

you are willing to discuss your plan with the reader and want his or her feedback, a necessity in arguing for a corporate change at any level.

SALES PROPOSALS

A sales proposal is the most common external proposal. Its purpose is to sell your company's brand, its products or services for a set fee. Whether short or long, a sales proposal is a marketing tool that includes a detailed description of the work you propose to do. Figure 13.6 on pages 537–539 is an example of a sales proposal.

Knowing Your Audience and Meeting Its Needs

Your audience will usually be one or more executives who have the power to approve or reject a proposal. This audience may be even more skeptical than readers of an internal proposal, because they may not know you or your work. To increase your chances of success, follow the company you're sending your proposal to on social media to get a better sense of its customers' views and its needs. Try to anticipate an audience's questions, such as:

- Does the writer's firm understand our problem?
- Can the writer's firm deliver what it promises?
- Can the job be completed on time?
- Is the budget reasonable and realistic?
- Will the job be done exactly as we proposed?
- Has the writer demonstrated his or her qualifications and trustworthiness?

Answer each of these questions by demonstrating how your product or service is tailored to the customer's needs.


Be sure, too, that your proposal has a competitive edge. Your proposal has to convince readers that the product or service your company offers is more reliable, economical, efficient, and up-to-date than another company's. Whenever relevant, stress that your company offers state-of-the-art technology, exemplary service, and after-the-sale assistance and warranty. Here is where your homework will pay off. See how Neelov Singh and Jack Rosen emphasize the range of advantages their flooring offers a prospective customer in Figure 13.6.

Being Ethical and Legal



In addition to the guidelines in Chapter 1 (see "Some Guidelines to Help You Reach Ethical Decisions," pages 32–34), here are some ways to make sure your sales proposal follows the highest ethical standards:

- **View your proposal as a contract.** If you omit information, misrepresent claims, or minimize risks, you can be taken to court and sued for damages.
- **Submit a complete, accurate, and fair budget.** Break down all costs in your budget. Indicate if your fees are by the job, weekly, or hourly. Always alert readers to any possible additional charges (e.g., the fees for permits, an increase in the price of materials).

FIGURE 13.6 PDF of a Sales Proposal in Response to a Request from a Company



Reynolds Interiors
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FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK  (www.facebook.com/reynoldsinteriors)
 AND TWITTER  (@reynoldsinteriors)

January 18, 2016

Mr. Floyd Tompkins, Manager
 General Appliances
 140 Kilmer Road
 Edison, NJ 08817-7639

Dear Mr. Tompkins:

In response to your request for bid #GA01012012 posted on your website for an appropriate floor covering at your new showroom, Reynolds Interiors is pleased to submit the following proposal to meet your specific needs. We appreciated the opportunity to visit your showroom on January 15 in order to gather information to prepare this proposal.

After carefully reviewing your requirements for a floor covering and inspecting your new facility, we believe that **Armstrong Classic Corlon 900** is the most suitable choice. Traffic tests conducted by the independent Contemporary Flooring Institute have repeatedly proved the superiority of Corlon's construction and resistance. Please go to the Institute's website (www.cfi.org) for a streaming video demonstration of how beautiful, durable, and versatile Classic Corlon flooring is.

Corlon's Advantages

Guaranteed against defects for a full three years, Corlon is one of the finest and most durable floor coverings manufactured by Armstrong. It is a heavy-duty commercial floor 0.085-inch thick for protection and durability. Twenty-five percent of the material consists of interface backing; the other 75 percent is an inlaid wear layer that offers exceptionally high resistance to the heavy, everyday traffic your showroom will see.

Another important feature of Corlon is the size of its rolls. Unlike other leading brands of commercial flooring—Remington or Treadmaster—Corlon comes in 12-foot-wide rather than 6-foot-wide rolls. This extra width will significantly reduce the number of seams on your floor, thus increasing its attractiveness and eliminating the dangers of splitting or bulging.

Letterhead advertises company's presence on social-networking sites

Proposal sent as a PDF attachment to an email in accordance for the request for bid

Begins with a reference to company's request for bids

Acknowledges site visit

Identifies best solution

Cites an independent source to corroborate the benefits of the product

Describes product features that will benefit reader

Distinguishes product from competitors'

(Continued)

FIGURE 13.6 (Continued)

Page 2

Installation Procedures

The Classic Corlon 900 requires an inlaid seaming process, a technical procedure requiring the skill of a highly trained floor mechanic. Herman Goshen, our certified chief floor mechanic, has more than eighteen years of experience working with the inlaid seam process. His professional work and keen sense of layout and design have been consistently praised by our many customers on Google+ Local and Angie's List, and I am proud of our 5-star rating on Yelp (www.yelp.com/biz/reynolds-interiors). To see a video demonstration of the installation process, please visit our website: www.reynolds.com/inlaid_installation.

