

How to Write Persuasive SEO Proposals

You may love SEO, but you didn't get into it because you love writing and submitting proposals. You might actually dread that part of your job.

You want to spend your valuable time doing what you do best, improving search and ranking for your clients websites.

But unless you already have the clients, you'll have to find them first.

Unfortunately, if you want the best clients – the ones with the highest budget, the best attitudes, and the ones who understand SEO doesn't happen overnight – you have to write top-quality proposals. That's part of the territory. You can't neglect writing proposals if you want to actually land those dream clients.

Writing proposals for your clients is necessary, but it doesn't have to be a time consuming chore. Instead of avoiding or dreading proposals, you can take the time to improve your proposal writing process.

By taking the time to create a proposal writing system you can free up the vast majority of the time you would otherwise spend writing, so that you can get back to doing what you love, optimizing.

Investing in learning is always beneficial and that holds true with proposals. Learning about the proposal writing process will help you

create your own system. **Once you see how easy it is to fit everything together, you'll be able to easily create your own system so that you start landing the clients you want.**

Let's get started!

The Anatomy of a Persuasive Proposal

5 Essential Elements Every Proposal Should Have

A proposal isn't as complex as an SEO strategy and it shouldn't have to be. Each proposal will vary in design and style from project to project, but each will follow the same basic layout or structure.

Your SEO proposals will include the five basic elements no matter the length or complexity of the project.

1. The Problem Statement

Identifying the problem is the first stage of creating a good proposal. A good problem statement tells the client that you know what they need and what their real issues are.

A problem statement identifies tasks that have to be completed. A great problem statement goes below those surface problems to

engage with the actual issues behind the project. Dig deeper and find the real issues.

Let's say you're bidding on a six month campaign to increase Page Rank and SERPS. Is that what the client really needs?

Any website is in business for just one reason. They want to make money. They're not going to increase traffic because they like having visitors.

Because visitors aren't valuable and neither are search results, traffic isn't what the client needs. If they just wanted traffic, they could just as easily purchase it for next to nothing.

Take a minute to find the root of the problem. **Why would this client want to hire an SEO service?**

Your problem statement gives you the opportunity to address these issues. Here are a few examples to help you get a better idea of what it's all about.

ABC Company is looking to launch a 6-month SEO campaign for their website and blog. The campaign should include onsite and offsite work with keywords, links, and internal optimization.

This problem statement mentions what the client is asking for but doesn't go any deeper. The problem statement mentions basic SEO services, but it doesn't describe why they would *benefit* the client.

In fact, it pretty much just reiterates whatever the client originally listed as the requirements for the job. These sort of services are just that: services, not solutions. This problem statement does nothing to tell the client that you're on the same page, or that you're any different from any other SEO sending a proposal.

Bottom line: it's not offering solutions

Now let's say that same SEO had taken the time to research and write something like this?

Over the last two years, ABC Company has seen a drastic increase in online competitors. Many of these competitors have better SEO campaigns, meaning that they come up higher in search results, and are beginning to attract more and more of ABC Company's customers.

ABC Company needs to launch an SEO campaign to help improve the ranking and search position of their website and pages. This will help new clients to find ABC Company, as well as ensure that old customers find who they are looking for.

The campaign should include keyword research and optimization for onsite use - internal SEO to optimize speed, performance, and markups to increase visibility to search engines – and external SEO to optimize backlinks and hype

around the web.

See what you did there? Instead of just saying “This is what the company needs” you take a look at why the client needs those services and lay it out for them. They don’t just want an SEO campaign, they want to rank higher on search so that they can compete with Internet alternatives, and attract new customers. They need to grow, and make more sales, and your problem statement says that you understand that.

You’ll have to take a few minutes to research clients to find out their actual problems. Most clients won’t just come out and say why they need your services, either for confidentiality or because they have trouble expressing the issues.

By taking the time to present the real problems your client is facing at the beginning of your proposal, you are making sure that your proposal stands out from the competitors.

