



Everything you need to know
about pitch, proposal and RFP
management software

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Introduction

Whatever sector your company works in, you know that outstanding proposals, pitches and RFP response documents can make all the difference when it comes to growing your business. If you're reading this ebook, it's probably because your company is looking for a better and more efficient way to create those documents.



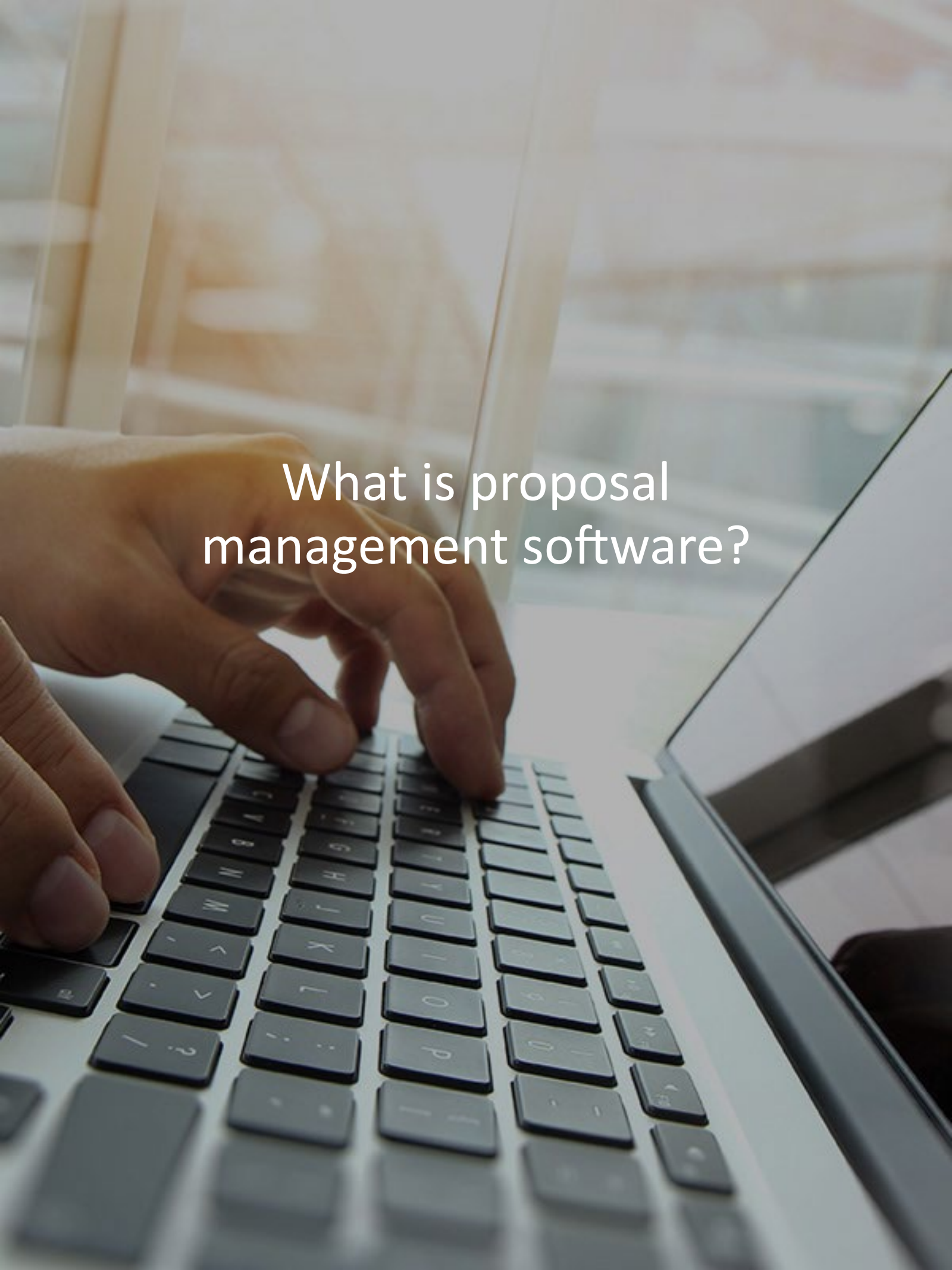
This guide was created to help marketing, sales, bid and proposal professionals learn more about proposal software and the benefits it offers.

Do any of these challenges sound familiar?

- Do Bid and Sales teams spend too long searching for information to include in proposals?
- Does great content produced for one proposal never get re-used in another?
- Do you all too often find that proposals and pitch documents contain out-of-date sections, or aren't correctly branded?
- Is it always a mad dash to complete a pitch, proposal or RFP response as the submission deadline looms?
- Is it a nightmare to manage tasks and track progress?

