Sample Document, Chapter 23: Writing Reader-Centered Proposals

The proposal below outlines a plan for a new day care center at a small publishing company called Publisher's Ink. The employees of this company lost day care services when a local day care center closed. The proposal addresses this situation by presenting a well-reasoned plan for day care services at the company. As you read this proposal, you should apply the various checklists in the callouts to the proposal. How well does the proposal satisfy the recommended criteria for a progress report (please see the end of the document for a full checklist).

Proposal for On-Site Day Care Center

Introduction

We suggest that Printers Ink, Incorporated establish a day care center—henceforth called the PII Day Care Center, or PII Center—to provide on-site childcare for employees' children ages 2 to 5. The center would be housed in the Samson House (a.k.a., the "Old Rec Room") and would be partially staffed by Printers Ink employees. Estimated cost for establishing the PII Day Care Center is $23,000-32,000; as you know, the CEO of Printers Ink has promised a donation of $50,000 to establish the center. Estimated yearly operating budget is $154,200 with $100,000-128,000 coming from tuition and fees.

Introduction checklist

- Tell clearly what you propose to do?
- Provide background information the readers will need or want?
- Forecast the rest of your proposal, if this would help your readers?

Critique: In the introduction Sandra and Jane tell what they are proposing and what it will cost. The writer explains what the proposal will do, but it fails to provide background or forecast the contents of the report. You can do both, even in short introduction.

The Problem

With the closing of WeeTots Child Care Center, the capacity for local day care has decreased by about 15%; this decrease has directly affected at least 12 current employees; some have been unable to find day care for their children and have resorted to hiring baby-sitters, trading off sick days, or in one case, resigning from the company.

Other employees have expressed a desire to spend more time with their children; in fact, several employees who have recently returned from maternity leave are finding it difficult to be away from their newborns all day and have expressed a desire to work part time.

Problem checklist

- Explains the problem, need, or goal of your proposed action?
- Persuades your readers that the problem, need, or goal is important to them?

Critique: This problem statement is short, but it satisfies the two requirements for an effective problem statement. The writer makes a concise but effective argument, using statistics and an emotional appeal, for the necessity of a new Day Care Center. The writers separate out two parts or aspects of the problem (the need for day care): The first is the fact that employees who don't have day care aren't able to work and the second is the desire that employees have to spend more time with their children.

Objectives

Although this problem is not directly related to the business of Printers Ink, whatever affects our employees affects the company. Unhappy employees are often unproductive; this along with high absences (of those who have no other source of day care) causes decreased production and ultimately diminishes profits. To solve these problems, we need to

- Help employees find adequate and economic child care facilities

- Help employees find ways to spend more time with their children
- Help employees coming off of maternity leave adjust more gradually

Solution

We propose to solve these problems by establishing an on-site day care center that will be partially staffed by employees enrolled in a workshare program. Workshare employees will work in the PII Day Care Center half a day and on their regular jobs half a day; workshare employees will receive their regular pay. Additionally, instituting a workshare program will provide opportunities for those returning from maternity leave to work part time during the first six months after their return. (As you may know, the Workshare Program is still in the design stage and will be addressed at another time.)

To establish PII Day Care Center, we suggest we do the following:

- Convert Samson House into a day care center (at an initial cost of $5,000 and an additional $10,000 if the company decides to maintain the center).
- Develop a workshare program for qualified employees who want to work a half day at their regular job and a half day taking care of children.
- Provide opportunities for those returning from maternity leave to work part time during the first six months after their return.

Granted, the development of this center will initially cost the company several thousand dollars. Ultimately, however, we believe the center will lead to increased productivity. Additionally, the development of an on-site day care system will create a greater sense of community among employees.

Method for Developing the PII Center

We propose to establish PII Day Care Center in the following steps:

Step 1: Hire a full-time certified director for PII Day Care Center (job to begin July 15, 2003) [12]

Step 2: Convert and equip Samson House into PII Day Care Center (begin on or before June 1, 2003, to be completed by September 1, 2003)

Step 3: Secure clientele (beginning on August 1, 2003)

Step 4: Secure additional staff (jobs to begin August 15, 2003)

Step 5: Open PII Day Care Center (September 15, 2003)

Step 1: Hire a full-time certified director for PII Day Care Center. We feel that hiring a full-time director is crucial to designing and establishing a quality day care center. No one currently at Printers Ink

Solution checklist

- Describes your solution in a way that assures your readers can understand it?
- Persuades that your solution will achieve each of the objectives you described?
- Persuades that your solution offers an especially desirable way of achieving the objectives?
- Protects you and your employer by clearly promising only what you and your employer want to deliver to your readers?

Critique: The solution presented in this proposal is detailed and convincing. Notice how the writer assigns a dollar value to various tasks and stages of the project.

Schedule checklist

- Tells when your project will be completed?
- Persuades that you have scheduled your work reasonably and soundly?
- Protects yourself and your employer by clearly stating what your readers must do in order for you to be able to meet your deadlines?
- Includes a schedule chart, if one would make your proposal more usable and persuasive?

Critique: This schedule provides clear dates for every major step in the project, but the writer offers almost no evidence that the schedule reflects a reasonable estimate of the time.

has the knowledge or expertise to plan, develop, and open PII Center. Hiring a director before the facility is designed ensures our creating a quality facility that meets or exceeds governmental design and health regulations. Further, the director's presence will facilitate hiring of quality personnel. See a draft of the position announcement in Appendix A to gain an idea of what the position entails. We propose that Printers Ink advertise the position as soon as possible, begin interview by the end of May, and hire a director to being work on July 15.

Estimated Salary Budget (Director only): $25,000-30,000.

