

Helping **you** to...



MORE

...and win more easily

Are your **proposal presentations** winning?

Research findings

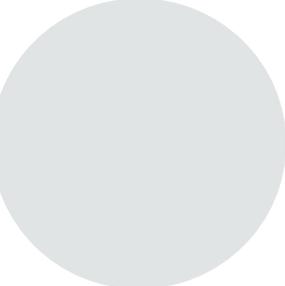
May 2015





The 2015 *Proposal Symposium* was attended by around 100 senior proposal professionals from a wide range of sectors. So, with the great and good from our industry assembled in Le Meridien in Piccadilly, we seized the opportunity to carry out some research into a massively important area:

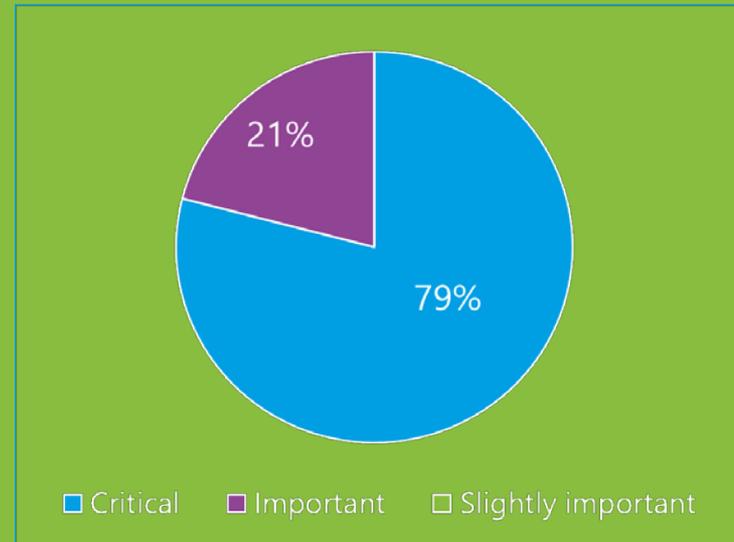
- **Are your proposal presentations winning?**



Once the proposal's submitted, the presentation is often left in the hands of the sales team. However, the best presentations are a collaborative effort, driven by the proposal team. What's happening out there at the moment?

How important is a superb proposal presentation to winning an opportunity?

The overwhelming message is that this is massively important.



“In professional services, the presenters are also the product: if they don’t do a good job they will not win.”

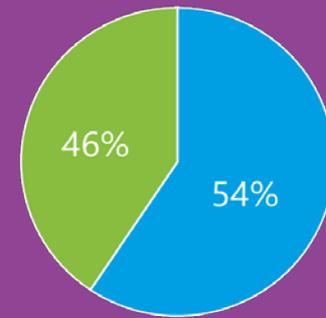
“We’ve lost bids at presentation. The team that goes to interview doesn’t match the bid in terms of enthusiasm and understanding.”

“Never enough time spent on these – seems to be considered of lesser importance compared to the written stages. Bit of a disconnect.”

“Often seems to be the ‘forgotten’ part of the proposal – with much less focus, when actually it’s probably more important.”

When do you normally start preparing the presentation?

A surprisingly large number of leading organisations leave it until late in the day before starting on the presentation.



■ Before proposal submission
■ After proposal submission

"Depends on the size of the deal."

"Way too late in the day, despite best efforts."

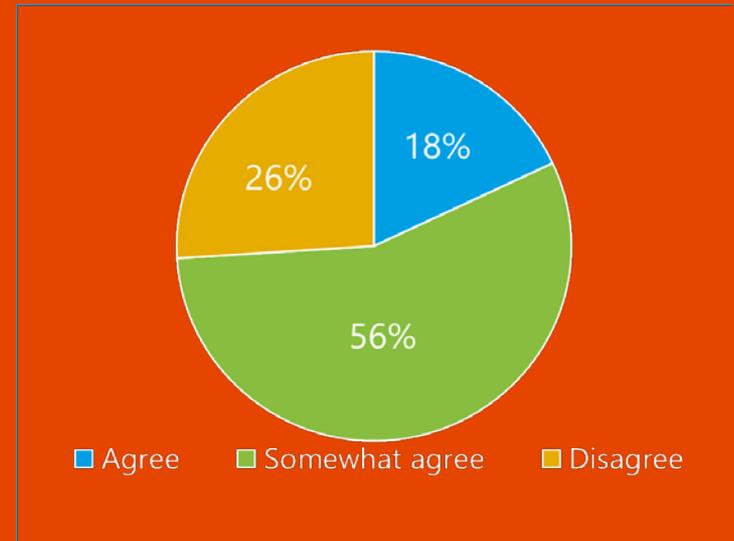
"Ideally in parallel with final bid preparation but typically, in reality, once down-selected."