Why does the client need an SEO campaign?

If you can tell the client the answer to that issue, then you have a great problem statement on your hands, and the start of a great proposal.

If you’ve got that down, then you’re ready to get started proposing a solution.

2. Your Proposed Solution

You've already told the client why they have to make the hire, now you get to tell them how your services can uniquely solve their actual problems.

Present your skills as the solution to the real issues you talked about in your problem statement.

Sure it's nice to have an SEO campaign, who wouldn't want one, right? Actually this couldn't be more wrong. Clients want to hire an SEO service who can benefit them and provide a direct ROI for their business. Your proposed solution has to offer solutions and benefits, not just services.

SEO is an important facet of Internet marketing, but that's not why the client will hire you. Leverage your ability to create sales and customers by building traffic to create a winning proposal.

Businesses are interested in what you can do for them and nothing more. You can use that to improve your proposal by connecting the dots and telling them what each service does for them. By telling them how you can improve their business, you're putting yourself ahead of your competitors.

Sound complex? Here are a few example solutions to help you get a better grip on the idea.

We recommend a 6-month SEO campaign for ABC Company. This would include keyword optimization on the website and blog, backlinks, internal optimization, and external optimization.

If you're falling asleep reading that, then you're on the right track.

This proposed solution is a bad example. It doesn't stand out, it doesn't mention anything other than what is required of the SEO. It doesn't offer *solutions*.

Most importantly, this proposed solution doesn't tell the client how these services would improve their business. It doesn't sell itself or you as an SEO guru.

If you wrote that same information like this, it would read altogether differently:

In order to improve search ranking and search related traffic, ABC Company must implement a minimum of a 6-month SEO Campaign. This will start with a needs analysis session and keyword research to determine which strategies will offer the most impact and results.

Analysis and research will be followed with a marketing strategy focused on providing consistent results over the period. This will include internal optimization to improve website speed and visitor click-through, HTML and Meta Tags to make ABC Company more visible to search engines, keyword optimization for web pages and blogs to improve search traffic, and external SEO to improve Page Rank and

search.

Notice the difference? **The SEO takes the time to connect the dots and tell the client what's happening, how it works, and what it does for them.** Keyword optimization stops being optimization and starts being something that improves traffic.

While the first example is a great deal easier to write, it doesn't sell your services. It's also a lot less likely to win you the bid.

Take the time to tell your clients what your services do for them. They probably don't know anything about SEO and they shouldn't have to, that's why they need you. Make connections for your potential clients and offer them a solution not a service.

3. Benefits

The follow-up to your recommended course of action should almost always be a benefits section. You've already told them that you understand their issues and that you know how to fix it, now you have to follow up.

Even if you put a lot of work into creating a persuading first two sections, it might not be enough to convert the client.

Why do they want to hire you?

Your prospective client might not even know what SEO is, just that it's good for marketing. You're the SEO expert, so you have to take the time to tell them how your services benefit their business.

Outlining the benefits of your services might seem unnecessary but your client might not realize what your services can offer.

Most clients are going to be either too busy or too ignorant of how SEO works to understand all of the benefits. If you want to create a winning proposal, you have to point out the benefits to the client.

The benefits section gives you the opportunity to do just that. Take a minute to go beneath the surface of the skill and point out the real effects. This is similar to what you did with your problem statement but instead of finding issues, you're offering benefits.

Here's one way you could get that across to your client:

We'll work with you to create an SEO strategy that benefits you as much as possible in terms of traffic and sales. We'll get started by researching high-conversion keywords and phrases that will draw in traffic interested in making a purchase from ABC Company and then we'll integrate them into existing webpages and blogs.

We'll take the time to go over your back-end website to optimize it for search engines so that you show up more, and traffic clicks through more often. We'll also initiate an external SEO campaign to help capture traffic from other websites, and build your Page Rank for social

authority over time.