Installation Schedule

We can install the Classic Corlon 900 on your showroom floor during the first week of March, which fits the timetable specified in your request. The material will take 3½ days for my 4-person crew to install, but will be ready to walk on immediately. Be assured that your floor will be installed no later than March 7th. We recommend, though, that you do not move heavy equipment onto the floor for 24 hours after installation.

Costs

The following costs include the Classic Corlon floor, labor, and taxes:

750 sq. yards of Classic Corlon at \$31.25/sq. yd.	\$ 23,437.50
Labor (4 people × 28 hrs. @ \$20.00/hr.)	\$ 2,240.00
Sealing fluid (10 gals. @ \$20.00/gal.)	\$ 200.00
Subtotal	\$ 25,877.50
Sales tax (7 percent)	\$ 1,811.43
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 27,688.93

Our costs are more than \$1,300.00 below those specified in your bid.

Reynolds' Qualifications

Reynolds Interiors has been in business for more than 28 years. In that time, we have installed more than 2,500 commercial floors in Trenton and its suburbs. In the last year alone, we have served more than 60 satisfied customers, including the new multipurpose Tech Mart facility in downtown New Brunswick. Our designs have also been included in several commercial properties that have won awards from the

Explains how job is done professionally

Cites a video embedded on their website

Gives realistic timetable

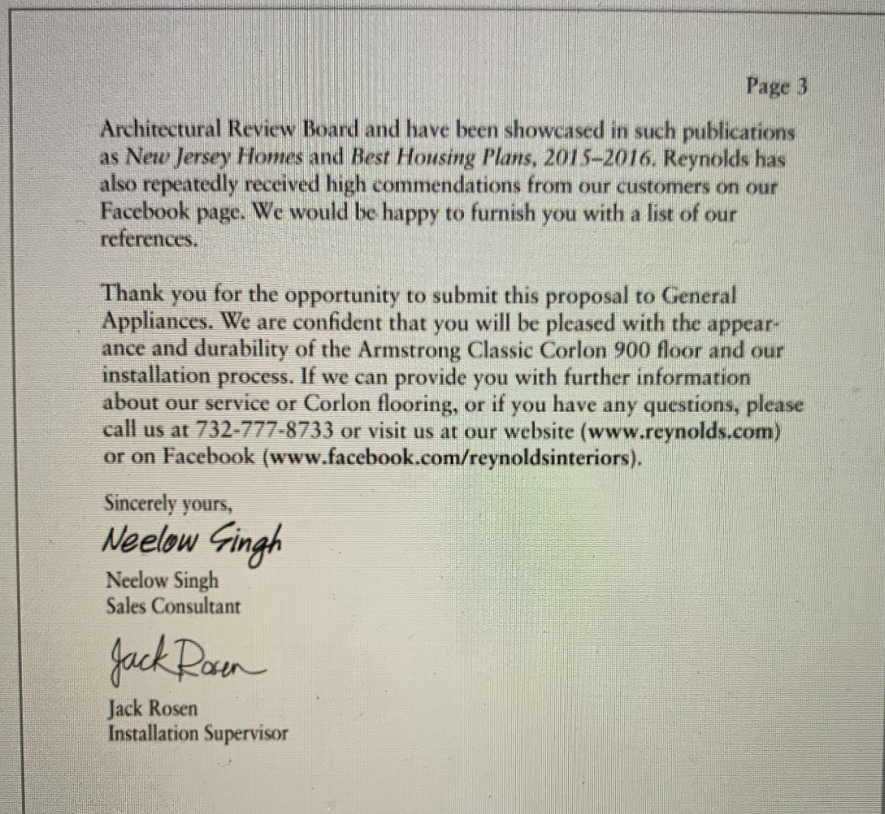
Itemizes all costs based on market conditions and reader's bid

Points out proposal comes in under budget—always a major consideration for buyers

Establishes history of service and provides documented evidence of quality work

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FIGURE 13.6 (Continued)



*Thanks reader
and encourages
him to accept
the proposal*

- **Estimate a realistic timeframe to do the work.** It would be unethical to say a job takes more time than necessary so you can then charge more.
- **Stipulate precisely what your product can (or cannot) do and what a service contract includes and excludes.** Don't make false claims. Always identify exceptions, limitations, and restrictions.

