - Does it answer their unasked questions?
  - Did it pass Legal?

Quality criteria for proposal writing

1. **Does it follow the instructions and reflect the evaluation criteria?**
2. **Does it pass the “So what?” test?**
3. **Is it about the customer or about you?**
4. **Does it clearly differentiate your proposal?**
5. **Does it lead with what you want the customer to conclude, and then support it?**
6. **What does it all add up to? Is it clear what the customer will get from your offering and**

Defect surveillance

- What do you want to avoid or make sure is not in the proposal?
- Is it merely descriptive?
- Does it contain:
  - Unsubstantiated claims
  - Universal truths
  - Cliches
- Does it contain typographical errors?

Turn your quality criteria into a list

- Include the things you want and don’t want in your list of quality criteria
- Make it checklist simple
- Use it to:
  - Write
  - Review
  - Track whether you got the inputs you need
  - Track progress
  - Quantify quality

Quantifiable scoring

- A scale of 1-5 or 1-10
- Red/Yellow/Green
- Letters like in school (A-E)

Metrics and Measurements

- Turn the art of proposal writing into a science
- Create a spreadsheet:
  - Bids x Quality Criteria Score
  - Include other metrics (price, industry sector, etc.)
- Which quality criteria correlate with your win rate?

Or you can just leave it all subjective and make it up as you go along…

Just like you do everywhere else that quality is essential.

Huh?

Q&A and Closing Remarks

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