

## CS 480 / CS 481 ~ PROJECT

# PROJECT PROPOSAL LETTER GUIDELINES

Write your prospective customer a **formal business letter** that defines what you intend to do during the semester. Include in the letter the following items:

- Describe the major objectives (vision) the customer is trying to achieve.
- Describe the current situation that is to be addressed by your project (don't refer to it as a problem and don't include too much detail).
- Describe your initial proposal for a realistic solution to the situation (don't include too much detail and don't promise anything you aren't reasonably confident you can deliver).
- Describe the value that your proposed solution will contribute.
- Discuss any impacts that might be associated with implementation of the solution.
- Provide an initial estimate of the size of the product you will be developing. The estimate should delineate the number of lines of new code and modified code you expect to deliver.
- Provide an initial estimate of the total number of hours you expect to work on this project.
- Review any special points discussed with the customer.
- Summarize what you will be providing to your customer.
- Review items received from the customer, or include a reminder of items expected from the customer.
- Document resources you will expect the customer to provide and when they must be available.
- Discuss the important dates or milestones in your project in which you expect some level of customer participation, e.g. your requirements presentation.
- Identify any periodic contact you want to have with your customer.
- Include business formalities: ownership of the finished product, copyrights, licensing, and any direct costs associated with development, etc.
- Include the paragraph below in your letter: Incorporate the exact wording provided, but include a sentence or two that provides a transition to the issues addressed by this paragraph. You certainly don't want the customer thinking that you aren't going to deliver what you're committing to:

"The software which I have agreed to develop is being done as part of the requirements for a Computer Science degree at the University of Idaho. As such, it is an academic exercise that must be accomplished under constraints imposed by the Computer Science Department. Although I fully expect to complete this project and deliver to you a fully functional and documented software product, neither I, my instructor, nor the University of Idaho Computer Science Department can guarantee the project will be completed satisfactorily. At the end of the semester, the software and accompanying written materials that I have developed will

be provided to you "as is" without warranty of any kind. Further, neither I nor the Computer Science Department warrants, guarantees, or makes any representations regarding the use, or the results of the use of the software or written materials in terms of correctness, accuracy, reliability, or otherwise. The entire risk as to the results and performance of the software and documentation is assumed by you. Neither I nor the Computer Science Department will assume any responsibility for support or maintenance of the software or documentation after they are delivered to you."

- At the end of the letter, give your customer a place to sign indicating agreement with the proposed project. Be sure to give your customer a copy of the letter he or she may keep.

In writing the letter also keep in mind the formal business style you should be using:

- Use an appropriate form of address.
- Use appropriate language in the body of the letter.
- Use a clear physical layout (margins, paragraphs, itemizations). Most letters look best if they are single spaced.
- Spell check your letter and read it for errors that spelling checkers can't find.

As a final point remember that what you say in the letter will begin the process of setting the customer's expectations. If you set high expectations that you aren't able to meet, your customer will be disappointed. If you set low expectations the customer is likely to begin wondering what they've managed to get involved in and how much time they'll end up wasting during the semester.

The due date for the proposal letter is posted on the website. Preferably you will have a copy signed by your customer; if not, turn in an unsigned copy at that time, and get a signed copy turned in as soon after that as possible.

If need be, copies can be mailed to me at:  
Heather Hunting  
P.O. Box 273  
Menan, ID 83434

Or, your customer can email a copy to me at:  
heather.hunting@gmail.com