

BUS 230: Business and Economics Research and Communication
Research Proposal
Instructor: James Murray

Purpose: The purpose of research proposal is to *inform* an interested party about a potential research project to be completed and *convince* that party that the research project is worthwhile. When a business or other organization considers conducting a research project (or even considers hiring another firm to do the project) it always involves costs, often substantial. Besides explicit costs that may involve purchasing materials or costs involving taking a sample, the organization faces the cost of paying its employees to conduct this particular research project instead of doing other valuable work. The purpose of a research proposal is to inform that decision about whether this research project should be completed.

Learning Outcomes:

- LO-1: Develop the ability to define a research problem. Formulate research questions and hypotheses that are measurable, well-defined, address the overall problem, are directly related, and reflect the scope of the problem.
- LO-4: Develop the ability to effectively communicate research results both written and orally.
- CBA LO-1: Develop the ability to convey information and ideas effectively.
- CBA LO-2: Decision Making and Critical Thinking - Have the ability to think critically when evaluating decisions.

Begin with a description for me who your audience is:

This paragraph that I ask for is not actually part of a research proposal, but I want you to tell me very specifically who you have in mind for your audience. Who should this be important to? I will use this information to evaluate how well you motivate and explain the research project. Still, who your audience is should be clear and implied from a well written proposal. In one or two sentences, just say what kind of people would voluntarily read your work. Who would want to learn of the results of this project before making a decision?

Important Elements of a Research Proposal:

Remember, the purpose of a research proposal is to convince a party that your research project should be conducted. The reader needs to understand what the purpose of the project is, what outcome of the project is going to be, and how likely is it that you will get that outcome. As such, the research proposal should do the following:

1. Communicate the purpose of your research project:
 - Provide relevant background information that your reader needs to understand in order to 1) understand your project idea and 2) appreciate the importance of your project idea.

- Communicate why is this project *important*. Remember, conducting your research project probably costs someone money. They need to be convinced this is a worthwhile expenditure.
2. Communicate that you do in fact know what you are doing. Without going into too much boring detail, explain to the reader your methodology:
- How will you conduct your research project?
 - Are you going to conduct a survey? Who is the population? What is your sample. Is your sample appropriate?
 - What variables are you going to collect? What survey questions will you ask? Describe what variables you will get from the survey questions, and explain how these variables will be useful in answering your research question.
 - What are you going to do with your variables? What relationships or co-movements will you investigate? What comparisons will you make?
3. What will be the *outcome* of your project? The reader needs to know what they are going to get for their money. Answering this includes,
- A convincing description of *what will be known as a result of conducting your research project*. This involves bringing the previous discussion back to the purpose of your project.
 - Describe *what decisions* can be better informed by your research project results.
 - Concretely, what will be some of the outputs? A written business report? An oral presentation?

Other tips:

- While it is not necessary, a useful format would be a three section proposal: 1) Introduction / Motivation, 2) Research Methodology, and 3) Outcome.
- Regarding the outcome of your project, be honest. Do not be overly optimistic about your results. Do not suggest your results can be more general than they are. That is, be specific about what decisions might be informed by your results, but not overly optimistic that your results will inform a wide range of business decisions. Remember, in the real world, you may be held accountable for achieving the outcomes that you report in your research proposal.
- Keep your research proposal well organized. Make sections for above important elements. People in the real world don't like spending a lot of time reading and re-reading. If it is easy to glance at and still pick up the important pieces of information described above, chances are your proposal will be more successful.
- Keep it as short as possible (while still achieving the above objectives). People in the real world don't like reading more than they have to. It takes time and makes understanding the reading more difficult.

Research Proposal Assignment: Write a 3-6 page research proposal following these guidelines.