



# What are we looking for in proposal session descriptions?

What makes a session proposal stand out from the crowd? These general tips and examples can help you write a proposal that gets noticed.

## Know your audience

Every event appeals to different groups, so consider the main audience that will be coming to the conference you're proposing for. What do they want to know? What do they already know? What are their biggest pain points that you can help solve?

## Speak directly to potential attendees

We're always looking for sessions that are audience-focused. A great way to quickly show that focus is to write your description as though you're talking directly to your audience (*you'll learn, you'll explore, you'll discuss, etc.*) and convincing them of why they should come to your session.

## Be specific about what's special about your session

It's not uncommon for us to receive multiple proposals on the same topic. Be sure that your description shares what's special about your particular take on the subject matter. As well, be careful not to just tease at what you'll cover. Instead, give as much detail as you can about the specific techniques, approaches, tools, and strategies you'll share.

## Set clear expectations

Make sure your description doesn't just report what you're going to talk about, but also clearly lets attendees know what they should expect to get out of the experience.

## Show the applicability

This is particularly important for case studies. If your topic is focused on a particular situation but can apply more broadly, make that clear in your proposal. The less people have to guess about how your session applies to their work, the better.

## Keep it conversational

Think about how you would describe your topic to a co-worker—that informal but still professional tone is a good one for session proposals.

## Review descriptions from previous Guild events

The posted conference session descriptions are essentially edited versions of the proposal content. They're a great way to get a sense of what we're looking for.

## ✓ A Winning Description: Tech Example

This description shares a common challenge and addresses how a tool can solve it.

The title directly describes the topic and will help attendees know what to expect from the session.

The first part of the description clearly outlines the problem this session addresses. It also describes it in a way that feels grounded in common challenges people in our industry experience.

The second part focuses on the solution this session will share – the most important part of your proposal. This section does a good job of committing to sharing enough information that the session feels valuable, but not so much that it's overpromising what can be accomplished in 45 – 60 minutes.

It's also important to note that it includes specific details about what will be covered in the session. Rather than just saying it will discuss three steps for creating explainer videos, it also gives a high-level overview of what they are. That level of detail can help attendees understand what exactly they'll get from the session.

The third part shares the key takeaways for attendees. Because this section is just the highlights, these points share the gist of the main content that will be covered, not the in-the-weeds details.

### What is the suggested title for your session?

Creating Animated Explainer Videos Using CaptiLine

### Describe the challenge or problem that this session addresses:

Many designers find themselves needing to explain complicated concepts in their courses. Pages of text technically get the job done, but they're tedious to write and even more tedious to learn from. Plus, this approach isn't very effective, with many people forgetting the content almost immediately after reading it. But what if there were another option for sharing your content in a way that's easier to understand and remember?

### Describe how this session will provide a solution for attendees:

In this session, you'll learn how animated explainer videos can help you create more engaging content and discover how to create them using a tool you probably already own: CaptiLine. You'll explore how to slim down your content for the video format and write effective scripts that are both clear and entertaining. You'll also look at the three important steps for creating explainer videos in CaptiLine. You'll start with how to establish an art style for your project, including fonts, color palettes, and image styles. Next, you'll get tips on how to build animations in CaptiLine, leveraging both templates and tricks with variables. Finally, you'll look at how to record high-quality voice-overs, from what microphones work best with CaptiLine to how to edit audio quickly in the tool itself or in Audacity. You'll leave this session with a new multimedia approach that will make your content more enjoyable for your audience and help teach them something along the way.

**List the specific attendee takeaways. This is also your opportunity to expand upon any strategies, techniques, and/or skills you touched on in the previous two questions.**

- Why explainer videos can be more effective than plain text for sharing content
- What makes a good explainer video script
- How to find the right balance between not enough and too much detail in your videos
- How to create animations in CaptiLine to illustrate your content
- How to record and integrate voice-over and background music into your CaptiLine file

## Issue: Not enough information

While this description technically answers the questions, it does so with very little detail. Because the description is so vague, it's tough to know what exactly the speaker will be covering on this topic. It also repeats content in the answers to the last two questions, providing even less detail than initially apparent.

It's important that your description share more specific details about what you're going to be talking about in your session. Those details help people see the value in your content. They also help show what's special about your take on the material—a particularly helpful piece of information if several people propose to speak on the same topic. Having a unique angle can help your proposal stick out from the crowd.