If so, a software solution that helps you manage your proposal process and content more effectively could well be the answer. But to be certain whether it's something your company should invest in, you'll need to understand what such a solution can offer, whether it will meet your needs at an affordable price, and whether you'll see a return on your investment.

This ebook aims to help you understand what proposal management software can offer, what features you should be looking for in a solution, and how you can expect it to support your proposal production process. Of course, implementing any new software solution successfully also demands commitment from the organization itself. This ebook also looks at some of those aspects, and discusses the level of involvement that would be needed from various parts of your organization.



What is proposal
management software?

What is proposal management software?

Proposal management software, also known as pitch or RFP management software, is a type of business process automation that helps you produce better-quality proposals and sales documents much more efficiently.

The solutions on the market today tend to include:

- A content library, which saves time — and therefore money — in the search for information, and helps raise the quality of your proposal content.
- A searchable repository for previous proposals, pitches and RFP responses.
- The ability to create templates to ensure consistent branding and automate the inclusion of specific content for defined geographies, sectors and so on.
- Collaboration capability, via the browser or a platform such as SharePoint, to enable live co-authoring and reduce version control issues.
- Functionality to allow users to generate proposals using a 'shopping cart' approach.
- Task allocations and workflows, which help automate quality and compliance assurance through audit trails, review and approval steps, and the ability to lock content.
- Project dashboards, tracking capability, and reporting.

Meeting quality and compliance challenges

A proposal management solution will help you resolve a number of quality and compliance challenges that organizations typically face, including the following:

- Addressing defined sectors, geographies or other target markets. You can create a range of templates, each containing specific information, statements or disclaimers for individual markets.
- Controlling your content. Content included in templates can be locked to prevent users making changes; or set to refresh before the pitch or proposal is finalized. An audit trail of all changes to a document in progress is also maintained, so you always know what content was added when, and by whom.
- Updating and approving content. You can build in review and approval cycles to ensure that new content is approved and existing content is kept up to date; and to prevent access to content which is still in draft or not yet approved.

A close-up photograph of a hand placing a dark puzzle piece into a larger assembly of similar pieces. The background is a bright, hazy light, creating a soft glow around the puzzle pieces. The hand is positioned in the upper left, with fingers carefully guiding the piece into place. The puzzle pieces are dark, possibly black or dark blue, and their interlocking shapes are clearly visible. The overall composition suggests a process of building, solving, or integrating a complex system.

How can I work out if my company
needs proposal management
software?

How can I work out if my company needs proposal management software?

There's a range of factors to take into account when deciding whether your company will profit from proposal management software. Like any software solution, it's an investment. You'll need to get buy-in to that investment from several areas of the business, and you'll need to be confident you'll see a return on it.

Among the things you'll need to think about are:

- The benefits you expect the solution to deliver.
- Whether it makes sense from a financial point of view.
- The usability of the solution, as adoption will be key to maximizing the value it delivers.
- What support you can count on from the provider.

In addition, you'll need to think about the practicalities of implementing a solution, such as the role of your IT team, how the project will be sponsored, who will drive it, and when and how budget will be made available.

To help guide your decision-making, we've created a matrix of 14 initial questions. Your answers to them will help you understand whether proposal management software is right for your company and if so, how to proceed.

Decision-making matrix

1. What benefits are you looking to achieve with proposal management software?
2. What efficiency factors are you looking for?
3. Would adoption assist with any form of compliance?
4. Do you expect a successful project to increase your sales revenue (close more business, close more business faster)?
5. What is the cost of not doing this?
6. What is the deadline for procurement / rollout / adoption?
7. Can you define the key metrics that will be used to confirm success / to allow ongoing investment / drive broader adoption?
8. What return on investment / other factors need to be met to justify investment?
9. Can budget be made available within the financial year or does this project need to be delayed until the next financial year?
10. Are you looking for an on-premises or cloud-based solution?
11. Who will be the main / secondary users (how many / which type of licenses are required)?
12. Do you need to get buy-in / approval from corporate IT / information security?
13. Who will be the project sponsor (this contact will drive system design, personalization, deployment, training, roll out and adoption)?
14. Who else needs to be involved in evaluation, procurement, deployment and support?

Calculating time and cost savings

Perhaps the biggest consideration when making your decision is the time — and therefore the money — you could potentially save by using proposal management software. To work that out, you'll need to calculate how much time your organization currently spends on proposal creation. To do this:

- Count up how many proposals, pitches or RFPs are produced on average each month.
- Multiply that number by the average number of hours expended on each one by everyone involved in the production process.
- Multiply that answer by the average hourly wage of those employees.

