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# Communicating For Maximum Impact

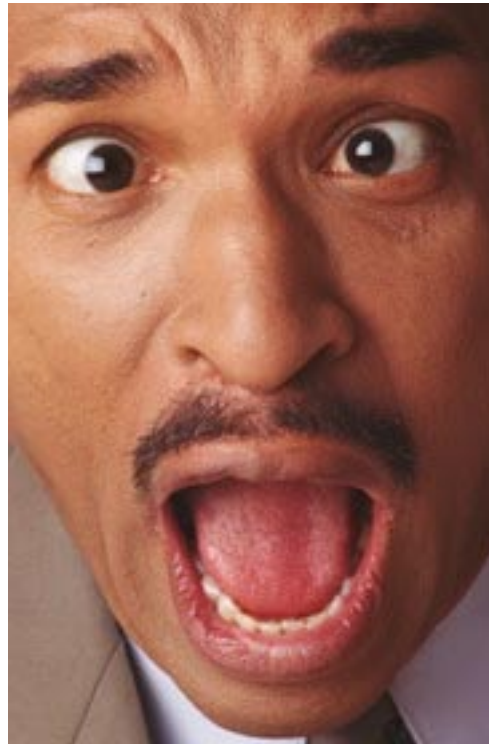
Winning More Business

**Kevin Abrahamson**  
**The Sant Corporation**

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# The RFP & Proposal Challenge:



**Do you just answer the mail?**

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# How Do We Appeal To The Decision Maker?

**Everyone Wants To Win!**

**A Better RFP Response Helps You  
Increase Your Chances**

- **Teamwork**
- **Quality**
- **Time**

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# How People Make Choices

## How Does Your Prospect Decide Who To Do Business With?

### “Simple Heuristics That Make Us Smart”

- Max Planck Institute for Human Development (Berlin) and the University of Chicago
- A study that made extensive inquiries into the actual methods people use to make decisions

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# Heuristics

## Recognition Heuristic

- Memory Is Used To Make Decisions
- That Which Is Recognized Has A Higher Value
- People With Less Knowledge Who Use This Heuristic Make More Accurate Choices

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# Heuristics

## Minimalist Heuristic

- Single Criteria Accepted As A Good Indicator Is Used To Make The Decision
- Apply Criterion To Both Choices Until You Have A Choice
- If The Same, Select Another Criterion And Apply Till You Have A Choice

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# Heuristics

## Take The Last Heuristic

- Use The Same Criteria That Stopped The Analysis And Made A Decision Last Time
- It Doesn't Assume The Last Criterion Was The Best, It Just Worked Last Time

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# Heuristics

## Take The Best Heuristic

- Use The Best Possible Criterion First TO Evaluate Two Objects
- Criterion Is Ordered On Most Valid First

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# Heuristics

## Estimation Heuristic

- Decision Maker Reaches Conclusion Based Upon ROI
- Which Offer Generates The Highest Rate Of Return
- If You Do Not Include ROI, People Will Estimate

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# Heuristics

## Categorize By Elimination Heuristic

- Process Of Elimination or "March Madness"
- Use A Specific Order Of Criterion And Eliminate Until Only One Remains

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# Heuristics

## Satisficing Heuristic

- Use Prior Experience To Establish The Norm And Guide The Selection Process
- Who Stands Out From The Rest?
- Searching Stops Once They Find "The Best"

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# Persuasion

## Persuasion Is A Process, Not An Event

### Is Your Team Persuasive?

- Salespeople
- Marketing Materials
- RFP's And Proposals
- Executives

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# The Primacy Principle

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**Put The Most Important Issue  
or Issues Up Front**

**People Will Search Until They Find A  
Differentiator**

- Compliance To The Specification
- Demonstrated Vendor Competence
- Fitness To Need
- ROI

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# The Primacy Principle

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## 2 Easy Ways To Implement:

- Compliance Matrix On Every RFP
- Highlight The High-Value Content

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# ROI, ROI, ROI

## Demonstrate A High Rate Of Return

### Display It In An Easy To Understand Format

- Graphically
- Statistically
- Focus On Decision Maker Criteria

**Graphics Increase Persuasiveness An Average of 47%!**

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# The Persuasive Paradigm

1. State the business problem or need
2. Identify the outcomes the client seeks, including potential ROI

State the needs  
or problems

Identify the  
positive  
outcomes

Present a  
recommendation

Provide details  
to substantiate

Recommend a solution

Provide substantiating details



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# Seven Key Questions

1. What is the client's problem or need?
2. Why is this problem worth solving?
3. What goals must be served?
4. Which goals have the highest priority?
5. What services will achieve the goals?
6. What is the potential payback from each possible solution?
7. Which solution is best?

