

Tender Tip:

10 Elements of Successful Proposals

Tenders and proposals are mostly formed in a competitive context. This means that they must (1) appeal to the needs (and budget) of the potential customer **and** (2) demonstrate overall superiority in comparison with alternatives. Doing either (let alone both) is not easy; as many organisations will attest...

But don't despair! Set out below are 10 proposal elements that aid customer focus and address competitive pressure. These elements may not always assume equal weight or importance but will all be evident, to some degree, in every winning proposal. Check the list and see how your last tender rated...

Proposal Element		Characteristics of a Successful Proposal
Information: what the proposal says		
1	Strategy and Messages	The value proposition (and this could be based around pricing) is clear to the reader. Key tender messages are cohesive, consistent and compelling.
2	Client Focus	A clear understanding of the client needs is demonstrated. Offerings are matched to these needs and supported with strong and relevant proof.
3	Competitive Focus	Proposed benefits are framed in a competitive context. Key sections, like the cover letter and executive summary, are present and are used to highlight and reinforce the competitive position.
4	Compliance	Tenderer instructions and information requirements are strictly adhered to, especially compliance with format, content and sequencing of requested information.
5	Content	Information provided is directly relevant to that requested with the most important details presented first. Use of "boilerplate" material has been carefully scrutinised. Use of "motherhood" statements has been avoided.
Presentation: how the information is presented		
6	Packaging	The document portrays a professional image (consistent with the importance and nature of the opportunity) – irrespective of whether the tender is conveyed in hard or soft copy format.
7	Structure	The document has a logical, consistent and compliant flow. Aids to document navigation are present (contents, tabs etc). Appendix materials and other supporting information are clearly identified and referenced.
8	Page Design	Documentation is client focussed and informative – even down to header and footer design. The layout makes information a pleasure to read.
9	Graphics	The document includes good use of diagrams, tables and figures to illustrate key issues and concepts ("a picture is worth a thousand words").
10	Writing Style	The document is written in plain English, jargon is eliminated and persuasive writing techniques (like active voice, action captions and descriptive headings) are used.

Didn't address all 10 the last time you tendered?

Don't worry – how about incorporating these elements into planning for your next tender!