Step 2: Convert and equip Samson House into PII Day Care Center. The architectural drawing and budget in Appendix B of this report indicate what needs to be done to convert the Samson House into PII Day Care Center. The architect and engineer believe the conversion can be completed in 3 months at a cost of $8,000-10,000. Equipment purchases can be made in stages over the next year by dividing and group equipment by priority of need; see chart in Appendix C outlining the procedure for purchasing equipment. Total cost of equipment will be $15,000-22,000.

Estimated Building and Equipping Budget: $23,000-32,000.

Step 3: Secure clientele (beginning on August 1, 2003). The director and teachers will begin reviewing applications and interviewing parents and children on August. 1. They will select 16 children and 6 alternates to invite to enroll.

Step 4: Secure additional staff (jobs to begin August 15, 2003). The director of PII Day Care Center and Printers Ink's personnel director assisted by the general manager of Printers Ink will review applications and interview potential teachers. They will need to hire two additional teachers (additional to the director, who because of the size of the enrollment can serve as a teacher).

Estimated Salary Budget (excluding the Director): $34,000-30,000.

Step 5: Open PII Day Care Center (September 15, 2003). Provided Steps 1ñ4 go as planned, the Center will open on September 15.

Costs

Cost checklist

- Persuade that you have presented all the costs?
- Persuade that the costs are reasonable?
- Protect you and your employer by including all your costs in your budget?
- Include a budget table, if one would make your proposal more usable and persuasive?

Critique: This proposal explains what things cost but does not persuade readers that the costs are reasonable. One way to persuade readers that costs are reasonable is to compare the costs to other cost estimates for similar items or tasks.

As noted earlier in this document, we anticipate a start-up cost of $23,000-32,000 and an estimated operating budget of $154,200. Thanks to the founder and CEO of Printers Ink, the start-up costs will be covered by his generous gift. The budget remains fluid at this time because we do not yet know how the workshare program will affect salary needs. As much as $128,000 of that budget could come from tuition. A breakdown of the predicted budget (assets and liabilities) can be found in Appendix D.

Conclusion

We are enthusiastic about the possibility of establishing the much-needed day care center at Printers Ink. We believe that it will improve production and community at Printers Ink.

Revision Checklist
PROPOSALS

Does your draft include each of the elements needed to create a proposal that your readers will find to be usable and persuasive? Remember that some elements of the superstructure may be unnecessary for your specific readers and purpose and that the elements may be organized in various ways.

Introduction

- ❑ Tells clearly what you propose to do?
- ❑ Provides background information the readers will need or want?
- ❑ Forecasts the rest of your proposal, if this would help your readers?

Problem

- ❑ Explains the problem, need, or goal of your proposed action?
- ❑ Persuades your readers that the problem, need, or goal is important to them?

Objectives

- ❑ Relates your objectives directly to the problem, need, or goal you described?
- ❑ Presents your objectives *without* naming your solution?

Solution (often the longest section of a proposal)

- ❑ Describes your solution in a way that assures your readers can understand it?
- ❑ Persuades that your solution will achieve each of the objectives you described?
- ❑ Persuades that your solution offers an especially desirable way of achieving the objectives?
- ❑ Protects you and your employer by clearly promising only what you and your employer want to deliver to your readers?

Method

- ❑ Describes clearly the steps you will follow in preparing the solution?
- ❑ Persuades that the method you plan to use for creating the solution will work?

Resources

- ❑ Persuades that you have or can obtain the needed resources?

- ❑ Protects you and your employer by clearly identifying any resources your readers must supply?

- ❑ **Schedule**
- ❑ Tells when your project will be completed?

- ❑ Persuades that you have scheduled your work reasonably and soundly?

- ❑ Protects yourself and your employer by clearly stating what your readers must do in order for you to be able to meet your deadlines?

- ❑ Includes a schedule chart, if one would make your proposal more usable and persuasive?

Qualifications

- ❑ If necessary, persuades that you have the ability to complete the project successfully?

Management

- ❑ If your project is large, persuades that you will organize the people working on it effectively?

- ❑ Includes an organizational chart, if one would make your proposal more usable and persuasive?

Costs

- ❑ Persuades that you have presented all the costs?

- ❑ Persuades that the costs are reasonable?

- ❑ Protects you and your employer by including all your costs in your budget?

- ❑ Includes a budget table, if one would make your proposal more usable and persuasive?

Conclusion

- ❑ Summarizes your key points?

- ❑ Concludes the proposal on a positive note that builds confidence in your ability to do a good job?

Reasoning (See Chapter 5)

- ❑ States your claims and conclusions clearly?

- ❑ Provides sufficient evidence, from the readers' viewpoint?

- ❑ Explains, if necessary, the line of reasoning that links your facts and your claims?

- ❑ Addresses any counterarguments or objections that your readers are likely to raise at any point in your report?

- ❑ Avoids making false assumptions and over generalizing?

Prose (See Chapters 4, 5, 7, and 8)

- ❑ Presents information in a clear, usable, and persuasive manner?
- ❑ Uses a variety of sentence structures and lengths?
- ❑ Flows in a way that is interesting and easy to follow?
- ❑ Uses correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation?

Graphics (See Chapter 12)

- ❑ Included wherever readers would find them helpful or persuasive?
- ❑ Look neat, attractive, and easy to read?
- ❑ Referred to at the appropriate points in the prose?
- ❑ Located where your readers can find them easily?

Page Design (See Chapter 13)

- ❑ Looks neat and attractive?
- ❑ Helps readers find specific information quickly?

Ethics

- ❑ Treats all the report's stakeholders ethically?
- ❑ Presents all information accurately and fairly?