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# Cognitive Webbing

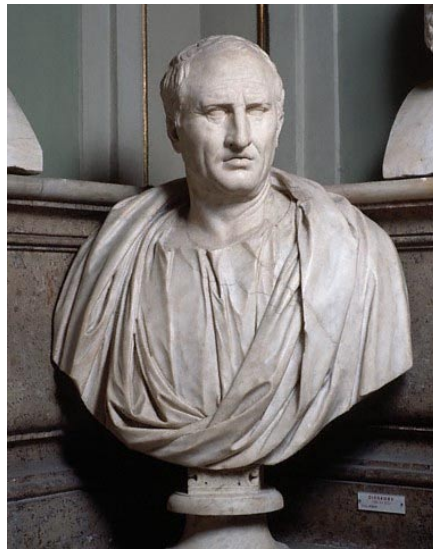
- Write Down The End Result Your Prospect Wants
  - Specific Outcomes
  - Specific Objectives
  - Which Are Important?
  - What Needs Do They Address
- Brainstorming
  - Who, What, When, Where, How
  - Define The Results
  - Determine The Measurement Indicators
  - Define The Time Frame
  - Define The Cost Factors
- Prioritize
  - Structure The Content
  - Don't Forget Prospects Point Of View

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# Cicero Principle



“If you wish to persuade me, you must think my thoughts, feel my feelings, and speak my words.”

Cicero

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# Cicero Principle

Write And Create Something Your Client Is Familiar With And Will Understand

- Avoid Using Unfamiliar Terms
- Write At The Correct Level
- Define Acronyms
- Never Assume Your Client Understands

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# Clarity Of Answers

Your Answers Must Be Clear, Factual And Complete

## **Question:**

What information appears on the Explanation of Benefits? Can EOB information be customized by the client? Please provide a sample EOB.

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## Clarity Of Answers

### **Answer #1:**

See the enclosed EOB.

Generally all EOB messages are predefined for all clients to meet readability, accuracy and legal requirements. Limited customization is available, including the addition of logos and personalized remarks in the remarks area.

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## Clarity Of Answers

### Answer #2:

It's important for plan members to understand how their benefits were determined. The Explanation of Benefits is an important tool in our overall effort to provide good communications and to avoid confusion or misunderstanding when plan members file a claim.

American Health has designed and written our EOB forms for maximum readability and accuracy. In addition, our forms' layout and content has been developed in part to address certain legal requirements. However, within that framework, we can provide a limited amount of customization, such as adding your logo or providing personalized information in the remarks area of the form.

The enclosed EOB is a sample of what we will provide to your members.

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## Clarity Of Answers

### **Question:**

We need an integrator that can be responsive and available 24x7. Please provide the pricing and options for this type of coverage in Appendix G.

### **Answer #1:**

Please see pricing in Appendix G.

### **Answer #2:**

With a business critical system, such as the one being proposed here, you need to know that you have support available around the clock. That's why <<your firm>> has created a support program that gives you 24x7 coverage at an extremely affordable price.

In Appendix G, we detail the levels of support available to you within the framework of 24x7 and the pricing for each.

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## Readability

### Avoid Sounding Like A Bureaucrat

#### Use Short Words

- 90 % Of Words Should Be 1-2 Syllables

#### Keep the sentences short

- 15-18 Words Average Sentence Length
- Bullet Points Are Even Better

#### Avoid Passive Voice

# Minimize Weasel Words

## Avoid Vague Modifiers

- "adequate ventilation"
- "inspect as necessary"

## Avoid "Booster" Words

- "very", "really", "certainly"
- "obviously", "somewhat", "significant"

## Avoid "Weasel" Words

- "help", "like", "virtually", "can be"  
"up to"



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# Ghost The Competition

**Raise issues in your proposal that strike at your competitions weak points.**

**Don't disparage them or mention them by name.**



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# Highlight Your Key Points

**Executives skim.**

You can make your document more "skimmable" by highlighting the main ideas.

Use bullets, headings, subheadings, boldface type, color, borders, graphics, and anything else that will make your key points jump off the page.



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# Be The Standard

## Get Prospects To Pick Up Your RFP Or Proposal First

### What Sounds Better?

"Reducing Overhead Costs By 30 %"

or

"Sant's RFP Response"

Would you ever title a book, "Book"?



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## Sant's Email Tips

Things you can use in everyday communications with prospects, clients, friends and more.

No advertising.

Just short, focused information.

[subscribe@santcorp.com](mailto:subscribe@santcorp.com)

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## APMP Special

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**You Can Easily Beat  
Your Competition!**

**You Have  
The Power Of Persuasion!**