That will give you an idea of the time and money being spent each month on proposal production.

As an aside, it's worth thinking about how some of those hours could be spent instead — supporting customers, looking for new business opportunities, or undertaking more billable activities, for example.

Other considerations that may tip the balance

When you're going through the decision-making process, it's also worth thinking about how successful your current proposal creation process is. Ask your Bid and Sales teams questions like:

- Have we had any high-profile proposal, pitch or RFP disappointments because there wasn't enough time, information or resources to do a really good job?
- Have we recently been involved in a proposal or RFP response that went wrong, took too long, or received negative feedback from the client or prospect?
- Have any big opportunities been missed recently because there simply wasn't enough capacity to respond on time?
- Have there been any recent, painful issues with version control or use of out-of-date information in a proposal, RFP response or pitch?
- Have there been any issues around updating styles when using older content?
- How satisfied is the team as a whole? Are they under too much pressure?

A low-angle, close-up photograph of several hands stacked on top of each other in a pyramid shape. The hands are of various skin tones and are wearing light-colored, long-sleeved shirts. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light gray. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

What features should I look for in
a proposal management software
solution?

What features should I look for in a proposal management software solution?

Once you decide that your company could benefit from proposal management software, you need to think about the features you want from your solution. The following features should be available:

- A content library (or content management system) with built-in task allocation and workflow capability.
- A searchable repository for previous proposals, pitches and RFP responses.
- Template creation functionality.
- Collaboration capability.
- The ability to integrate with CRM (and other) systems.
- Automated proposal generation using a 'shopping cart' approach.
- Project dashboards and tracking.
- Reporting.
- It's also worth remembering that the more simple and intuitive the solution, the more likely it is that these features will actually be used. Sacrificing user experience for a ton of features is never a good idea.

Content library

A well categorized, searchable content library makes it quicker and easier to find the content needed for inclusion in a proposal. Instead of hunting in various file stores, asking colleagues, or leafing through previous proposals and RFPs, Sales and Bid teams can find the pre-created, pre-approved, re-usable content and RFP responses they need in the content library. Ideally, the search functionality will be powerful enough to enable users to search within the stored documents, not just by their titles.

The library should also allow you to manage and control the content, to avoid issues like versioning and the risk of draft or out-of-date content being used. You should be able to set up workflows to help ensure that all content is regularly reviewed and updated, with automated alerts to let contributors know when they need to review content and complete allocated tasks.

This will reduce the administrative burden on the Marketing team, and give users confidence that the content they retrieve is complete, current, on brand and on message. So they'll save even more time and effort as there's no rework or approval process to go through.

It should be easy for subject-matter experts (SMEs) and other contributors to populate the library, ensuring it grows over time and keeps improving proposal quality. Some proposal management software includes features that enable anyone to suggest new content for inclusion or edits to existing content (subject to approval), which broadens the range of information available and helps keep it bang up to date.

Repository of previous proposals, pitches and RFP responses

Like the content library, the repository should be easy to populate, search and manage. It should also be tied into your CRM system, to avoid confusion and duplication. As well as acting as an additional source of content for Sales and Bid teams, the repository will provide an audit trail that allows users to check what was sent to a client previously, and compare with a current proposal (for example, if pricing has changed).

Templates

By creating templates for proposals and pitches, you'll ensure they're always correctly branded, regardless of who produces them. And, if your company's branding changes, you'll be able to update the templates accordingly.

If you target clearly defined sectors, geographies or other markets, you may want to create a different template for each one, which includes, for example, market-specific statements or disclaimers.

Some proposal management software requires coding or HTML skills to create templates. Other solutions make it simpler by allowing templates to be created using MS Word and PowerPoint.

Collaboration and co-authoring

Real-time collaboration and co-authoring will speed up creation of new content as bottlenecks are removed, and version control is simplified. Some proposal management solutions enable co-authoring via the browser; others enable it via a platform such as SharePoint.

Either approach allows contributors to work on the proposal, pitch or presentation at the same time. All updates and changes will be saved automatically, so that contributors always see, and work on, the latest version of the document.

CRM integration

The ability to integrate your proposal software with your CRM system — automatically merging in live data — will make it possible to generate customized proposals and pitches at the click of a button. Tailoring content by client, product, sector and so on in this way will help you create truly personalized documents at a fraction of the effort it costs you now. You'll also avoid the risk of cut-and-paste errors, such as a misspelled or incorrect company name.

