

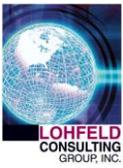
Words to avoid in proposals

Words to avoid in proposals	
Crutch words – used when writers don’t understand what to say	
We understand...	Never use the word “understand” in a proposal, other than in a section heading. To say “we understand your requirements” obfuscates any understanding and is, by definition, an unsubstantiated claim. On the other hand, if you say something insightful about how you will fulfill the requirements, the reader will see that the bidder understands the requirements. Understanding should be demonstrated, not claimed.
Leverage our experience...	“Leverage” is a word that some writers use when they know there is an advantage to be gained, but they don’t know how to do it. Explain “how” rather than infer. Do not use “leverage” in proposals unless you are talking about a mechanical lever and fulcrum.
Thank you for the opportunity...	Means, “We are desperate for your business and don’t really belong in the market.”
We look forward to...	Just provide a call to action. If the RFP allows it, simply state when you will contact them to schedule an oral or finalist presentation. Make sure to follow the timeline addressed in the RFP.
Boasting words – these exaggerate or overstate facts, causing loss of credibility	
state-of-the-art	This is overused and is probably not credible.
the right choice	Prove it.
uniquely qualified, unique, very unique	Prove it.
best of breed/class	Prove it.



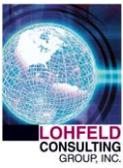
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premier, world-class, world-renowned	Can't be proven. Using it is wasting the evaluators' attention.
industry best practices, industry standard	Overused, unless recognized as such by an independent 3rd party.
leading company, leading edge, leading provider, industry leader, pioneers, cutting edge, etc.	Overused and not believable. Don't damage your credibility by using it.
Vague, useless words – these provide little value to the reader	
we are committed	Customers don't want your commitment, they want results.
we are quality focused	This is another way of stating your intentions. Instead of focusing on quality, deliver it.
we value	Instead of valuing it, deliver it.
our mission is to	This is just another way of stating your intention.
dedicated to	Your dedication is not relevant to whether you have delivered or not.
top-quality	Is there any other kind?
full service	What exactly does that mean and is it credible?
comprehensive	As opposed to?
fastest growing	Your ability to grow rapidly may not be a selling point to your customer.
trustworthy	I don't know about you, but when I hear that, I tend to run the other way.
customer first	This is not believable. Everyone knows there are limits to what you will do for your customers. Don't strain your credibility.
maximize	What exactly does that mean? Be specific.



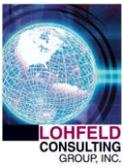
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minimize	What exactly does that mean? Be specific.
optimize	What exactly does that mean? Be specific.
holistic	What exactly does that mean? Be specific.
synergistic	What exactly does that mean? Be specific.
robust	What exactly does that mean? Be specific.
Weak words – these weaken the bidder’s argument and cause doubt in the minds of evaluators	
Don’t use	Use
we believe, think, or feel	Who cares? The customer doesn’t care what you think. Take whatever you were about to say, turn it into a positive action, and state the benefits to the customer.
we will strive, try, or attempt	Customers don’t want you to try, they want you to deliver.
we would be honored	This is just another way of saying how you feel and talking about yourself instead of making it about the customer.
we are pleased to submit	Of course you are! Does that phrase do anything other than waste the evaluators’ time and attention?
we are committed	Customers don’t want your commitment, they want results.
our highest priority	This is like saying it’s your greatest intention.
we can provide	Either you provide it, or you don’t.
we are involved in	Too vague. State what you are doing.
our mission is to	This is just another way of stating your intention.



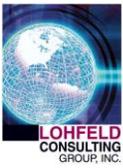
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we desire your business	Of course you do! But, your proposal should not be about your needs, it should be about the customer's needs.
we intend to	Either you do it, or you don't. Who cares what your intentions are.
we are devoted to	This is just another way of saying you intend to.
we hope	That's like saying you intend to, but you're not sure you'll be able to.
Phrases with hidden verbs – replace with action verbs	
Don't use	Use
arrived at the conclusion came to an agreement	concluded agreed
gave a demonstration gave an explanation	demonstrated explained
has a requirement for	requires
has a need for	needs
held a meeting	met
made a payment	paid
performed an analysis of	analyzed
Redundant Words – simplify to write concisely	
Don't use	Use
6-month period	6 months
a number of	several
able to	can
accordingly	so
acquainted with	know
acted as	was
actual experience	experience
advance planning	planning



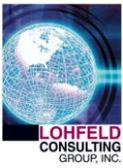
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advance reservations	reservations
advance warning	warning
along the lines of	like, similar to
any and all	all, any, every (or leave out)
as to	About
basic fundamentals	basic or fundamentals
capable of	can
close proximity	proximity
combined experience	This is a faux metric. Use <i>average number of years' experience</i> .
consensus of opinion	Consensus
consequently	so
deteriorate in quality	Deteriorate
discontinue	Stop
each and every	each
end result	result
estimated roughly at	estimated at
exact same	Same
filled to capacity	Filled
first and foremost	first, foremost
for backup purposes	for backup
for the purpose of	for, to
functioned as	Was
furthermore	then
give an affirmative answer to	say yes to, agree to
good advantage	Advantage
if and when	if
in a teaching situation	in teaching
in accordance with	By



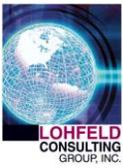
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in addition	also
in an effort to	to
in as much as	since, because
in favor of	for, to
in order to	to
in the case of	if
in the event that	if
in the nature of	like
in the neighborhood of	about
in this day and age	today
issue a reminder	remind
join together	join
in order to [verb]	to [verb]
new innovation	innovation
on a [daily, weekly, monthly] basis	daily, weekly, monthly
on the basis of	by
on the grounds that	because, since
past experience	experience
past history	history
plan ahead	plan
prior to	before
reason is because	reason is
regular routine	routine
responsible for managing	managed, manages
suddenly exploded	exploded
throng of people	throng
twelve noon	noon
utilize	use
with a view to	to



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Words to avoid in proposals	
with reference to	about (or leave out)
with regard to	about (or leave out)
with the result that	so that
Unnecessary qualifiers – avoid these or if used, substantiate your assertions	
actually	now and again
all	Obviously
always	Occasionally
best	of course
certainly	Quite
comparatively	Rather
definitely	Relatively
exactly	Respectively
finest	Sharpest
heaviest	Some
I am absolutely certain	Sometimes
I guess/know/think	Somewhat
it goes without saying	sort of
kind of	Specific
lowest/highest cost/risk/confidence	Thoroughly
maybe	Totally
more or less	Usually
most	Utterly
needless to say	Very
never	Wholly
none	Worst



Words to avoid in proposals

Needlessly long words – replaced with short, simple words	
Long word	Replacement
ascertain	learn
encompass	include
endeavor	try
enumerate	list
fabricate	make
fluctuate	vary
illustrate	show
indispensable	vital
initiate	start
irregardless	This is not a real word – use <i>regardless</i>
methodology	methods
modification	change
obfuscate	hide, confuse (better yet – use a positive statement using <i>clarify</i>)
orientate	This is not a real word – use <i>orient</i>
preventative	preventive
recapitulate	review
reproduction	copy
subsequent	after
substantial	large
termination	end
terminology	terms
utilization	use
Slang words – use in everyday speaking, but not in proposals	
hit the ground running	well-seasoned managers



Words to avoid in proposals

Legal words – if used, make sure you intend to comply with the legal definition	
assure	Ensure
guarantee	Insure