By taking the time to offer benefits, you're taking the time to tell the client why they should hire you. This information is one of the best ways to [separate yourself from your competitors](#). It also gives clients a better reason to hire you.

4. Pricing Information

If you've done a good job with your proposal then it already outlines the client's problem, your proposed solution, and how that solution directly benefits the client. What you haven't done is answer the one question that every client is going to have.

Does this fit in my budget?

A higher budget isn't necessarily a bad thing. It offers perceived value, and if you've done a good job with the first two sections of your proposal, it will actually back you up as a valuable addition to their marketing team. If you can offer ROI, then how much you charge doesn't matter. What does matter is your pricing section.

If your pricing section is confusing or difficult to read, then the client won't understand it. A good pricing section is broken down into small sections, easy to digest, and makes your rates easy to understand.

Sure it's easy to say, but how do you make pricing more understandable? The best way is to use a grid format so that it's

easier to take in.

SEO Campaign

\$4,980 Per Month

Strategy Creation – We'll consult with you and talk over your goals to create a long-term SEO strategy designed to drive you the most traffic during crucial sales periods.

Keyword Research – We'll take the time to research the top performing keywords in your niche and then put them to work for you. We'll optimize or rewrite your existing content and blogs, and write new content to draw traffic for those keywords.

Internal Optimization – We'll have our web design experts work on your website to make it faster, to improve visibility across different devices, and ensure that search engines can easily see your content using meta data and HTML tags.

External Optimization – We'll increase your visibility around the web by getting you mentions and blog content on websites and blogs. This will help to capture their traffic to boost sales, as well as to build Page Rank to increase Google ranking.

Project Total

\$4,980 Per Month

You don't have to be a mathematics major in college to figure out what this pricing section means. It's easy to understand because you're not

pricing every item. **Break down prices at a higher level to avoid confusion.**

Unless you have a really complex pricing plan, where you will need more information, you want to keep pricing simple. On the other hand, some longer and more complex projects may require a fee or budget schedule, where you will discuss milestone payments and in-depth pricing.

Finally, consider using [psychological price hacks](#) to grab your clients attention. The right pricing schedule will do as much for your proposal as some of the other elements, so make sure that you make it easy to understand.

5. Call to Action

Now that you've put so much work into creating a persuasive proposal, you don't want it to go to waste by leaving the client to set it aside.

You may have written the best proposal ever, and the client might really want to get back to you. But the minute they put it down to go do something else, you lose your ability to make that happen. Even if they intend to get back to you, you can still lose them. Clients are busy, distracted, and just as likely to forget as you are.

Take the initiative and ask your clients to act. You'll get more clients.

Asking for action might seem obvious, especially if you're accustomed

to writing landing pages. Unfortunately, a lot of SEOs somehow leave this crucial element out of their proposal. They expect the client to look for their contact information.

Unfortunately, it rarely happens. Your prospective clients are busy, stressed, and probably have more than one proposal. Ask your client to contact you or it might not happen.

Your call to action should communicate how to move forward with the project but it should also make it easy. You don't want to make it too hard to move forward because this is an action that you really want them to take.

Here's a quick example of what a call to action section should look like:

ABC Company can take the following steps to proceed with this project:

- 1. Accept the proposal as is or discuss desired changes. Strategy adjustments will be made as the project commences to improve effectiveness.*
- 2. Finalize and sign contract.*
- 3. Submit initial payment of first monthly fee.*

Once the contract is signed, we'll kick off with a preliminary meeting to discuss SEO strategy and then start keyword research.

Here the SEO makes it easy for the client to move forward with the

hire. All they have to do is follow the instructions given and they've already proceeded with the contract. Importantly, it also lets them know what they get out of it immediately after signing the contract.

Don't forget the call to action! Remember that you want potential clients to move forward with clients. Make it easy for them and include a call to action.

Putting It All Together

Structuring a Persuasive Proposal

You've already learned about the five essential elements of a proposal, so now let's put them together. These five elements make up the basic proposal structure, and you can use them to create your own proposals later.

