Persuasive Writing

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Stop writing descriptively (describing yourself.) Instead, write persuasively—*why the customer should select us* as opposed to our competitors—in the context of what matters to the customer.

Objectives

At the end of this course, you will:

- Understand how persuasive writing can increase your technical score.
- Be able to use persuasive writing on your next proposal or capture.

How are proposals reviewed and evaluated?

- Wide range of reviewers, readers.
- Use checklist based on RFP or other instructions.
- Skim your proposal; not a thorough read.
- Generally rushed to reach decision.
- “Reluctant participants”—bored and busy!
- Decision generally based only on what is in proposal.

What evaluators don't like/like

Don't Like

- Too wordy
- Long sentences, paragraphs
- Poor response to RFP requirements
- Poor or unclear approach to resolving the problem
- Lack of specificity
- Unnecessary information
- Jargon

Like

- Easy to read
- Very clear; major points jump out
- Summaries
- Consistent structure
- Easy to find response to every RFP requirement
- Relevant examples
- Graphics that add value

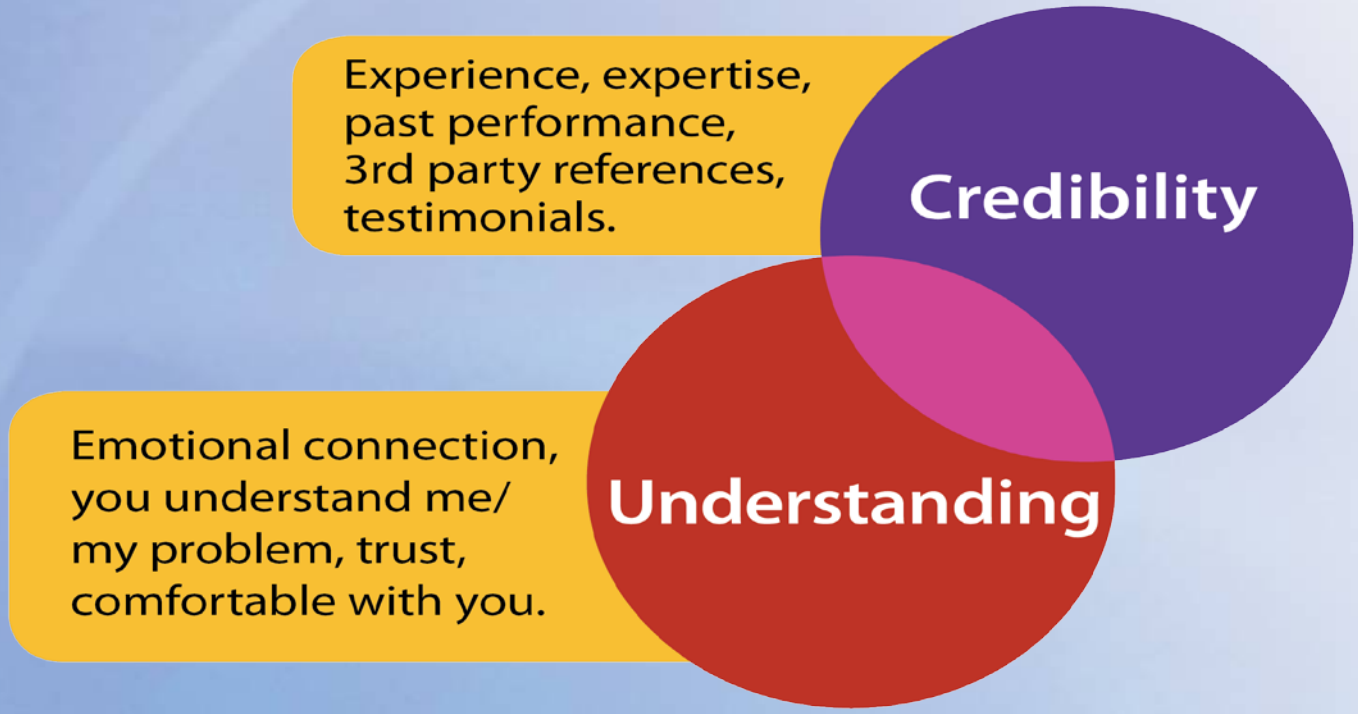
Writing to evaluators: Step 1

Experience, expertise,
past performance,
3rd party references,
testimonials.

Credibility

--Herther, Jay, Understanding How Evaluators Score and How to Influence Their Votes; APMP Journal 2009.

Writing to evaluators: Step 2



Herther, J. (2009).

Writing to evaluators: Step 3

Herther, J. (2009).

For evaluators to give you maximum points:

- You must first be **credible.**
- Then demonstrate you **understand** me/my problem.

----------***Have to pass these two tests first***----------

- Then, and only then, will evaluator seek out **facts** (supporting data) to rationalize their decision.