As well, if your description mentions you'll be sharing a set of tips, techniques, tools, or approaches, don't leave it vague. Mention specifically what they are, even if it's just at a high level.

### **What is the suggested title for your session?**

Animated Explainer Videos

### **Describe the challenge or problem that this session addresses:**

We often need to explain complicated concepts in our courses. How can we share that content in a way that's easier to understand and remember?

### **Describe how this session will provide a solution for attendees:**

In this session, you'll learn how animated explainer videos can help you create more engaging content and how to create them using CaptiLine. You'll explore tips for writing scripts and creating video content. You'll also look at the three most important steps for creating explainer videos in CaptiLine.

### **List the specific attendee takeaways. This is also your opportunity to expand upon any strategies, techniques, and/or skills you touched on in the previous two questions.**

- Why you should use explainer videos
- How to write a video script
- How to create videos in CaptiLine
- Three steps for creating explainer videos

## ✘ Issue: Not targeted at the Learning Guild audience

This is a great description. The only problem is that this session doesn't target the average attendee of Learning Guild conferences.

The majority of people who attend our conferences create content for adults. Most work in corporate training environments, with a smaller percentage coming from academia, predominantly from higher education.

That's not to say, however, that you need to work in those fields to propose content for our events—in fact, we love having people outside our field speak at our conferences. You just need to gear your proposals to our audience.

For instance, the person who wrote this proposal could rework it to be a more general session about how to use CaptiLine to create explainer videos. While the speaker's own experience was with creating content for elementary students, many of the techniques and strategies he or she used to create those videos could be useful for *anyone* who creates training content. Simply finding a new approach to cover that information in a way that's useful for the average Guild event attendee is a great option.

### **What is the suggested title for your session?**

Using CaptiLine-Based explainer Videos to Teach Elementary School Math Concepts

### **Describe the challenge or problem that this session addresses:**

Elementary school teachers constantly find themselves needing to explain complicated math concepts to students. While textbooks technically get the job done, students often find them tricky and boring to read. Classroom lecturing can help make math feel more approachable, but it's not something your students can review later on. But what if there were another option for sharing new math concepts in a way that's easier to understand and remember?

### **Describe how this session will provide a solution for attendees:**

In this session, you'll learn how animated explainer videos can help you make math concepts easier for students to grasp. Find out how to create them using a tool you may already own: CaptiLine. You'll explore how to slim down content for the video format and write effective scripts to explain common math techniques and rules. You'll also look at the process for creating your own explainer videos in CaptiLine, including creating an art style, building animations, and recording voice-over. You'll leave this session with a new technique that will help make math more enjoyable for your students.

### **List the specific attendee takeaways. This is also your opportunity to expand upon any strategies, techniques, and/or skills you touched on in the previous two questions.**

- Why explainer videos can be more effective than textbooks for explaining math concepts
- What makes a good explainer video script
- How to find the right balance between not enough and too much detail in your videos
- How to create animations in CaptiLine to illustrate your content
- How to record and integrate voice-over and background music into your CaptiLine file

## ✓ A Winning Description: Case Study Example

Overall, this session description gives a good sense of what we're looking for in a proposal about a case study. It summarizes the key points about the project and also clearly shares what others can learn from it.

The title directly describes the topic and will help attendees know what to expect from the session.

The first part of the description clearly outlines the problem this session addresses. Because it's a case study, this description does describe a specific situation, but it's also written so that people in similar situations will be able to see how the content can relate to their work as well.

The second part points out how this session addresses the problem. Once again, because it's a case study, it touches not only on how the speaker solved their own challenge, but also on what someone in a different situation can learn from this.

The third part highlights the key takeaways for attendees. Even though this is a case study, this section stays focused on what information from this session will be most useful for attendees in their own work, not the simple facts of the case study.

### What is the suggested title for your session?

Using Storytelling to Make Compliance Training Stick

### Describe the challenge or problem that this session addresses:

It's that yearly task that everyone dreads: compliance training. For many, it's an unavoidable chore made even worse by the often boring and tedious way this content is presented. At XYZ Bank, compliance training was meeting the letter of the law, but the bank found that its training actually wasn't changing the behavior of its employees. The team needed a new approach—and one that they could build in-house.

