



## **DO YOUR PROPOSALS ALLOW PROSPECTS TO STEAL YOUR BRAINPOWER? (Including the TOP TEN list of reasons why a prospect demands a proposal)**

**Proposals are the foundation of business building for many salespeople.** How many of us constantly invest precious sales time to draft a proposal, actually pouring years of experience and expertise into this written gamble at acquiring business? Too many of us spends lots of time proposing because we don't employ a qualifying system before designing these documents.

One reason most of us are so quick to accommodate potential clients is that we really do want to please people. Think of how ridiculous it would sound if you refused to provide materials to your prospect! So you and I are very likely to assume that a request for a proposal is a *yes* indicator. It reinforces our hope that we've just moved one step closer to closing the sale. There is, however, the prospect's perspective. If we don't understand what might really be going on with that request, we could spend endless hours creating and delivering documents for people who have no intention of buying our products or services. And here's why:

**Prospects love free consulting.** They give you their biggest smile and drain your brain of all its problem-solving knowledge before you understand their true intentions. And they love it even more in print than in person. If you don't have a strategy for dealing with proposal requests, you're at the mercy of every potential client. Over the past twenty years, I've analyzed many of the top sales training organizations (see some recommendations in the appendix). It's interesting to note that virtually all the great training systems have the wisdom to recognize and teach how critical it is for a salesperson *not* to give everyone proposals simply because they are requested. To help you understand the dangers of proposal writing, here's a list you'll learn from.

### **The Top Ten Reasons A Prospect Demands A Proposal** *(The impact to you is in parentheses)*

10. They need to keep their current vendors honest *(what a surprise—you never had a prayer of getting the business)*
9. They want a fair range of prices for the type of service you offer *(thanks for the quote, the business is going to the prospect's brother-in-law, at just below your rate)*
8. They want to keep themselves up-to-date on the latest business processes and technologies *(thanks for the education, goodbye)*

7. They think your product or service simply sounds interesting (*but they have no intention of buying!*)
  6. They need new and better ideas—to make their own changes (*thanks for your free consulting; that really hurts, doesn't it?*)
  5. They just wonder how much it would cost (*wow, you're really expensive!*)
  4. This request will get you off their back (*oops, you forgot to qualify the prospect, didn't you?*)
  3. They can look good when they pass your information to the real decision-maker (*did you spend all that time with the wrong person?*)
  2. They honestly need their problems solved (*too bad you don't know whom the other eight proposals are from, what they charge and maybe what they're saying about you*)
- And the number one reason prospects make you pour your blood, sweat, and tears into a proposal:
1. A prospect can lie to a salesperson and still get into heaven!

### **Final Thoughts:**

Preparing proposals can offer false hope to all sales pros. Do you really believe that everyone asking for a customized, written solution is ready to buy?

Please, please, stop wasting your time jumping through hoops to design proposals for everyone that nods his head or grunts into your telephone. *Qualify first*, and then begin to work with your best potential clients. Your organization should have some criteria for what defines a good prospect. Use them, or immediately create your own to save yourself from sales heartbreak. If you don't quickly sort the good prospects from the time wasters, bad prospects can sabotage your income. Your expectations of who will buy from you will be inaccurate. One good method might be to charge a fee for a proposal. Obviously, a prospect who's not serious won't pay for it. If this works for you, implement it.

However, your organization might not choose to use this strategy, so get a grip on what looks like a realistic buyer and craft your plan without giving away all your solutions.

The lesson here is that you need to set guidelines to determine which prospects are worth investing your time in proposal design. Otherwise, you'll waste lots of time showboating in print for prospects who have no intention of doing business with you. If you don't weed out the weeds, you'll have very little time to find, smell, and pick the flowers.

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