The structure for a standard design proposal goes like this:

- 1. Problem Statement**
- 2. Proposed Solution**
- 3. Benefits**
- 4. Pricing Information**
- 5. Call to Action**

You can use the titles given, or use a couple of different titles for the different sections. Mostly you can choose which one you want based on personal preference.

“Problem Statement” can also go by “Client Needs,” “Client Goals,” “Client Objectives,” or “Goals and Objectives.”

“Proposed Solution” can also go by “Recommended Solution” or “Recommended Strategy.”

“Pricing Information” can also go by “Fee Summary” (for shorter projects), “Fee Schedule” (for longer projects), or “Project Pricing.”

Making Proposal Writing a Repeatable Process

Turning It into a System

Even if you absolutely hate writing proposals, you can't avoid it entirely. Most importantly, you wouldn't want to. Even if your competitors aren't sending proposals, you still want to because it gives you an edge.

Not submitting a proposal hurts your chances of getting the project. **Taking the time to write and submit a proposal gives the client the opportunity to see that you're a professional, and that you know what they need.**

While you can't avoid writing proposals altogether, you can make the process easier by creating a system. A proposal writing system automates a great deal of the writing process so that you can save time and get back to delivering quality SEO results.

The fastest way to create a system is to use [proposal software](#). Using software will eliminate many of the manual steps so that you save time and effort.

Software also includes professional design templates that you can utilize to make your proposals look better with less effort. It's literally the easiest way to quickly create high-quality proposals with as little time and energy as possible.

You will still have to do your own research. Spending the time to identify the client's problems and offering specific solutions is what makes you stand out from your competitors and you wouldn't want to skip that.

If you don't want Bidsketch proposal software, then you can also manually create your own system with templates.

Creating Your Own Proposal Templates

A Manual Alternative to Proposal

Software

The easiest way to create a proposal writing system without the use of software is to use templates. Making a proposal template is a bit time consuming, but it will save you time when writing your proposals later.

Microsoft Office is the most popular software for making templates, but you can also try [OpenOffice](#) as an alternative. Generally, you will need two templates, one for small projects and one for long projects.

Let's go over those now.

Small Proposal Templates

A small proposal template is perfect for small optimization jobs that don't cover a lot of information or are for short-term projects. While many SEOs will simply give a price estimate for this sort of work, sending a proposal will make you stand out, which means you're more likely to get the job.

Small proposals are also short. Most small proposals are perfect at around two pages in length. That's just about right for getting the information across without wasting time for either party.

If you don't know how, you can check [these basic instructions](#) to create a Microsoft Word Template. The OpenOffice Wiki [here](#) is a better resource for Open Office users.

Here's a basic structure for the small proposal template:

- **Client Needs** (problem statement)
- **Recommended Solution** (proposed solution)
- **Benefits**
- **Fee Summary** (pricing information)
- **Next Steps** (call to action)

Large Proposal Templates

A large proposal template is going to be better suited to most of your SEO projects. Large templates are great for longer, more involved, and more complicated projects. For example, any job that requires milestone payments is probably better suited to a long proposal.