### Describe how this session will provide a solution for attendees:

In this case study session, find out how XYZ Bank revitalized its compliance training by leveraging an unexpected technique: storytelling. You'll explore how the team used real stories to draw people's attention, show how the content mattered to their work, and help them remember it long afterward. You'll learn how to identify what content is best suited to a story format and how to find real examples to share. You'll then learn storytelling techniques that will assist you in crafting a fictional scenario that feels grounded in reality and will make a story stick with your reader. Finally, you'll investigate how to measure the difference this technique can make in the way people retain information.

### List the specific attendee takeaways. This is also your opportunity to expand upon any strategies, techniques, and/or skills you touched on in the previous two questions.

- Why storytelling is so effective for making dry content more engaging and memorable
- How to use employee interviews to find real-world stories that are related to your content and your audience's lived experience
- What techniques make a strong story, including using a narrative hook at the beginning, consistent characterization, and showing instead of telling
- How performance data can be the most useful tool for proving a story-based approach is working

## Issue: It's all about you

This description very clearly tells the story of what this company did to address its compliance training problems. However, it doesn't articulate what attendees will get out of the session.

Right now, this feels very niche to the banking industry, but rethinking how this story is told can make it applicable to a substantially wider audience.

When writing a case study proposal, it's very important to make it clear how people not in your exact situation will still benefit from hearing your story. If an attendee can't see that benefit in the description, they'll likely choose not to attend your session.

### **What is the suggested title for your session?**

How We Made Our Compliance Training Come Alive

### **Describe the challenge or problem that this session addresses:**

Every spring, XYZ Bank asked employees to complete a task they dreaded: compliance training. Anti-money-laundering, industry-specific customer service, and branch safety courses were at best seen as a necessary evil and at worst as a waste of time. And while this training was meeting the letter of banking law, it actually wasn't changing the behavior of employees. We needed a new approach—and one that we could build in-house.

### **Describe how this session will provide a solution for attendees:**

In this session, you'll find out how XYZ Bank revitalized its compliance training by leveraging an unexpected technique: storytelling. This case study will tell you how we used real-world stories from the banking world and attention-grabbing writing to draw our employees' attention, show them how this content mattered to their branch work, and help them remember it long afterward. You'll learn how we found the content for our stories, what our development process for writing them was like, and how we reworked our existing courses to focus them around these new story examples.

### **List the specific attendee takeaways. This is also your opportunity to expand upon any strategies, techniques, and/or skills you touched on in the previous two questions.**

- What sources we found in our company for great example stories
- What kinds of stories worked best for our content
- How we ensured that this story-based approach still met the banking legal standards
- What data we used to prove to our SMEs that this approach helped improve our branches

## ✘ Issue: It's a pitch!

This description reads much more like a commercial for services rather than a case study people can learn from.

While it's absolutely OK to propose sessions that talk about how a solution you created for a client or a topic related to the tool/service your company offers, it's important to walk the fine line between sharing your story and sounding like you're selling your services or a product to attendees.

If the session is more about building awareness of what your business has to offer clients or why someone should buy the product you used, then it can often come across more like a pitch.

If you're a vendor/consultant, be aware that this can make some attendees view a session with a bit more skepticism. However, you can address that by sharing a story that doesn't rely on the audience buying your services/product to get valuable insights. Writing a proposal that sticks to sharing the strategy behind solving a specific, common challenge can be helpful. Bringing your client along for case studies is also a good way to address this challenge. If your organization sells a tool, consider proposing a topic that covers techniques that can be used with multiple tools or is tool agnostic.

### What is the suggested title for your session?

How We Made XYZ's Compliance Training Come Alive

### Describe the challenge or problem that this session addresses:

Every spring, XYZ Bank asked employees to complete a task they dreaded: compliance training. They knew they needed a new solution that went beyond meeting the letter of the law and actually changed behavior. They reached out to our company for the solution, knowing our anti-money-laundering, industry-specific customer service, and branch safety courses were some of the best in the industry.

### Describe how this session will provide a solution for attendees:

In this session, you'll find out how we helped XYZ Bank revitalize its compliance training and how we can help your organization as well. This case study will tell you about our proprietary storytelling tool that helps real stories come to life and grab employee attention. You'll learn how we found the content for these stories, how to import them into our storytelling tool, and the results that proved this investment in our approach had value to the business.

### List the specific attendee takeaways. This is also your opportunity to expand upon any strategies, techniques, and/or skills you touched on in the previous two questions.

- What sources we found for great example stories
- How our storytelling tool makes training more engaging,
- How we ensured that this approach still met our client's industry legal standards
- What data we used to prove this approach met business needs
- What other compliance training approaches our company has to offer your organization