

# Proposal

The Proposal will be worth 30% of your final grade in this course and will be due by **midnight, Wednesday, January 18**. For this assignment, you are required to write about an actual or potential problem for an actual business; this business could be a small/medium/large company, any religious institution (a mosque, synagogue, church, etc.), any social service agency, any educational institution, or any other company or agency that serves people in some way.

Please do NOT write about problems that involve large-scale problems that your proposal could not reasonably resolve, such as problems you might find in politics and government or that involve religious/ethical/moral beliefs. The type of proposal that you'll be writing needs to be similar to those written at companies, which tend to focus on small/medium-sized problems that have concrete causes and effects that affect one agency, company, or institution. The smaller the size of the problem, the more convincing and effective your proposal will be.

Also, please identify problems in agencies, companies, or other institutions that you know really well. For example, some students in this class are parents and have written strong proposals about a problem at their children's daycare centers or schools; some students work part- or full-time and have experienced or observed problems at those jobs; and some students don't have children, work experience, or other such connections in this area, but are able to identify problems here at UWM or at a community college they attended in this area.

Here are just a few examples of problems that have worked well in past proposals written for English 205 are these (but try hard to identify problems on your own!):

- Shoplifting at a store has increased dramatically in the past year
- The system of valet parking at a restaurant is inefficient, leading to obvious customer discontent
- The long lines at a downtown lunch counter have resulted in many potential customers turning away and choosing other options
- The high fat content of food in a company cafeteria is contributing to health problems among employees
- A school's lunch hour is too short, leading to many students not finishing their lunches in time, which in turn has a negative impact on the attention levels in afternoon classes.

Well, you get the idea!

## What are the main purposes of a Proposal?

Most business professionals write reports of various types. One of the most common is the proposal. A proposal can be in the form of an email, a lengthy memo like the Ethics

Packet memo to the boss, or a formal report. For this assignment, you will write a proposal as a formal report with required sections in it.

A proposal typically has three central purposes:

- To convince the reader that a problem actually exists
- To convince the reader that this problem is serious
- To convince the reader that this problem has had a serious negative impact on the company, or might have fairly soon.

The proposal that you will write will need to fulfill all three of these purposes in order to receive an A-level grade.

To convince the reader that a serious problem actually exists, you will write a fairly lengthy Problem section that fulfills the first two purposes listed above. There, you will need to describe the problem in considerable detail, including what gave rise to the problem, what the problem looks like now (its scope, its nature), and the problem's actual or potential negative impact on the company. As you describe the causes, nature, and negative effects of the problem, you will need to pull in detailed description and examples, but also some research evidence to support your claims that the problem exists and is serious. This research evidence might include interview quotes, survey statistics, data/statistical trends from company records, and your own observations or experiences with the situation. Note that there is no need to make an emotional appeal in a typical business proposal; instead, the combination of your description, argument, and evidence/examples will convince the reader sufficiently well.

To convince the reader that your proposed plan is feasible and has a strong chance to either minimize or eradicate the problem, once again you will need to describe all aspects of your plan in some detail and to pull in evidence that backs up your claims. This research evidence can include everything listed in the previous paragraph or comparative data, such as evidence that the same plan has worked really well at one or more other companies, or a comparison of this plan and other possible plans that demonstrates that this plan is superior and ought to be approved and implemented.

What if you can't gather enough research evidence from actual companies within the tight time frame of this course? Please do your best to gather some evidence from the company that is experiencing the problem: even if all you can do is conduct one interview and look at annual company reports from the past three years, that would be a strong effort! However, for this particular assignment, I will also accept the following types of research:

- You might find descriptions of the same problem at another company and the successful implementation of a solution that resolved it—that comparative data would work well in the proposal.

- You can also do some memory searching and write down what you remember noticing or experiencing yourself when you worked at a company or attended a school, etc.
- Some magazines and newspapers publish descriptions of problems/solutions and you might be able to locate those types of articles with the help of a reference librarian at the UWM Golda Meir Library or at a community library, or find them on the Internet.
- And finally, given the tight time frame of this course, I will give you permission to fabricate (make up, invent) some research evidence to support your claims; just as an example, you can invent an adverse statistical trend over the past five years that give evidence of a problem hurting the company's profit margin. Important: even though some evidence in your proposal can be fictional, be sure that most evidence that you use in your proposal is real. And whether the evidence is fictional or real, write citations at the end of your report, including imaginary citations for the fictional evidence and actual citations for the actual evidence that you found and used in your proposal.