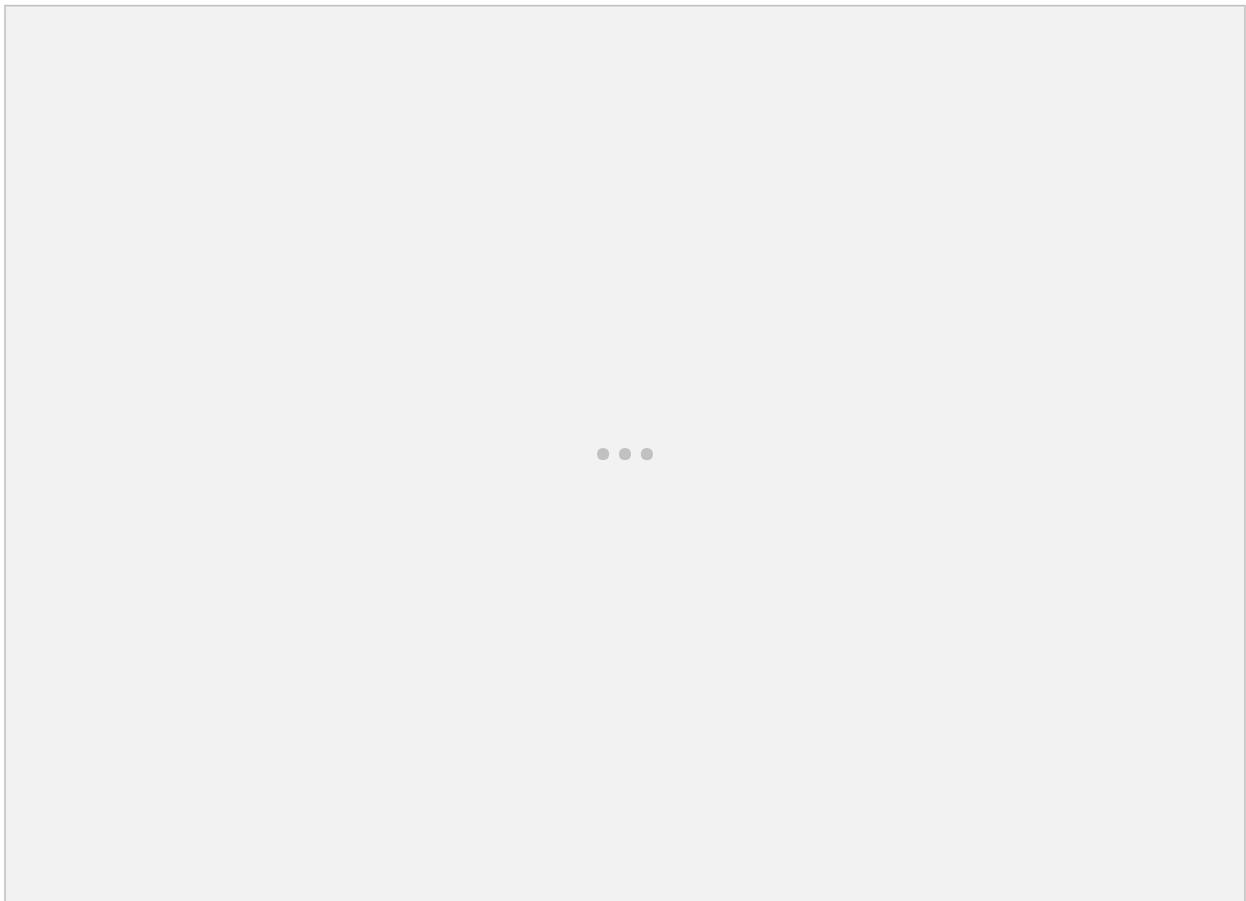
Here's a basic structure for the large proposal template:

- **Goals and Objectives** (problem statement)
- **Recommended Solution** (proposed solution)
- **Benefits**
- **Fee Summary** (pricing information)
- **Fee Schedule:** outlines different points where you'll receive partial

payments of the total project cost for completed work

- **Estimated Project Schedule:** gives prospective clients an estimated timeline for their website project, when revisions are to take place, and details about any ongoing work like blogging for SEO, Guest Posts, or any other services you might offer

