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- When writing in the business world (or any world, for that matter), you will often do more than just explain a problem. You will often *propose a solution*
- Good solutions are both convincing and effective
- That is, your *proposal* should address the reader's concerns and needs, and your *solution* should be both practical and sensible

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Here's an effective structure for proposing a solution:

- Explain the problem
- Explain the solution
- Address the objections

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## *Explain the problem*

- It's always best to state (or restate if your reader is already familiar with the problem) the problem at the beginning
- By clearly explaining the problem upfront, you not only remind the reader of the issues, but you define the scope of your solution
- You also begin the process of building credibility with your reader. You summarize the seriousness and urgency of the issues, and that you are aware of them

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- Don't go into the problem at depth. Just write enough to explain and/or remind the reader
- Often, writers make the mistake of spending too much time on the problem and not enough time on the solution
- A simple technique to avoid making that mistake is to look over your draft. At most, 25% of your writing should focus on the problem. Leave the other 75% (or more) for the solution
- If necessary, count your words!

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## *Explain the solution*

- After explaining the problem, Simply (and clearly) state your solution
- Use headings, paragraph breaks, etc., to make your solution very obvious to your reader
- Don't assume your reader will understand the solution as well as you do. Include all relevant information necessary to fully explain your idea

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- Immediately follow the explanation of your solution with (at least) three strong points in support of your solution
- Each point should be in a separate paragraph (with or without headings)
- Each of these points must be supported by sufficient detail (facts, anecdotes, etc.)

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- Remember your audience!
- To convince your reader to adopt your solution, you must address your reader's needs
- Try looking at the problem from your reader's point-of-view. What's *really* important to your reader?

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## *Address the objections*

- After explaining your solution and including (at least) three strong reasons why it should be implemented, you have one more thing to do. You need to overcome objections
- Often, your reader will think of reasons why your solution should not be adopted. You need to anticipate those objections and respond to them

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- The best approach to overcoming objections is to start out by acknowledging the weaknesses of your solution. If you can't think of any—*think again*. If your solution doesn't have any problems, why wasn't it implemented already?
- Acknowledging weaknesses doesn't necessarily weaken your proposal. On the contrary, it helps build credibility with your reader
- When acknowledging weaknesses, be respectful of counter positions to your own. Just because others see things differently, that doesn't automatically mean you're always right!

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- The key to overcoming objections is to be frank with your reader. Acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of your proposal, and conclude with the statement that—on balance—your solution is a good one
- Finally, end with a call to action!
- If you want your reader to take action at the end of your proposal, then clearly state what you want your reader to do