The KISS Principle

Let's pretend you have received two proposals. One of them is 25 pages long. The other is 100 pages long. Which one will you read first?

Exactly. That's why this message focuses on the KISS principle--Keep It Short and Simple.

Simplicity is a good thing. I've never heard anyone complain that a proposal wasn't complicated enough. And keeping it short makes sense, because people are more likely to read it if it's short.

This message contains eight ideas to keep your business development letters and proposals simple and short.

For people of a certain age, the KISS Principle conjures up visions of guys on stage wearing face paint.

But KISS is actually an acronym that embodies guidelines for writing clearly. Sometimes it's spelled out as "Keep It Simple, Stupid." But a better definition--and one that's less offensive--is "Keep It Short and Simple."

Short?

As a general rule, keep your sentences about 15-18 words long. That's an average sentence length that most readers can decode easily.

Use short words. As Churchill once said, "Short words are the best words." Why? Because they're the words people use every day, the words they understand easily. On average, 90% of your words should be one or two syllables long.

And keep your paragraphs short, too. Three or four lines of text are plenty. You don't have to write paragraphs that fill up the whole page. In fact, most people would prefer it if you don't.

Finally, whenever possible, use bullet points:

- They're easier to read
- They add emphasis
- They make the page more appealing to the eye
Simple?

Avoid jargon--yours, that is. And don't forget that product names are jargon. In spite of all that advertising and marketing, outside your company most people don't know what the "Turboencabulator 2000" is.

If you use acronyms, don't assume that spelling out the acronym in words makes it clear. One telecommunications company recently wrote, "DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) is an option for your high-bandwidth applications." Huh? What's a digital subscriber line? How complicated is it to install? What's a "high-bandwidth application?"

Use everyday language. You're better off writing it the way you would say it, for example as if you were explaining it to a bright kid.

It also helps to use language from the client's area of expertise. If you're selling to a client in the education sector, talk about students, term times, faculty, staff, and the campus--not customers, users, or the structures. It'll make more sense to them.

So forget the face paint. Just "Keep It Short and Simple" and you'll be a hit.

Written in collaboration with Tom Sant, The Sant Corporation.

You can learn more about the world's most successful proposal automation tools and see an interactive, web-based demo of them at The Sant Corporation's website, [www.santcorp.com](http://www.santcorp.com).

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**Next Steps:**

For details of the MarketingWorks solution to winning proposals: