

Proposal Tips

When responding to an RFP, make sure your response gets in **before** the stated deadline and answers all of the questions accurately. Keep a current personal or company resumé on file for these occasions, and don't **overstate your qualifications** to win a bid. If you have never planned and organized an international symposium for thousands of attendees, don't make it sound as if you have. Be patient and be prepared to start with smaller events and work your way up to the challenge of this type of event.

Include **written references** from past events you helped to plan – even ones where you provided a service for free – and include a list of qualifications. Advise them of your availability and make sure you point out exactly what services you will and – more importantly – will not cover.

The client may not be obligated to award the contract to the “lowest cost” bidder. Instead, they may make their decision based on a number of factors, including the event planning company's previous experience presenting similar events.

Adding some details about what you plan to do (for example, suggested celebrities to invite, types of decorations, etc.) can make your proposal stand out. In the February 1, 2000 issue of *Special Events*, the editors interviewed Tina Ruggiero, executive vice president and general manager of the New York office of Lewis & Partners Advertising who described what she looks for when hiring event planners. In response to the question “What makes an event proposal strong for you?”, she said:

“Details make or break an event. I look for tiny elements in a proposal. They make the event a signature, one of a kind. If I see planning details, I know that the execution will also be well-supervised, well-coordinated and totally buttoned up.”

To help you decide whether to submit a proposal and, if so, how much effort to put into it, pay attention to how the prospective client communicates with you. Are they encouraging? Do they return your calls promptly? Do they sound positive about your chances?

If the answer to these questions is “yes” and you want the job, it is probably worth your time to write the proposal. If not, writing a proposal could be a waste of your time and energy.

A number of **companies specialize in writing proposals**. You can find them by doing a web search for “writing proposals” and “contract.” An excellent resource is Deborah Kluge's webpage, which has links on proposal writing and government contracting. Her proposal pointers are great!

Proposal Writing and Government Contracting
Links <http://www.proposalwriter.com>

Recommended books on proposal writing include:

***Proven Proposal Strategies to Win More Business*, by Herman Holtz** <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1574100882>

***Federal Contracting Made Easy*, by Scott A. Stanberry** <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1567261582>

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