

INTRODUCTION

Professional services firms haven't been making formal proposals to get work for all that long. They were only allowed to since the late 1970s and really haven't been doing so in earnest until around 1990 or so.

When that moment finally came, nearly every firm in the industry was ill-equipped and ill-prepared to create attractive and effective proposals. Looking back now, some of the earliest ones I was involved in were almost laughable. Things like dime store tabs and covers with die-cast cutouts to make the title visible were all the rage, and folks went positively wild when clip art became available. (My favorite was the loving cup with stars pouring out of it which graced the top of nearly every "Awards" section I looked at in those days.)

Wow—time has changed a lot since then, and our industry has changed with it.

The burgeoning of technology assured that business competition increased. Though we like to attribute such competition to the Great Recession (in hopes it'll go away), in fact, it's permanent—technology, after all, has made it possible for any firm to reach anyone, anywhere.

And now that geography is no longer a factor in business, a Darwinian specter has emerged—with firms adopting head-down, "survival-of-the-fittest" posturing where low bids (and, often correspondingly, low quality) win the battle (but lose the war).

With change sweeping every aspect of life, business, and design, we can't lose sight of the things that are eternal—the tried-and-true tools and tactics that get more work. The fundamentals have not changed and probably never will. And this book has that timeless advice. It teaches you to:

- Focus on solving problems for your client
- Not talk about yourself—talk about them
- Go after far less stuff

- Work much harder on proposals when the client is likely to make decisions—before the RFP
- Make your proposals easy to read
- Answer RFP questions, but at the same time, make your proposal be a story (about how you are going to solve the client’s problems)

This book is more than just a manual. It’ll put you to work. I like to say that Frank offers “meat and potatoes” type of advice—no theory, no jargon, no abstractions. Just specific tools that you can use tomorrow morning. And that’s exactly what this book delivers.

One more thing: something else that’s changed is that there’s a far greater emphasis these days on enhanced collaboration and teaming. It is in this positive spirit that this book is before you today. Frank Stasiowski’s brainchild, this book is a compilation of Frank’s work and the work of other PSMJ experts and contributors. Representing the commingled experience of dozens of A/E industry insiders, High Impact Proposals takes a 21st-century approach to an age-old problem: how do I write to win?

In this book, you’ll learn how.

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