



How to Keep the Information in Your Proposal Package Verifiable, Relevant & Recent

In response to the common request by existing and prospective clients for “proof sources” when purchasing new technology, most business-to-business (B2B) marketers have created “proposal packages”. These proposal packages give “weight” to the financials of a proposal both literally and figuratively by providing industry articles, a list of references, perhaps an industry award and a case study or two. The proposal package serves two audiences;

Purchaser

Most purchasers do not want to be on the ‘bleeding edge’ of new technology and want a reasonable sense of comfort that a product or service has already delivered on its promise for other organizations.

Vendor

Vendors want consistent messaging across every interaction that involves an existing or prospective client and have a vested interest in making sure that any published information given to potential purchasers supports the product or service’s value proposition.

The proposal package is meant to deliver on each of these counts and usually does when first published.

The challenge for most B2B Marketers is not in creating a proposal package but in maintaining it so that the information that it contains remains verifiable, relevant & recent. As soon as one item of information in the package is seen by purchasers and sales people as being unverifiable, irrelevant or dated, the entire package loses credibility. ***The most common reason that a proposal package is not maintained is that it is approached as a “project”, rather than a “program”.*** As a project, once the proposal package “project” is completed, marketing or sales operations staff are on to the next thing on their task list. Once it exists, the package remains in its original version since “it will do for now”. On the other hand, if it is managed as a program, it is viewed as something which is ongoing and can be monitored on a regular basis. Constant monitoring and maintenance will keep the information verifiable, relevant and current.

How can you keep your proposal package up to date?

- Assign responsibility
Ensure that someone in Marketing or Sales Operations is responsible in their performance appraisal for maintaining the proposal package.
- Document the maintenance process
Create a check list that must be completed on a monthly basis. The check list needs to include what to look for, where to look for it and who to contact within the organization. Without this, changes elsewhere in the organization may create voids and new employees will lack the ability to properly maintain the package.
- Create a visible and easy to use publication process
If there is an existing monthly sales channel newsletter or info package, make sure that it is used regularly to communicate updates. If you have a central repository of sales materials, make sure that it is updated and old versions are archived or purged.
- Acknowledge providers of information
People love to receive recognition whether they are sales people or administrative support workers. Publicly thanking contributors maintains visibility for the program.
- Acknowledge successes
Publish the names of those responsible for big wins. Create press releases if applicable and possible.
- Maintain access to sources
Make sure to maintain subscriptions to industry sources of information. If case studies are a critical part of your package, ensure that a program is in place to identify potential subjects and thank employees and clients for their participation.

The proposal package is an invaluable sales tool that is worth allocating resources to - either internal or external – in order to ensure that the information is:

Verifiable, Relevant & Recent!