Automated proposal generation using 'guided carts'

Guided carts simplify and accelerate the generation of highly personalized pitches and proposals, which are based on your company's approved, best quality content, and automatically include CRM content. Guided carts are especially useful for new recruits or people who seldom create proposals, as they can easily create a 'standard' proposal containing all the usual content sections. Alternatively, they can "shop" for content: only approved content can be added; and you can set mandatory sections to be auto-included. The approved content sections are then automatically pulled into a pre-designed proposal template.

Project dashboards and tracking

Project dashboards enable efficient allocation of tasks and progress tracking. They help you to make sure that all supporting documents, final pricing and the finalized pitch or proposal are all in one place, and provide you with a clear audit trail. Co-ordinating the proposal production process is simplified: project owners can allocate tasks, invite external team members to contribute, restrict access to sensitive parts of a document, and monitor section completion to ensure submission deadlines are met.

Reporting

Your proposal management software should enable you to report on the status of each project using criteria such as start date, close date, owner, and RAG (red, amber green) status. You should also be able to report on user access, content usage (by content type, project and user), and on how search is being used (for example, popular search terms, search results, searches that yield no results). With reports like these to hand, you'll have insight into how the proposal management software is being used, and how well your content library is supporting proposal creation.



What do I need to consider?

What do I need to consider?

When you're ready to implement proposal management software, you'll need to make sure you engage key stakeholders from different parts of your business. IT will clearly have an important role to play in the project, as will the Bid, Sales and other teams. You'll also need to think about what training will be needed, and how you'll drive user adoption to ensure the company uses the solution to best effect.

Who needs to be involved in setting up the solution?

Different teams will be involved in the project at different stages, and will have distinct areas of responsibility. The following tables give an overview of what's typically required from whom at the key planning and deployment stages.

Planning

Activity	Who is responsible?
Deployment planning	IT
Forming the project team	Project lead
Agreeing the search structure for the content library	Bid team
Agreeing required templates	Bid team, Sales management
Specifying branding	Bid team
Agreeing the rollout strategy	Bid team, Sales
Agreeing the training plan	Bid team, Training department
Agreeing the communications plan	Marketing
Agreeing success factors	Bid team, Sales management

Deployment

Activity	Who is responsible?
Installation and testing	IT
Building the central repository structure	Bid team
Building templates	Bid team, Sales admin
Populating the central repository	Bid team

What will we need to do?

Your IT team will be a key player in getting your solution set up. What they'll need to do will vary depending on whether you choose a hosted (cloud-based) solution, or an on-premises deployment.

Hosted solution. IT will need to understand how the solution will be accessed, what the networking and security implications may be, and how it will integrate with other hosted and on-premises solutions in use at your company.

On-premises solution. IT will be responsible for:

- Specifying, procuring and installing the infrastructure to support the solution, including any backup capability.
- Installing and configuring the proposal management software (supported by the provider).
- Integrating it with existing enterprise systems, such as CRM.

In most companies, the IT team will also manage users, access rights and troubleshooting.

You should be able to count on your solution provider to assign dedicated resources to help you plan and deploy the solution, and configure the content library, to help your users get the best from the solution as quickly as possible.

You'll also want to engage your Bid, Sales and Marketing teams and have them participate in meetings, conferences, workshops and software demonstrations. That way, you'll ensure the solution is configured to meet everyone's needs, which will accelerate adoption, and help your company gain maximum value from it.

What about training?

The best proposal management software solutions will be accessible via a familiar, intuitive interface, making them easy to use from the word go with no complicated new system to learn. But to help users — and therefore your company — get the most from the software, you'll want to offer everyone the level of training they need. This will vary, as different roles will use different sets of features.

As a rough guide, assuming your solution has a familiar interface, you should allow for the following initial training periods:

- Content managers / admin - about half a day.
- Bid managers / admin - about half a day.
- Template authors - about half a day.
- Contributors and subject matter experts - no longer than an hour or two.

Your solution provider may offer a variety of approaches to training, such as:

- Self service text - or video-based online training, enabling people to learn at their own pace and refresh their knowledge as they need to.
- Instructor-led sessions for groups of employees.
- Train the trainer, in which someone in your organization is trained, who then trains colleagues.

How do we drive adoption and use?

Before you implement the solution and start training users, you'll want to plan and carry out a communications program to let employees know what's happening. That way, you'll generate excitement and get everyone on board early, which will pave the way for a successful rollout.

Choosing a solution that's easy to get started with — for example, one with a familiar Microsoft interface — will help accelerate adoption. And, as already discussed, training will help hands-on users get the very best from the new software.