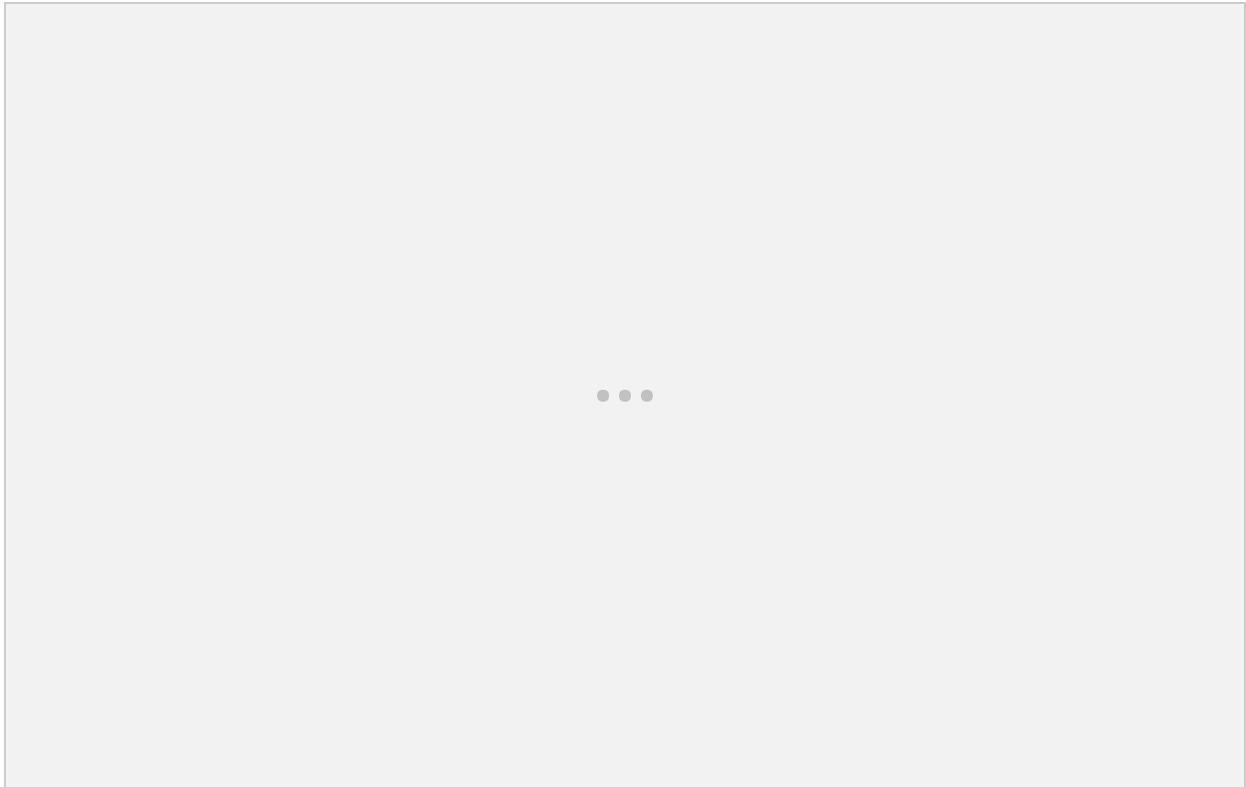
Check this example project template from the [free SEO proposal template](#) to see what it should look like.



- **Next Steps** (call to action)
- **Terms and Conditions:** these help ensure you get paid and set

client expectations if legal issues arise; they become more important on large projects when more money is at stake.

Feel free to take a look the Terms and Conditions section from our sample SEO proposal template below:



Note: You definitely want to modify your Terms and Conditions section based on the individual project and client. If you're in doubt about the language or the terms, run it by a lawyer before using it.

Try not to make your large proposal too much longer than the short one. Four or five pages is about right for getting the information across. Going on too long won't give you extra room for persuading them, but it will bore them.

Making It Look Professional

First Impression Is Everything

As an SEO, professionalism should be your calling card. The image you present to your clients shows them who you are.

Proposals are no different. For most clients, the proposal is your only chance to make a good first impression. They expect you to look as good as you sound.

If your proposal looks like you threw it together, or pasted it from a template, then you're going to lose bids. No one wants to hire an SEO who doesn't present themselves properly. Even if you've put together a great proposal, they won't be able to see it through poor presentation.

