

To: Alpha Designs

From:

Subject: Suggestions to Revise Proposal to MUSE

Date: September 29, 2013

Summary

The proposal submitted for the potential improvements to the computer labs encompassed all aspects of necessary upgrades and fixes; however, it was conveyed poorly; the document required a large amount of corrections to the visual elements as well as general written style in order to properly communicate your overall design proposal. Our task was to read through and critique your proposal to determine how it could become a better technical document. We have finished analyzing your proposal and have provided our suggestions to what your company can do to create a more effective document.

Comment [HMG1]: What?

Comment [HMG2]: Run on sentence. Need to break into two sentences.

Our team is made up of three select individuals that read through your proposal to determine how style, design, and illustration were used to communicate your design. After analyzing your proposal the team compiled a list of suggestions for your document.

Style

The proposal contained major stylistic drawbacks including run-on sentences, excessive wordiness, and ~~failure to finish~~ incomplete sentences. One example of excessive wordiness was the statement "We have found the following actions necessary to achieve the two goals mentioned above: ...", which could be simplified to "These two actions are necessary..." The proposal also contained unfinished thoughts such as "The result is an efficient lab that allows very interactive". Mistakes like this greatly decrease a document's credibility and can harm a company's chances for acquiring a contract.

The proposal frequently lacked concrete verbs. Rather than using specific verbs, you used different forms of the "be" verb. While all the sentences containing forms of "be" were grammatically correct, they lose the detail concrete verbs add and create unneeded length to sentences. One of the best examples of this comes from the first sentence of the proposal. The proposal read: "The purpose of this document is to propose the best alternatives on how to make the laboratories in MUSE more suitable for an interactive learning environment." The sentence was rewritten as "This document proposes the best alternatives to make the laboratories in MUSE more suitable for an interactive learning system." Both sentences convey the same message, but the revised version cuts down on length and uses the concrete verb to show a more specific purpose.

Your proposal also needs to have sentence length edited. The document contained multiple instances of too long sentences that tied non-related ideas together. One example of this is “The Alpha Design team consists of three accomplished junior engineering students with expertise in both electrical and mechanical engineering, who have used the labs for the last couple of years which ensures witness of the problems prevalent on the labs firsthand, a team that knows what needs to be done to fix the problem and wanted to contribute to the change that they have been wishing to see for long.” Whew!

This one sentence could easily be broken into three smaller sentences like so: “The Alpha Design team consists of three accomplished junior level engineering students with expertise in both electrical and mechanical engineering. Each team member has used the labs for the last couple of years, which ensures witness of the problems prevalent in the labs firsthand. The team knows what needs to be done to fix the problem and wants to contribute to the past due remodeling.” This creates more clarity in the document, and makes much more sense. Good.

The document did correctly address the audience without sounding arrogant or pompous. It also effectively used specific nouns and defined all uncommon terms used to create sentences that are easy to read and understand. The proposal also effectively started most paragraphs with strong topic sentences, which makes searching a document easier.

Also, the document effectively avoided using passive voice, which makes sentences shorter and clearer. A strength of the proposal was the proximity of the nouns and verbs. The sentence structure kept noun verb placement close and allowed the document to avoid losing focus. Most importantly, the project conveyed a well-planned design for improving the existing computer labs.

Design

In terms of document design your proposal had some clear drawbacks. The most evident was the use of an image as a header instead of a traditional page number. The document included a table of contents utilizing page numbers, but the document did not show page numbers. This made the proposal difficult for a reader to effectively navigate. The document also had inconsistent title naming. The section titles did not match those listed in the table of contents, creating more confusion for the reader.

Furthermore, title format was inconsistent throughout the proposal, which conveyed a different title hierarchy than desired. The use of heading hierarchy was well designed in certain sections, but was occasionally misused and created more confusion. The document did effectively space and size paragraphs in order to prevent an overload of information in one section.

Comment [HMG3]: Major problem. ☹

Illustrations

The use of illustrations in your proposal needed revision. Several images and slogans were placed unnecessarily throughout the document. The four main poor implementations of illustrations were the random use of clipart on page 8, the picture of the Dell OptiPlex on page 6, the incorrect labeling of the two tables, the usage of your company's slogan throughout the document, and the lack of a figure of your proposed layout for the lab. The tables that were provided were useful and designed effectively, but they were labeled incorrectly. They were referenced as "figures" rather than "tables", and the explanations were placed below the tables instead of above them. Even with the misplaced explanations, the tables were informative and helped explain your thinking.

Comment [HMG4]: Hmm. Is it the use that needs revision?

The problem with the clip-art, picture of the Dell OptiPlex, and placement of your company's slogan all relate back to one core value of technical writing: providing only necessary information in the document. The clipart and picture of the computer provided no additional information and degraded the tone of professionalism. The only useful information was provided in the figure label for the new computer, which could be easily incorporated into the main body of the writing. The slogan that was plastered in any available white space added no information and made the proposal appear to be a sales pitch rather than a technical document.

The final major issue with figures in the proposal was that it never contained a figure of the proposed room arrangement. The room design was discussed in detail, but an image of the proposed design was not included. Instead, the document contained multiple images of the current design in order to point out flaws. The reader would benefit greatly from an image of the proposed design alongside a written description of it.

Conclusion

While the proposal contained an effective potential design for the computer labs, the document lacked several core values of technical writing. Your team's proposal was more of a sales pitch than a piece of technical writing. It included unnecessary slogans, poorly designed clipart, excessive wordiness, and confusing organization. It was difficult for readers to effectively navigate the document, which is a major downfall for any technical document. The suggestions provided will strengthen your proposal and aid your company greatly. We have included a revised version of your proposal in Appendix 1 below.

Points 94(100)	Elements of Review	
5(5)	Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a logic flow appropriate to a professional report (such as SBFO: summary, background, facts, outcome)
15(15)	Summary/Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a communication purpose based on AB23 including a summary of the contents of the report. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Problem statement (A but B) 2. The writer's role 3. The purpose for writing <p>Reminder: The audience for your report is the student writer. Your purpose is to provide an analysis of the proposal including suggestions for improvement.</p>
10(10)	Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides context necessary to understanding the analysis.
22(25)	Facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides your findings—both strengths and weaknesses of style, design, and illustration in the document. <p>Reminder: consult the checklists on pp. 62, 92, &122.</p>
25(25)	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides specific recommendations and examples for improvement.
5(5)	Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The memo observes the conventions of memo format, including To, From (with initials), Subject, and Date lines. • The Subject line indicates the action the writer wants the reader to take. <p>Reminder: consult the checklist on p. 62 to see if the memo is designed correctly.</p>
12(15)	Grammar and punctuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The memo follows conventional standards. • It contains no grammatical or spelling errors. • Word processing mechanics are perfect. <p>\Reminder: consult the checklist on p. 62 to see if the memo achieves a readable style.</p>

Comments very nice analysis.

