



MB DOLPHIN & ASSOCIATES, LLC™

# MB Dolphin WAVE

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## Selling in Writing vs. Selling in Person

Condensed from *Capture Planning*

A proposal is a selling document. But selling the client involves more than choosing the right words to close the deal as you would in person. It's not just the words you use; it's what you do before you begin writing that determines whether you win or lose. Here are key points to remember:

- **Proposals are not interactive.** When you watch a salesperson in action, they ask questions and try different approaches based on the answers. In writing, you must anticipate. So get what you need in advance unless you're a really good psychic!

- **Proposals only provide information in one direction.** It's a bit like trying to have a discussion when you can't hear the other party, or like a performance with no audience response. To keep the other party engaged, you have to take their interests into consideration and anticipate their response.

- **Doing your homework is critical.** You have to get the answers to your questions ahead of time. If you have to guess, you're at a definite disadvantage.

- **Perspective is critical.** Learn to see the world

through the client's eyes. They will read your proposal through their eyes, not yours.

Everything you write must revolve around them, what they're trying to do, what they need to reach a decision, and what they want.

- **Mistakes are permanent.** If you misinterpret the customer or fail to write from their perspective, they will be constantly reminded of it with each page they read. If you make a mistake in person, you can recover from it. You can use body language and facial expressions to earn their trust. No so in a proposal. When you do it in writing, it's there forever.

## Women-owned Businesses Get Federal Set Asides

### SBA Finalizes Program to Boost Contracts for Women-owned Businesses

from *NAWBO News*, October 2010

Federal agencies will begin setting aside contracts for women-owned businesses after the Small Business Administration published its final regulation in the Federal Register on Thursday more than 10 years after the program was authorized. Agencies will be authorized to set aside contracts of up to \$3 million in most industries for businesses that are majority-owned by women.

### Creative Women Entrepreneurs

Condensed from Curtis Coghlan, *The Huntsville Times*

*Shoot Like a Girl* is a small business created by Karen Butler about 18 months ago. She teaches women how to shoot a bow or a firearm. Her imagination and doggedness epitomizes the entrepreneurial spirit of women.

So get your guns, ladies, and start your own business doing what you do best. Whether it's cooking, sewing, writing, managing, gardening, or any one of a thousand categories, now is a good time to begin. If you're unsure about where to begin, check out SCORE for all the information and help you'll need.

Call Sandra McClintock, 949-495-4747, to attend one of several new workshops, "Writing Proposals that Win Business."





### MB DOLPHIN Company Profile

*Thirty-plus years of diversified experience in proposal development, publications management and improved business and technical communications have gone into the value-added consulting services that MB Dolphin offers to both the government and commercial business customers. Specialization includes design, providing and facilitating processes, implementing proposal solutions, writing and editing business and technical communications, and a wide range of training services.*

## 5-Step Formula for Business Success

Excerpted from Capture Planning  
The most important thing in business is getting people to give you their money. People trying to start a business know exactly what they want to sell but are doomed to failure if they don't know who their customers will be. Finding customers who will give you their money is hard work.

For some people, the problem is closing the deal once you've got someone to talk to you. For others, the problem is knowing where to find these people who might become customers. When you start breaking it down, you get something like this:

1. In order to find customers, you've got to figure out who are the best targets. We call this **market research**.
2. In order to get their attention, you have to know who to target. We call this **strategic planning**.
3. Before you get a chance to talk to them or sell to them, you've got to get their attention. We call this **marketing**.
4. In order to get people to consider buying, you need to interact with them. We call this **sales**. When it's in writing, we call it a proposal.
5. In order to close the deal and get people to give you money, you must have acceptable terms and conditions. In its written form, we call this a **contract**.

These 5 steps are a formula for success.

**You want to be a consultant.** You need to figure out a match between the services you wish to offer and the people who need them. You need to make sure there are enough potential customers for you to get enough business. Once you know what space you are playing in, you need to identify the specific types of companies or people to go after. Then you need to figure out how you are going to find them and get in touch. Will they contact you or will you contact them? Once you are communicating with them, you need to convince them that they need your services. Once they agree, you need to spell out on paper what those services are and how they will be delivered. So you give them a proposal. If they accept the proposal, then you sign a contract and get to work.