Proper presentation is crucial to the success of a proposal. How do you make yours great without software?

1. Elegant Design

Because your design reflects on you as a professional, you want something that showcases you. High-end clients will expect to see

more than just paper when they look at your proposal.

You need an elegant design that enhances your content without overwhelming your proposal content. You want to impress, without making it look like you're trying.

Of course, it's easier to say that than do it, but that's the downside of doing it yourself instead of using software.

Look for understated and elegant. It will look better with your content and impress without drowning everything else out. You'll probably have to spend a few bucks on a great theme rather than using a free one.

2. Helper Text

If you don't have software to help you out then helper text is the next best thing. Helper or placeholder text lets you know what to include in each section of your proposal template.

While you might not need this sort of helper text eventually, giving yourself the extra help now will definitely help make sure that your proposals turn out better at first. Over time you'll get a feel for each paragraph, but helper text offers you a great checklist to ensure that you're including the right information.

Need helper text? Try the Anatomy of a Persuasive Proposal section for help.

Finally, it cannot be stressed enough that you have to take out your

placeholder text before sending the proposal. Make sure you reread everything and take it out, or you will lose the bid. Accidentally leaving in a single line of something that has nothing to do with the client will ruin your proposal.

You'll also want to stay away from using generalized language or terms on any proposal. The client only wants to read something that refers to their specific project.

Here's a general rule of thumb:

If you can't make the language and the content about the client's specific needs, then don't include it.

Avoiding generalized content ensures that your content stays relevant to the client. It also keeps them shorter, and makes them more about what matters most, the client.

3. Should I Say Something about My Company?

Some SEOs spend a great deal of time in their proposal talking about their successes and education. They believe it's the best way to tell the client what they can do.

Unfortunately, they couldn't be more wrong. Most clients only care about what you can do in terms of your experience. They want to know how you can solve their problems, not who you've worked with.

As an SEO, including a short paragraph about your work history might be a good idea, but for the most part, your basic structure

is enough (problem statement, proposed solution, pricing information, etc.).

A [website designed to attract clients and showcase your work](#) is the perfect way to interact with clients who want to know more about you. If you have one, then you'll definitely want to include it at the end of your proposal.

You can include a Company Info or About Us section if you want. If you plan on including it, remember to keep it short, keep the content focused on what would be relevant to the client, and make sure it's after your pricing section.

Talking about yourself at the beginning of the proposal can literally kill your chances of winning the bid. Not only does it tell the client that you're more interested in yourself than them, it also interrupts the flow of the entire proposal.

By writing your about section at the end of the proposal, you offer anyone who is interested the information, without forcing everyone else to read it.

Tools, Resources, and Next Steps

Hopefully you have a better understanding by now of: 1) what a compelling SEO proposal looks like; 2) how to create one that will separate you from your competitors; and 3) how to make proposal

writing as painless and efficient as possible by turning it into a system.

You'll have to keep writing and submitting proposals—that's just the name of the game—but you can make it easy to get them out to clients quickly and save you time and trouble.

The easiest way to do this is to use [Bidsketch proposal software](#). This gives you the structure and presentation you need to get your proposals out quickly and effectively.

You could also follow the directions above to create your own proposal templates manually. It'll take a time investment, but you'll set yourself up for more free time to focus on clients going forward.

If you are going the template route and don't quite know where to get started, we've made a [free SEO proposal template](#) available. You can model it or use it for a little inspiration to get started.

Another thing you can do to help grow your optimization business is to check out [the Bidsketch blog](#). There's a ton of free, actionable content available—whether it's about negotiating higher rates with clients, being more productive, or marketing your SEO—and we update it often.

Finally, if you haven't done so already, hop on to the Bidsketch email list. You'll receive a free eBook about marketing strategies to get more clients, along with fresh new content delivered straight to your inbox as soon as it's released.

Best of luck in creating winning SEO proposals!