Anyone who's regularly involved in producing proposals, pitches and RFP responses will quickly experience the solution's benefits, as high-quality content becomes quicker to find, collaboration speeds the writing process, and robust templates make it much easier to produce great-looking, on-brand documents. Those who're less frequently involved will find the process much more straightforward than before, especially if your solution features guided carts.

Once the solution has been implemented and is in use, you'll want to carry out regular reviews to understand how effectively it's supporting your teams and your company. At this stage, only you can drive internal adoption and engagement, so whoever is put in charge of this should be a strong leader. Reviews will generally cover areas such as:

- Proposal effectiveness.
- Content availability.
- Search effectiveness.
- Process adoption.
- Performance against success criteria.

A top-down view of a person's hands typing on a silver laptop keyboard. The laptop is open, and the screen displays a software interface with various buttons and text. To the left of the laptop is a white cup of coffee on a saucer. A white cable is plugged into the laptop. The entire scene is set on a dark wooden desk. The person is wearing a blue and white checkered shirt and a silver watch with a white face.

Introduction to Qorus Software

Introduction to Qorus Software

Among the software solutions on the market today for pitch, proposal and RFP management is Qorus Software. Available as both a hosted and an on-premises solution, it's one of the most easy to use, with widespread take-up in the legal and other sectors.

The solution aims to reduce training time, speed up implementation, and encourage company-wide user adoption, for the benefit of Marketing and Business Development, as well as Bid and Sales teams. To achieve these aims, it's built on familiar Microsoft Office tools: Word, Excel and PowerPoint; and is fully embedded into SharePoint, to help you maximize the value of your existing technology investment.

Qorus incorporates all the functionality you'd expect to find in a proposal management solution to help you create beautifully branded and consistent documents every time. Functionality includes:

- A content library with Google-like search capability.
- Easy co-authoring and collaboration.
- Guided carts for highly automated proposal production.
- Tight integration with CRM and other enterprise systems.
- Automated allocation and approval workflows.
- Project dashboards and reporting.

We're a proud Microsoft partner, with Gold primary competency in Application Development and Silver Cloud Competency.

"Qorus provides a great tool to build documents required for any sales process. The ability to create and manage libraries of standard content, along with the collaborative elements, allow us to save significant time when responding to RFPs or creating other sales related documents"
- David Long, Director, Tribridge

Conclusion

Win-win

success
decision
teamwork
negotiation
solve text
successful
resolution
solution
best possible
support
symbol win-
strategy
wordcloud work
innovation
win success
problem reso
positive
challenge
winner ide
thinking
solving logic
business
result

Conclusion

If your company is struggling to produce proposals, pitches and RFP responses that consistently help you win new business, proposal management software may be just what you need to improve the situation.

By storing, managing and controlling all your proposal content in one place, and making it easy to search and retrieve, you'll help Bid and Sales teams create winning proposals faster and more efficiently.

No more wondering where to look for the content they need, and whether the content they find is up to date. No more worries about leaving out key sections — or including inappropriate content. No more struggling with versioning issues. No more risk of incorrectly branded or formatted documents reaching your clients and prospects.

And more time to spend on client-facing and billable activities.

As with any software solution, however, you'll need to be sure that a proposal management solution will:

- Be rapidly adopted.
- Support your proposal process and help it become more mature.
- Deliver real benefits to your Bid and Sales teams, and to your organization as a whole.

You'll need to choose a solution that provides all the features your organization needs, is as easy as possible to use, and is properly supported by the vendor. You'll also need to be realistic about the level of commitment needed from different teams, including Bid, Sales, IT, Marketing and Business Development — all of whom will need to be brought on board to support the implementation.

If you'd like to find out more about proposal management software and how it could help your company, visit the Qorus website at www.qorusdocs.com or contact us on info@qorusdocs.com.

About Qorus Software

Qorus Software is a leading global pitch and proposal management solution provider.

Core to our success is the conviction that software should be intuitive and easy to use. Which is why our solutions are built using well-known Microsoft applications like Word, PowerPoint and SharePoint.

Qorus has a growing list of global enterprise customers and believes that, together with processes and people, software can help improve win rates.

We are headquartered in Seattle, Washington, with offices in the United Kingdom and South Africa.

To learn more about Qorus Software, visit www.qorusdocs.com

To request a demo of our proposal management software, visit www.qorusdocs.com/proposal-software

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Download the Qorus Breeze *Proposals* product overview



Download Overview

See how Longview Systems migrated to Qorus Breeze *Proposals*



Download Case Study

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