## Requirements

Audience: This proposal will be written for me – instead, pretend that you are writing it for an actual person or group who would make the final decision whether to approve the proposed plan. You will not actually submit this proposal to that audience, unless you want to do so, but aim the entire proposal to that individual or group.

Length: This proposal should be between 5 and 10 pages, single-spaced, not including the Cover Page and Executive Summary.

Visuals: You are required to include at least two visuals in your proposal, which can include actual photographs, tables, charts, flow charts, or other types of visual aids that can help readers understand a problem and solution and can back up your claims.

Sections: You are required to use the following sections:

1. **Cover page.** On this page, place a relevant photograph or other professional looking visual, in addition to the title of your report, the name of the reader and company (you could write, for example: "Submitted to:" followed by the name of your contact at the company and that person's job title), your own name and job title (again, you could write "Submitted by" followed by that information), and the month/year of submission.
2. **Executive Summary.** This is a half- or full-page section in which you provide a brief summary of the most important points of your report. Use headings such as these: Problem, Proposed Plan, Feasibility, and Benefits. In each section, just

briefly summarize the main points in your proposal in one or a few sentences. It is also acceptable to include one or a few vertical lists in these sections.

3. **Problem.** This is one of the main sections and needs to begin on a new page. In this section, provide a thorough, fairly detailed description of the problem that the organization is experiencing and give evidence that it exists and is serious to the organization. Describe its probable or actual causes, the scope and nature of the problem right now, and its actual or probable negative effects (or impact) on the organization. If you want, you can create subsections in this major section, such as Causes of the Problem, Nature of the Problem, and Negative Impact of the Problem – or How did the problem arise? What does the problem look like right now? How has the problem hurt our company?
4. **Proposed Plan.** In this section, describe your proposed plan fully and in detail, and objectively so that the reader will be able to see very clearly it has the potential to resolve the problem or fulfill the need. Within this section, please create subsections that you can call, for example, What is the Proposed Plan? How is the Proposed Plan Feasible? How will this Plan Benefit the Company?

Some ideas for making this section especially persuasive and convincing:

- Consider using comparative data anywhere in this main section that shows, convincingly, that your proposed plan has worked well (was feasible and had benefits) at another company or at a group of companies.
  - It's effective to provide an overview of what the plan consists of and then propose that the company approach the plan as a pilot and then decide, later on, if it wants to make it permanent; you can then, for example, describe the pilot plan in terms of stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. While describing those stages, provide specific dates – for approval of the plan, planning, implementation, evaluation, and then making a final decision regarding the plan. Also provide specific steps that will be taken for each stage.
  - When discussing Feasibility, include subsections covering personnel (who will do what/their qualifications), resources (what equipment or other tangible items will be needed/whether those are available or affordable), and budget (the costs/whether the plan is cost-effective and affordable for the company)
  - When discussing Benefits, be focused and either list benefits for the company or describe them in brief subsections.
5. **Closing Thoughts.** You can also call this conclusion, "Closing Remarks" or "Conclusion." In this section, make a final "pitch" for approval of your proposal; focus on those original three purposes and ask the reader to remember that this problem exists and is very serious and your proposed plan can either minimize or

resolve the problem, is feasible, and is worth approving due to the benefits it will have for the company.

**References.** If you used any references from the Internet or elsewhere, be sure to list these in a final section called **References**. Also, as I mentioned earlier, if you used fictional evidence that you made up yourself, include fictional citations in this section. Use any style you prefer for listing the References; I usually begin each entry with the first author's last name and list the references alphabetically.

If you used primary sources, such as people you interviewed, create two subsections: Published sources and Primary sources. In the Primary sources subsection, you can begin each entry with the last name of the person you interviewed and list those entries alphabetically.

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I will not be showing models of proposals, because each of you needs to make all writing decisions on your own while also meeting the assignment requirements and I do not want models to influence anyone to use the same decisions that another student used in the past. My best advice for you is to do the following:

- Structure and format this report by following the instructions from this file VERY carefully, and
- Apply to this proposal what you have learned in this course about writing effective business documents – for example, begin each major section and each subsection with a quick introduction or overview; use a set of subsections if you have quite a bit of information to present but use a list if you don't have that much information; and so on.

I welcome any questions you might have and wish you great luck on your Proposal!  
Best, Rachel