



Helping organizations drive revenue and generate profits through stronger business communications

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## Use Email to Set Yourself Apart

**Question:** I never really know how to start a sales proposal. I often compete against companies that offer almost exactly what we offer and I know the prospect must be bored out of their minds reading through each of our proposals. How can I get their attention — and keep it? I need your ideas!

**SpeakerSue says:** The more you know about them, the more specific you can be and the easier it will be for you to grab their attention and compel them to read. With that said, the best advice I can give to you to set yourself apart is to be relevant, respectful, and unpredictable.

I recently spoke at 2 similar association meetings. Each meeting was sponsored (the sponsor paid the lunch tab for the meeting for the right to talk about their product/service for 10 minutes and to have their company name on the meeting materials). At the first meeting, the sponsor walked up to the lectern, and started her PowerPoint presentation. For the next 10 minutes she told us everything she knew about her company and her product. She had slides detailing every new feature, every new facet, every new flippin' thing! The attendees paid close attention for the first minute or two. By the 3 minute mark, people were looking around. By the 5 minute mark, everyone in the room had stopped paying attention, with most of them whispering to a colleague about how awful the presentation was.

At the second meeting, the sponsor walked into the middle of the room. He said, "Most of you know something about our company. I have a prize for everyone at your table, if you can tell me something about this company." It was amazing! People started jumping up to yell out information. After the first table reported a fact, he said, "Can someone tell me something else?" Tables were buzzing! He'd repeat the fact (correct it if he needed to), attach the fact to a benefit, and give out his fun prizes. Every table was a winner — and so was he!

**1. Stop selling your features.** If everyone else offers the same features, consider beginning your proposal with:

We can offer you everything our competition has promised — and then some. Or how about starting with: Our competition will do a great job for you. We'll do an awesome one. Or maybe: Choose a great meeting or a memorable learning experience. Or both. Only our hotel can offer that.

**2. Think about not sending a proposal!** What can you send that will represent to your prospect what benefit you bring to them? Can you send them a Starbucks gift card and say, "Relax. Sit back. We have it all covered for you." Be unpredictable in your presentation to get their attention.

**3. Compel them with the absolute most important benefit to them.** Sometimes in my speaking excitement, I try to deliver too much information. I present 10 techniques too quickly for the group to grasp them all. I have to remember to focus on their needs and to emphasize the 3 to 5 strategies that will make a difference for them. If I can give them enough detail for them to be comfortable applying those 3 to 5 techniques, haven't I done a better job than if I give them 10 "awareness" ideas but no clear application?

Apply that same strategy when you're selling your benefits. What is the absolute most compelling information they need? Instead of data dumping everything, start with the one most fabulous benefit you offer (think Billy Crystal!). Get them seeing it, feeling it, tasting it.

# Sue Hershkowitz-Coore, CSP



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## Use Email to Set Yourself Apart *continued*

**4. Another idea for being unpredictable: Forget that old “EVERYTHING IN CAPS IS SCREAMING” advice.** I don’t recommend sending a routine email written in CAPS, but an occasional word in a sales proposal that is made bold, or capitalized, or emphasized with color or italics, gets attention. Don’t be afraid to bring their attention to your message with special fonts.

**5. Use testimonials.** Nothing sells faster and better than social proof. As kids, many of us used this as a rationale to convince our parents that what we wanted to do was really okay because Shelley and Mark were allowed to do it. (Sometimes it worked, particularly if we led our folks to believe that Shelley and Mark’s parents said it was okay for their kids, so it should be okay for us, too! Sometimes it didn’t work, as in my mother’s constant reminder that “If everyone jumped off the Empire State building, would you go too?”) Testimonials are powerful (regardless of my mother’s comment) in any position in a sales letter/proposal — at the beginning, middle or close — because they speak to the reader in a manner that we can’t. Try beginning with something like: Imagine that you’ve booked your spring meeting at our hotel. What would you attendees say on their evals? If they’re anything like the ABC association and the XYZ Corporation, here is what they’ll be raving about... Or, just begin with a powerful quotation from a delighted client.

Provide clear documentation for the testimonials (provide the name and company of the person you are quoting) and you’ll make your offer much more enticing to your reader.

Keep your reader’s reading and eliminate their boredom by concentrating on what is relevant to them and present it in a manner that is respectful, interesting and meaningful to them and you’ll not only grasp their attention but you’ll keep them reading, too. You may even get the results, recognition and respect you deserve.

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For more tips, or to schedule Sue Hershkowitz-Coore, CSP to speak at your next meeting, please send an email to [Sue@SpeakerSue.com](mailto:Sue@SpeakerSue.com).

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