**You want to be a government contractor.** You need to find a match between your capabilities and the agencies with a budget to purchase them. Then you need to figure out who the buyers are and what their acquisition process is until you know what specific contract vehicles to target. Then you need to research the customer, the opportunity, and the competitive environment. Now establish a relationship with the customer so that they know your capabilities and qualifications. Finally, if the opportunity will result in an RFQ or RFP, you need to be prepared to submit a winning proposal. If you need help writing a winning proposal, call MB Dolphin at 949-495-4747.

## Autumn 2010 Events New Workshops offered in Orange County

Are you having difficulty with the government and public agency procurement process? **"Writing Proposals That Win Business"** is a new workshop that exposes you to the full range of proposal elements and how to address each for success. Some of the topics covered are:

- *Marketing/capture*
- *Pre-solicitation activities*
- *Reading the solicitation*
- *Creating detailed outlines*
- *Kick-off team meeting*
- *Building win themes*
- *Preparing storyboards*
- *Writing technical and management sections*
- *Reviewing the first draft*
- *Conducting color team reviews*
- *Proposal production graphics*
- *Delivery to the client*

### FREE WORKSHOPS

Visit our [Events Page](#) to reserve your seat.

**Nov 9, 2010**

San Juan Capistrano Library  
31495 El Camino Real  
San Juan Capistrano  
(949) 493-1752  
5:30--8:30 PM

## Good Writing ... How Important Is It and How Do We Improve It?

### The Effects of Poor Writing

Does poor writing really affect the bottom line, and should companies be concerned if their employees cannot write well? There is evidence to show how poor writing skills can adversely affect:

- Employee Morale
- Profitability
- Liability

**Employee Morale** - Poor communication impacts an employee's performance in several ways:

- Poorly written or oral instructions can lead to work being done incorrectly
  - Time and money are lost on projects because of mistakes
  - Critical information is not shared in a timely manner to the appropriate people
- Procedures are not properly followed.

**Profitability** - Companies lose time and money when projects are not completed on time. Proposals may be poorly written or non-compliant, and policies and procedures may not be followed, so fines may be accrued.

**Liability** - Something as simple as a comma or period can cause issues with liability. Reports or specifications, if written incorrectly, increase the chance for costly mistakes. The saying "garbage in, garbage out" becomes a reality.

It's always wise to allow your documents to cool and have another set of eyes review them. The cost is too high to allow for poor writing, and we have all learned in the past that *"an ounce of prevention can save a ton of grief."*

### Eight Steps to Improve Your Writing

Here are 8 simple things a non-writer can do to dramatically improve their proposal writing. Use this list to go through what you have written sentence by sentence. Doing so can transform your writing into a compelling and persuasive proposal and significantly improve your chances of winning.

#### 1. Is it written to get the highest score based on the evaluation criteria?

This is the most important thing for you to achieve. You should study the evaluation criteria and make sure that what you have written will get the highest score. If you don't get the highest score, you don't win. It really is that simple.

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## Explore SCORE, the Small Business Organization

SCORE is an organization sponsored by the Small Business Administration (SBA). It is staffed with volunteers who share their business expertise with small businesses, usually at no charge.

MB Dolphin's Chief Operating Officer (COO) Sandra McClintock will present SCORE workshops at Orange County locations in Autumn 2010.

The title is **"Writing Proposals that Win Government Business."** Register for it if you want to know how to find government business

and submit a winning bid on it.

### SBA/SCORE

200 W. Santa Ana Blvd., Suite 700  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

[www.score114.org](http://www.score114.org)

SCORE offers many other services for small businesses, including advice from experts about specific opportunities for your business.

SCORE volunteers have a wealth of business knowledge and experience, and they have the insight to

evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your business, and then suggest the actions to take to improve your prospects.

If you haven't contacted SCORE yet, don't wait to take advantage of this invaluable free service.