"At shortlist. I know that this is wrong!"

"When we start preparing the bid, if not before."

To what extent do you agree with the statement: "Our sales people only really start to think about their story once the proposal's gone in and they realise they have to face the customer."?

Only 26% wholeheartedly disagreed – there is a definite need for improvement in this area.

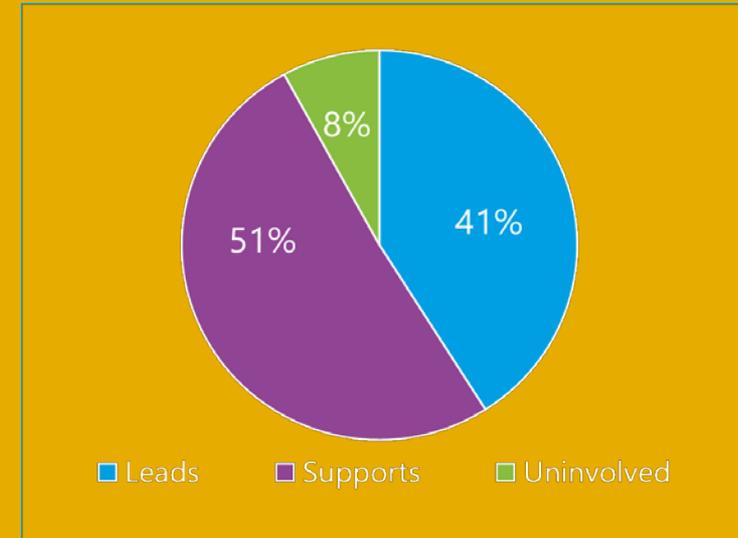


"Oh yes. Sounds familiar."

"It used to happen but we've managed to change that culture."

To what extent is the proposal manager involved in preparing the presentation?

Good to see that the proposal manager is almost always engaged although often this is just a supporting role.



"Want to get more involved but the team gets moved on to bids."

"Co-ordination support mainly."

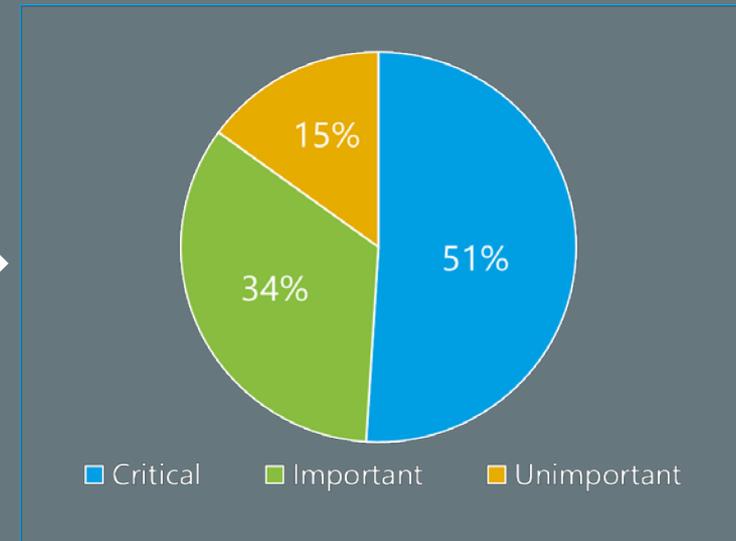
"Depends. Our best bid managers take the lead role in shaping and delivering the presentation. But it requires skills and natural gravitas."

"We only support although I believe we should be heavily involved/lead end to end."

"We have the sales team engaged from before the bid lands on our desk so they continue throughout the process. I have a supporting role which works well."

How important are presentation rehearsals in your organisation?

Although 85% of respondents see rehearsals as critical or important the vast majority of the comments suggest that this is a challenging area.



"But not done well due to time constraints."

"Critical. We also pull in other colleagues to provide challenge and act as panel members."

"Quite important but not important enough. We are desperately trying to change this."