"Many technical proposals that are written by engineers and SMEs are [fact]-driven."

Herther, J. (2009).

Writing descriptively vs. persuasively

Descriptive

- All nurses who will begin work on the proposed contract in January 2014 will be veterans who worked on the 2013 survey.

Persuasive

- Two hundred nurses, with an average of 7 years project-experience, are in place and ready to begin work.

HOW to write persuasively

Style	How	Key Elements
"Tell them what you are going to tell them."	**Strategic** portion establishes credibility and understanding	• Section Theme Statement • Discriminators/Benefits/ Proof table
"Tell them."	**Tactical** portion provides facts to define HOW you will implement the strategy	• Requirements *and* discriminators • Graphics • Tone—The "6C's"
"Tell them what you told them."	**Summary** portion	• "Bookending"

Begin with the end in mind. . .

RTI Discriminators	Benefits to <client>	Proof

Discriminators

- Features of our offer or solution that:
  1. differ from a competitor's offer *and*
  2. are acknowledged by the client as important.
- Both conditions must be met.

--Larry Newman, Shipley Associates Proposal Guide: Winning Business, 3rd Edition, 2006, pg 50

Benefits

- How does each discriminating feature *benefit client*?
- If it does not benefit the client, it is *not* a discriminator. It may be required for compliance, but it is not a discriminator.
- Generally relate to schedule, cost, quality, and/or risk.
- Quantify benefits if possible.

> "Customers don't buy what it *is*; they buy what it *does* for them. They buy *benefits*, not features."
>
> --Pugh and Bacon, Powerful Proposals

Proof or evidence

- What can we cite to add credibility to our claimed discriminator and associated benefit to client?

> "Unsubstantiated claims fail; proof with data works."
>
> --Herther, J. (2009)

For example

RTI Discriminators	Benefits to <client>	Proof
100% of required nurses are in place and ready to begin work upon award.	•No recruiting costs, saving approx $xxx. •No downtime, removing any possibility of delay in meeting deadlines.	200 nurses in place in all 50 states (use graphic to show.)

RTI Discriminators	Benefits to <client>	Proof
100% of required nurses are in place and ready to begin work upon award.	• No recruiting costs, saving approximately $xxx. • No downtime, no delay in meeting deadlines.	200 nurses in place in all 50 states (use graphic to show.)
All nurses have experience collecting same bio-specimens from similar populations.	• Maintain data comparability.	80% of nurses have 5+ years experience with 50% having 10+ years experience.

FACTS **UNDERSTANDING** **CREDIBILITY**

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Instructions for completing Section Strategy

- Draft Discriminators/Benefits/Proof table for section.
- Insert section outline per RFP instructions.
- Insert *every RFP requirement* your section is to address within the appropriate sub-section of your outline.
- Note within outline where you will showcase each win theme (each row in the discriminator, benefits, proof table.)
- Summarize HOW you will meet the requirement including who (name, position) will lead or perform work elements.
- Note where you want to use key graphics, in particular to showcase win themes.
- Draft Section Theme Statement.
- “Bookend”: move theme statement to beginning; move table to the end.
- Note Open Issues to be resolved before you can write/budget this section.

Why Graphics?