**Contact SCORE to take advantage of this invaluable free service.**

**SBA/SCORE**  
200 W. Santa Ana Blvd., Suite 700  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

[www.score114.org](http://www.score114.org)

### MB Dolphin offers Proposal Team Staffing:

- Capture Manager
- Proposal Developer
- Publication Developer
- Technical Writer/Editor
- Professional Proofing
- Production Coordinator
- Graphic Illustrator
- Document Integrator
- Quality Assurance
- Software Development
- Systems Engineering
- Web Design
- Logo Design
- Specialized Graphics
- Portable Display Design
- Architectural Design Concepts

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## Good Writing ... How Important Is It and How Do We Improve It? {cont}

Anything you have written, no matter how important to you, will not help you win if it is not addressed in the evaluation criteria. The best thing you can do is to provide snippets that can easily be copied and pasted from what you wrote onto their evaluation forms to justify their score.

### 2. How quickly can the evaluator find what they need to prove RFP compliance?

If you are not compliant with every requirement, your proposal may not even get evaluated. When there are lots of proposals submitted, the easiest way to get out of reading them all is to disqualify as many as possible based on non-compliance.

### 3. Does it include all of the keywords from the RFP?

You must use the RFP's terminology instead of your own (no matter how strongly you prefer to use certain terms or how much better they are). In fact, you should use all of the keywords from the RFP. The evaluator will be looking at the RFP and then looking at what you wrote to see where you have addressed what's in the RFP. When they do that, they'll be skimming for the keywords. You should make them easy to find. One of the best ways to make sure you've address all key words and tasks is to make a compliance matrix with RFP requirements in one column and the page where they're addressed in the other.

**4. Does it answer all the questions the customer might have?** An easy way to ensure that you answer the customer's questions is to address "who," "what," "where," "how," "when," and "why" in your response. Look at what you have written and ask yourself questions that start with those words. See if you can't add detail to your response by providing answers to all of them.

**5. Does every sentence pass the "So what?" test?** Have you written descriptive statements, cited qualifications, or made unsubstantiated claims in any sentence without explaining what matters and why? It is not enough to state your qualifications; you need to explain what matters about them and how the customer will benefit. The evaluator is often more interested in why it matters than the statement. Never assume that the value of a statement is obvious.

**6. Does what you wrote exceed the requirements of the RFP?** Everyone is responding to the same RFP. Any competition will also be compliant. If you are merely compliant then at best you are competing solely on price and at worst vulnerable to someone else offering something better. Exceeding the specifications of the RFP does not have to mean increasing your price. If it's a choice between two vendors with the same offering and

one offers a better written response or does a better job of answering the customers (written and unwritten) questions, who do you think has the competitive advantage.

### 7. Does it give the evaluator a reason to want what you are offering?

The customer is making a purchase and has multiple offerings to choose from. Does your proposal give them reasons to want what you are offering more than what anyone else might be offering? This means you need to understand what they really want, which may or may not actually be found in the RFP. Your proposal must provide compelling reasons for the evaluator to select you (as opposed to someone else).

### 8. Is it written from the customer's perspective and not simply a description of yourself?

If every sentence starts with your company's name, there's a good chance that you have written about yourself and not about what matters to the evaluator. When you talk with a sales person, do you want to hear them talk all about themselves or do you want to hear them talk about what the offering will do for you and how you will benefit from it? Look at every sentence and make sure that every feature, attribute, or piece of information you provide is put into the customer's context.

*Excerpted from Capture Planning.com*

## Five Ingredients of Proposal Persuasion

**Anticipation.** Anticipate how the evaluators will reach their decision. Research this or just ask them. Remember, different people have different priorities. Find out if it's risk, cost, innovation, obsolescence, timeline, etc.

**Strategy.** Decide what you have to do to win. Once you know, this is your "win theme." Articulate it well so the evaluators get it.

**Positioning.** Is your proposal competing against other proposals? How will your proposal compare? Will it be stronger, faster, cheaper, better, more technical, or something else? When a proposal is competitive, it's not enough to have a strong proposal — you need to give the evaluator a reason to select your proposal instead of theirs. By intentionally positioning yourself, you give them that reason.

**Motivation.** The evaluator needs to be motivated to accept your proposal. Maybe your reasons will motivate them. Or maybe you'll make them an offer they can't refuse. In addition to anticipating the questions the evaluator needs answered, you should also anticipate what it will take to motivate them.

**Presentation.** Effective copy gets attention and sets the stage. Articulate what means the most to the evaluators.