"Have moved from no rehearsal to rehearsal every time. Educating branch managers who never conduct formal presentations is an enlightening and rewarding process."

"We talk about it but rarely factor in the time."

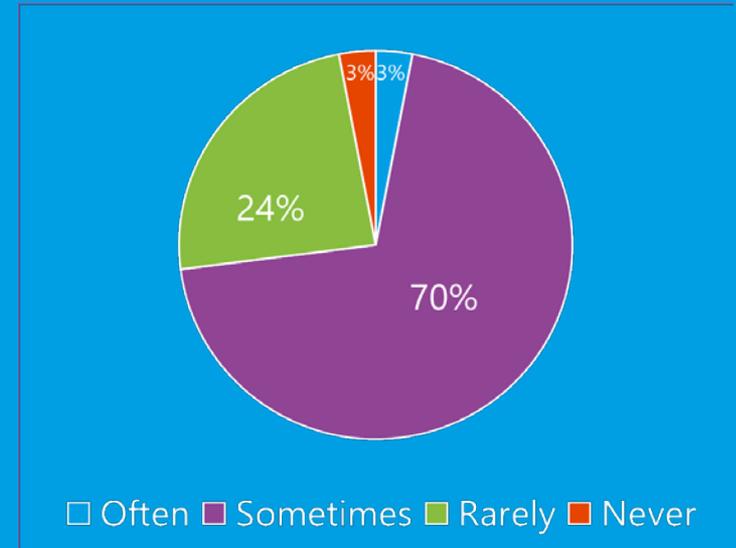
"Culture is not embedded to run full rehearsals or, more importantly, to adapt the presentation based on feedback."

"Unimportant. We are running training for sales staff because this is the case."

"Only critical on 'must wins' but should be always."

Based on gut feel (or, better still, your analysis), do you lose deals due to poor proposal presentations?

The results here support our perception that there's a big opportunity for organisations to differentiate themselves through better presentations.



"Yes, we've been told that we were in pole position and our presentation let us down."

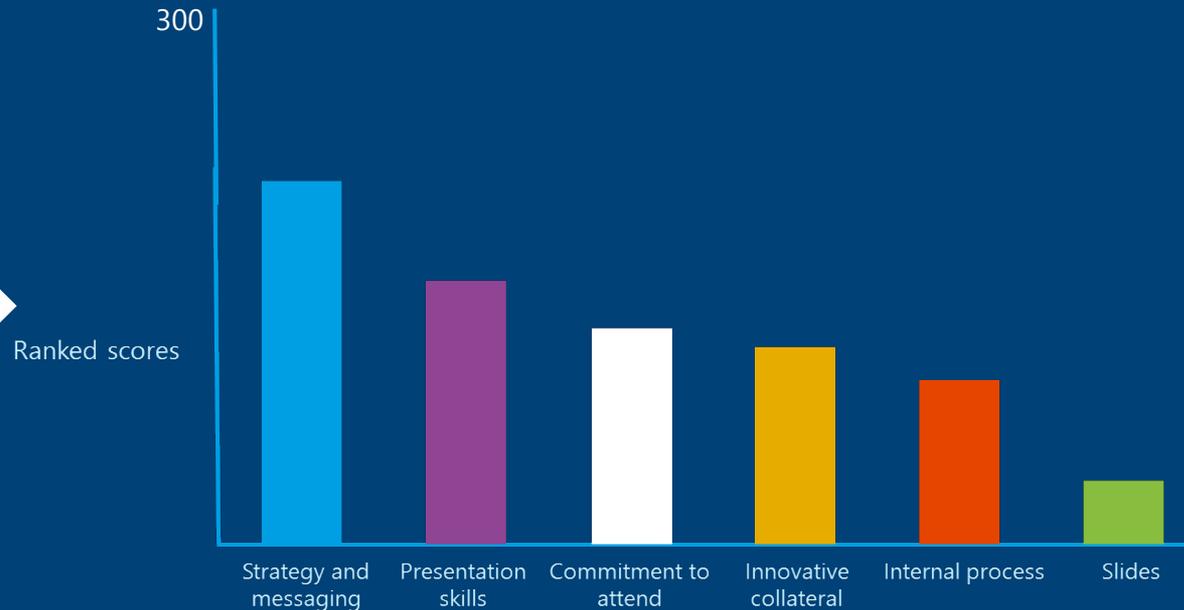
"Lack of knowledge of customer along with trying to sell apples when the customer wants pears."