Organization of a Sales Proposal

Most sales proposals include the following elements: *introduction, description of the proposed product or service, timetable, costs, qualifications of your company, and conclusion.*

Introduction

The introduction to a sales proposal can be a single paragraph in a brief proposal or several pages in a more complex one. Basically, your introduction should

persuasively prepare readers for everything that follows in your proposal. The introduction itself may contain the following sections, which sometimes may be combined.

1. Statement of purpose and subject of proposal. Tell readers why you are writing, and identify the specific subject of your work. Refer to the request for proposals or bids the reader has issued, as the writers in Figure 13.6 do. Briefly define the solution you propose. Tell readers exactly what you propose to do for them. Be clear about what your plan covers and, if there could be any doubt, what it does not.

2. Background of the problem you propose to solve. Show readers that you are familiar with their problem and why it is important. In a solicited proposal like the one in Figure 13.6, this section is usually unnecessary because the potential client has already identified the problem and wants to know how you would address it. In that case, just point out how your company would solve the problem, mentioning your superiority over your competitors (see the section “Corlon’s Advantages” in Figure 13.6).

In an unsolicited proposal, you need to describe the problem in convincing detail, identifying the specific trouble areas. Depending on the type of proposal you submit, you may want to focus briefly on the dimensions of the problem—when it was first observed, who/what it most acutely affects, and the specific organizational/community/environmental context in which the problem is most troubling.

Description of the Proposed Product or Service

This section is the heart of your proposal. Before spending their money, customers will demand hard, factual evidence of what you claim can and should be done. Here are some points that your proposal should cover.

1. Carefully show potential customers that your product or service is right for them. Stress particular benefits of your product or service most relevant to your reader. Blend sales talk with descriptions of hardware. Where possible, utilize the Internet to convey information that isn’t possible in a written proposal. Note how the proposal in Figure 13.6 references the online results of an independent testing agency to stress the benefits of the product it sells, and it also points the reader to a streaming video on the company’s website that demonstrates the installation process that will be used.

2. Describe your work in appropriate detail. Specify what the product looks like; what it does; and how consistently and well it will perform in the readers’ office, plant, hospital, or agency. You might include a brochure, picture, diagram, or, as the writers of the proposal in Figure 13.6 do, a few samples of your product for customers to study.

3. Stress any special features, maintenance advantages, installation or warranty benefits. Convince readers that your product is the most up-to-date and efficient one they could select. Highlight features that show the quality, consistency, or security of your work. See how Neelow Singh and Jack Rosen in Figure 13.6 demonstrate why and how Corlon is the best choice for the heavy traffic of the General Appliances showroom. For a service, emphasize the procedures you use, the terms of the service, the quality assurance tests you run, and especially any state-of-the-art equipment.

Timetable

A carefully planned timetable assures readers that you know your job and that you can accomplish it in the deadline set forth in the call for proposals or bids. Your dates should match any listed in a company's proposal request. Provide specific dates to indicate

- when the work will begin
- how the work will be divided into phases or stages
- when you will be finished
- whether any follow-up visits or services are involved

For proposals offering a service, specify how many times—an hour, a week, a month—customers can expect to receive your help; for example, spraying three times a month if your company offers exterminating services, or 24-hour-a-day monitoring of social media sites to provide off-hours feedback for customer complaints. The proposal writers in Figure 13.6 assure their reader that installation will be done by a specified date.

Costs

Make your budget accurate, complete, and convincing. But give customers more than merely the bottom-line cost. Show exactly what readers are getting for their money so that they can determine if everything they need is included. Itemize costs for

- specific services
- equipment and materials
- labor (by the hour or by the job)
- transportation/travel
- training

To further persuade readers to accept their proposal, the writers in Figure 13.5 stress how customers' positive reviews on review sites like Yelp and Angie's List are crucial to growing their business. In Figure 13.6, the authors point out how their work comes in under the specified budget.

If something is not included or is considered optional, say so—additional hours of training, replacement of parts, upgrades, and the like. If you anticipate a price increase, let the customer know how long current prices will stay in effect. That information may spur them to act favorably now.

Qualifications of Your Company

Emphasize your company's accomplishments and expertise in providing similar services and/or equipment. Mention the names of a few local firms for whom you have worked that would be able to recommend you and cite any awards or commendations, as the writers do in Figure 13.6, e.g., the Tech Mart facility.

Conclusion

This is the "call to action" section of your sales proposal. Encourage your reader to approve your plan by stressing its major benefits. Offer to answer any questions the reader may have. And take the opportunity to refer the reader to any samples, visuals, or sites on social media.