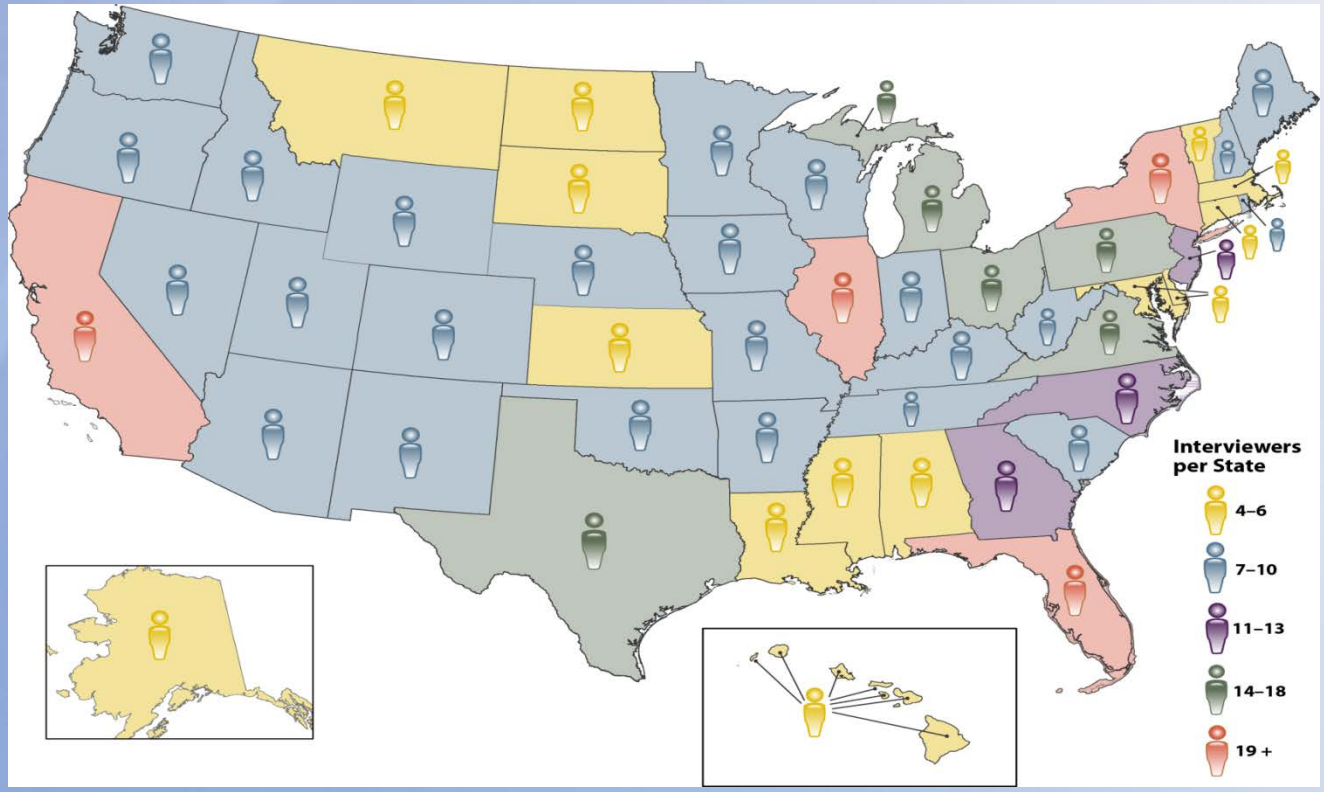
- "Graphics are one of the most effective ways to ***persuade*** the prospect to select your solution. Graphics convey **both *facts and emotion***, equally important aspects of effective persuasion."

--Newman, L. (2006), Pg 76, emphasis added

"We looked at the graphics first. If we found the answer, we didn't bother to read the text." *--Experienced proposal evaluator*

Geographic Location of Nurses for 2014 Survey

<Client> will benefit by having over 200 project-experienced nurses ready to begin health assessments in all 50 States, eliminating recruiting costs and any possibility of schedule delay, while maintaining data continuity.



Tone: The "6 C's"

1. Compliant
2. Clear
3. Concise
4. Credible
5. Compelling
6. Client-focused

"Studies of government source selection boards found that an evaluator normally does not understand 75 percent of what he or she reads in the proposal." --Herther, J. (2009)

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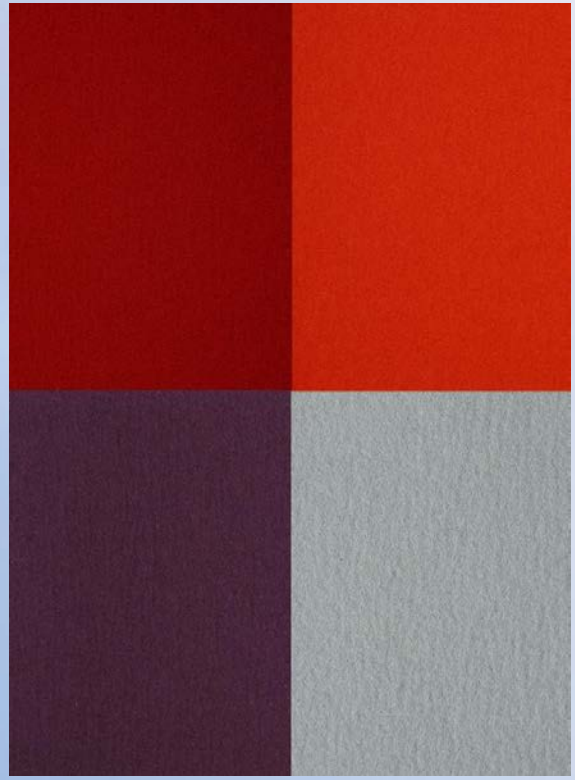
Summary Portion or *"Bookending"*

- Draft section theme statement for beginning of section.
- Followed by tactical, or body of section.
- Then move discriminators/benefits/proof table to end of section.

Section Theme Statement

- 1–2 sentences that link client benefits to the discriminating features of our offer.
- Intent is to build credibility and demonstrate understanding; tell the reader why they should select us.
- Don't try to summarize everything in the section.
- The most powerful themes contain the most unique discriminators, something the client wants that no one else offers.

“Weave throughout” . . .

or . . . place persuasively?