"Can be influenced by individual approach/chemistry as much as pitch content."

"I'm sure we do but no specific examples of this."

If you could improve your presentations, what would you focus on? (Rank top three in order)

**Strategy/messaging
and presentation
skills were the top
two areas identified.**



"Having the time and skill to create innovative presentations using multimedia such as personalised videos to cement ideas or explain our solution clearly."

"Presentation skills are the key here."

"Focus more on the client than on the organisation."

"Training for my bid managers in presentation skills (remember Body Talk at UKAPMP conference? – brilliant), body language, consultative selling (asking as many questions/keeping presentations two way.)"

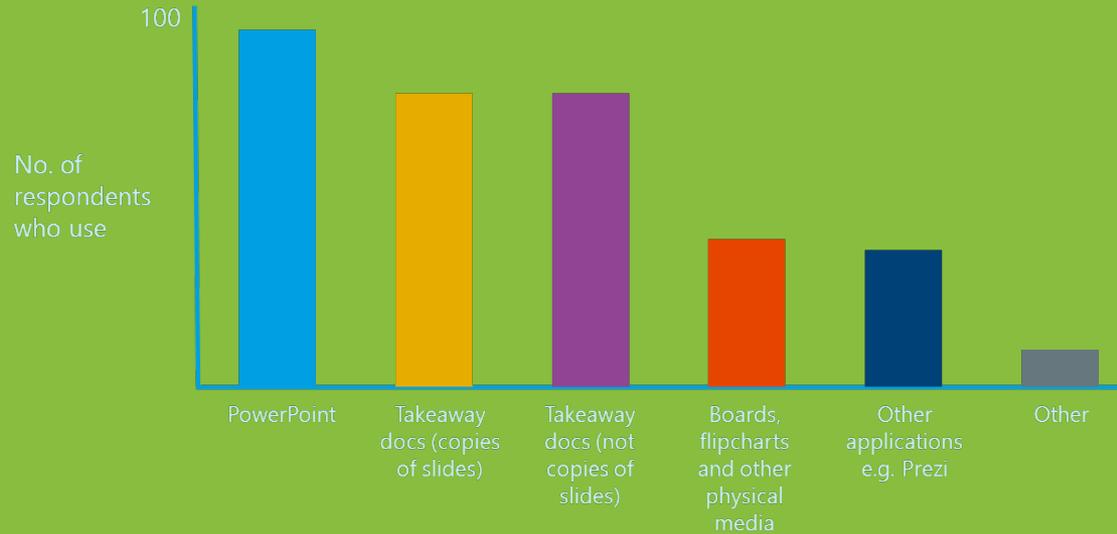
"Bringing standards across the company as some areas are better than others. Corporate buy-in needed."

"Getting the brand police to relax."

"More pre-planning, development of messaging, and going beyond the pack-fixing stage."

What media do you regularly use in your presentations? (Select those that apply)

**Despite the advance
of technology,
PowerPoint still rules.**



"Tried Prezi, didn't like it.
Have used boards on big
bids."

"Weakness in the
business re media."

"Agenda cards – 2, 4, 6
pages of the key topics
left behind afterwards but
talked through without
slides."

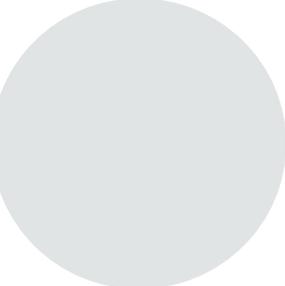
"Looking at move towards
iPAD but change is
difficult."

"Prezi can make people
feel sick!. We only use it
for short demos where
zooming in is needed"

"Video and audio."



It's clear from these results that there's lots of best practice going on. But it's also evident that there's scope to do things better – be it with regard to messaging, presentation skills or stakeholder engagement. And we're seeing increasing interest in moving beyond the constraints of the traditional slide deck model.



Procurement guru, Steve Mullins observes that proposal presentations tend, on the whole, to be 'average' or 'mediocre'. What an opportunity! If you can deliver 'outstanding' you will give yourself a distinct advantage.

Strategic Proposals is here to help you to win. We achieve win rates of well over 80% for our clients in the UK and worldwide.

For more information , please get in touch with Susan Hanning, Head of Proposals, Scotland on +44 (0)7730 364889

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