

## DO



### Frame your response.

Think BEFORE you write. Do homework. Identify SMEs. Know your competitive position. Identify and plan to address gaps. Strategically align benefits and accomplishments with each RFP question for maximum impact and score.



### Create a plan.

Start early. Involve key stakeholders. Establish accountability. Start with why – what purpose, cause, or belief drives you and distinguishes you? Let it guide your plan and define you throughout your proposal.



### Target your messaging.

Profile your customer and evaluators. Carefully consider their goals/obstacles. Express your value from their perspective. Directly align benefits of your offering with their needs. Ask yourself often, "Why should they care?"



### Tell a great story.

Decide on one key takeaway you want evaluators to remember. Engage the evaluator with meaningful details and images. Use anecdotes that build empathy and emphasize the key takeaway. Keep it simple and concise.



### Prove it.

Always back your value propositions with proof points. Find the most compelling data to validate your offerings. If you can't prove it, don't say it.



### Communicate Visually.

Use images, photographs, graphics, tables, sketches, and even cartoons to make an emotional connection with evaluators and help them remember your key takeaway.



### Use Quotes and Testimonials.

Identify opportunities early to have stakeholders vouch for you in your proposal. Determine the best approach for getting what you need and presenting it ethically and appropriately.

**"Good writing does not succeed or fail on the strength of its ability to persuade. It succeeds or fails on the strength of its ability to engage you, to make you think, to give you a glimpse into someone else's head." – Malcolm Gladwell**

## DON'T



### Wander around.

Get straight to the point, even if the RFP does not. Avoid long introductions and background information. Cut the adverbs – extremely, definitely, truly, very, and really – just delete them. Most importantly, ANSWER THE QUESTION.



### Use tired clichés.

Avoid empty, specious, or unsupported statements of any kind. No "innovative." No "thought leader." No "core competency." No "added value." These tend to creep back into proposals and bore evaluators, so eradicate them frequently.



### Use passive voice...much.

Set a goal of 5% or less passive voice. Only use it when you don't know the identity of the person or thing performing the action. It makes ideas difficult to follow and causes wordiness that may distract and frustrate evaluators.



### Over-emphasize you.

Refer to Target your messaging. Think like your customer. Draw clear lines between your offering and their requirements. Emphasize benefits to THEM. Tip: Count the number of times your name appears vs. that of your customer.



### Overdo win themes.

Remember that more is not better. Focus on a very small number of powerful ideas that support your "why" – the primary differentiator between you and your competitors. Use themes that help evaluators remember a key takeaway.



### Use filler phrases.

Remove meaningless words. Make room for important and substantiated benefits that positively influence evaluators. Change phrases like "in order to" and "in an effort to" to just "to." Google® "Reduce Prepositional Phrases."