

Being a Graphic Designer is getting harder.

With competitiveness at an all-time high, designers need more than breadth taking their design skills in today's market. We need to be able to communicate effectively with our clients.

While every client proposal will be unique, there are a few essentials that every graphic design proposal should have.

Having these down pat will save you time creating graphic design proposals and ensure communication with your client is transparent and effective.

I. INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Introductions help brief clients what they can expect from the proposal and make the basic information clear.

Every graphic design proposal needs an introduction, regardless of how short or long.

II. TITLE SLIDE or PROPOSAL COVER

Pieces of these information may include:

- Client name
- Project title (the problem being solved)
- Your name and title
- Date of submission

III. THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

With the introduction out of the way, it's time to identify your client's problem.

Many graphic designers fail to acknowledge what problem their client is looking to resolve, causing them to rush into the solution. They get excited by their deliverables and forget to address the problem at hand.

This is something you want to avoid.

A concise summary of the problem acts as a point of reference for the project priorities.

Outline your client's problem—this is key in gaining your client's trust.

- This will help you stand out from the competition
- It will strengthen your client relationship.
- It reaffirms that you understand the problem they are trying to solve.

IV. THE SOLUTION

Now that you have acknowledged your client's problem, the solution should be straightforward.

- Your solution should explain what you plan to do (i.e. design a logo) and how it will resolve their problem.
- It's best to add how it will lead to business success on a holistic scale to strengthen your argument.

For example, a new logo design and refined brand colors will increase engagement rate and dwell time on the homepage.

- Pointing out the wider business benefits will show your client the extended value of your graphic design services, and help increase the perceived value of your work.

V. THE DELIVERABLES*

Some graphic designers assume that the outcome of their design efforts can be easily visualized by their clients.

Unfortunately, this isn't the case.

VI. THE PROCESS

Transparency is paramount in any service selling transaction.

A major challenge that many clients face is the ability to justify the costs paid.

One of the biggest factors contributing to this challenge is the uncertainty around the process of producing the deliverable.

While you as the graphic designer are aware of how much work is involved, your client may not. Therefore, you need to make your client aware of the work behind the scenes and a "Process" section is a great way to do this.

Some process steps you may want to include as a graphic designer:

- Graphic design research
- Mood boards
- Initial sketches
- Building design
- Design revisions

VII. THE COST**

Most graphic design proposals are won or lost in the cost section.

Before you even start working on your proposal, ask your client what their total budget is. While this can be scary and you might get the sense that you're encroaching on some line, you're not. *It's critical information for you to know.*

Once you've identified the budget, the breakdown of your costs should be comprehensive yet concise to quickly understand.

This conversation will help the client develop a budget for the project, and it will also let you know whether or not the project is financially worthwhile for you before you put in the hard work of developing a proposal.

VIII. CALL TO ACTION

Now that all the information is out there, including the deliverables, process, and costs, it's time to prompt the prospect to take the next steps ... to accept your proposal and kick off the project.

- Ideally, you'll want to give them a way to accept and sign off on the proposal straight away.
- If you're sending your proposal as a Word, or Google Doc, this can be a little difficult as they don't really have built-in acceptance or signature features.

To solve this, you could do any of the following ...

- You can create sign-able PDFs that can be returned by your client.
- Ask the prospect to send you an email saying something like "Please proceed"
- Link to contract (or other binding agreement) in a tool like Docusign, which gives them the ability to accept and sign.
- Alternatively, if you use a dedicated proposal tool, it will allow your prospect to accept and sign the proposal right there from within it.

Whatever you do, don't force your prospective client to print out your proposal, sign it, scan it and send it back. That's time-consuming, particularly if someone doesn't have immediate access to a printer, and research shows that it dramatically increases the time it takes to get documents signed off.

*Deliverables: Ads, Websites, Brochures, Posters, Presentations, Logo Design, Branding, Publications, Charts, Illustrations, Sales Flyers, Point-of-Purchase Displays, Direct Mail, Business Stationery, Business Card Design, Banners, Packaging Design, and more.

**Costs: Design Services (Design Time, Revisions, Client Meetings), Project Coordination, Estimates for Printing and Production, Shipping Costs, etc.