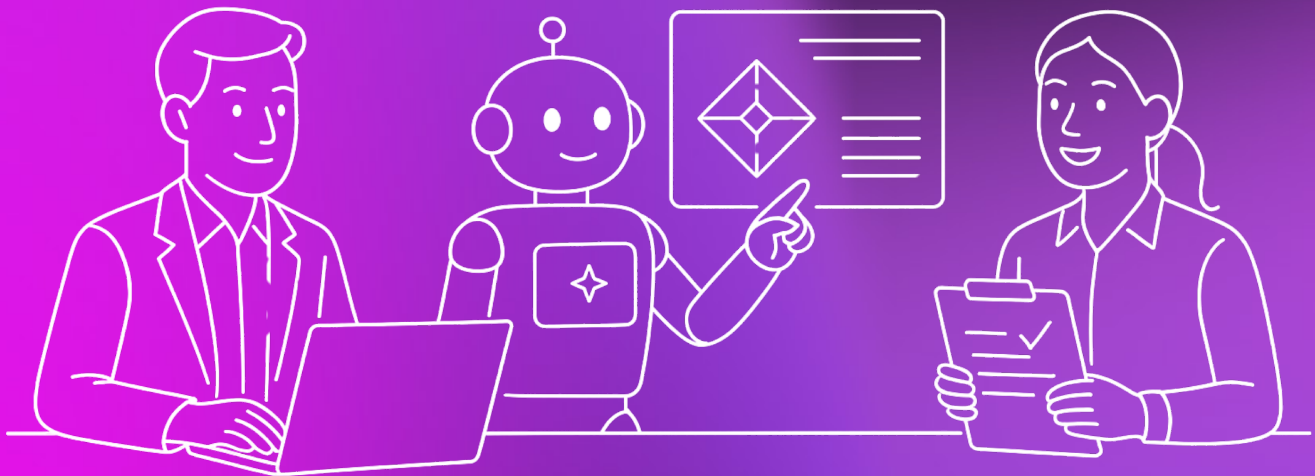# Draft, Differentiate, Drive:

Rethinking Consultancy Proposal Workflows with Generative AI

Master Thesis
Strategic Product Design, Technical University of Delft

Lotte Boekestijn

Author
Lotte E. Boekestijn
Student Number: 5112079

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Science
in Strategic Product Design
Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering

at the Delft University of Technology, to be defended publicly on
22nd of July, 2025

Thesis Committee:
Chair: **Ir. R.G.H. (Bart) Bluemink**
Mentor: **Dr. R.S.K. (Senthil) Chandrasegaran**

Company Accenture Song:
First mentor: Raban van Deursen, Growth Strategy Consultant
Second mentor: Kay Langenberg, Program and Project Management Manager
Buddy: Ir. Ynhi Nguyen, Growth Strategy Consultant

Abstract

As consulting firms face increasing pressure to deliver proposals faster and more efficiently, the RFP workflow has become a critical yet strained process—especially within high-volume environments like Accenture Song. GenAI, and more specifically LLMs, offer new possibilities to streamline repetitive tasks, improve consistency, and reduce workload. Yet, there remains little empirical insight into how these technologies can be meaningfully embedded in real-world consulting workflows without disrupting human collaboration.

This thesis explores *how GenAI might support greater efficiency and employee satisfaction within the RFP workflow of Accenture Song's D&DP team*. Combining literature research with qualitative methods—including interviews, process shadowing, and a collaborative mapping session—the study identifies recurring pain points in areas such as proposal development, communication, and feedback loops. These insights are synthesised into key opportunity areas where GenAI could augment, rather than replace, existing work.

Using the Double Diamond framework, a design process was applied to translate findings into actionable interventions. Multiple concept directions were generated, evaluated, and refined through co-creation with the D&DP team. One hybrid solution was developed into a high-fidelity prototype that supports consultants in structuring proposals, maintaining consistency, and reducing rework.

The final solution is positioned across product, process, and strategic layers, offering a practical path for implementation. It shows that GenAI can be a powerful enabler—if introduced with care. Rather than automating away the human element, this project demonstrates how thoughtful design can turn emerging technology into meaningful support for the people doing the work.

Preface

As the final milestone of my master's in Strategic Product Design at TU Delft, this thesis, "Draft, Differentiate, Drive: Rethinking Consultancy Proposal Workflows with Generative AI", marks the conclusion of an intense and meaningful journey. The project was carried out in collaboration with Accenture Song and took place between February and July 2025. It has been both a deep dive into a real design challenge and a personal exploration of how technology, strategy, and human experience intersect in today's consulting practice.

Throughout this period, I explored the proposal development process within one of the world's leading consultancy firms. I became increasingly interested in this unique phase of work, where pressure, collaboration, and storytelling come together. What stood out to me was how complex this process is, not just in terms of structure, but also in terms of how people work with and around each other. The opportunity to introduce generative AI into this space made the project both timely and forward-looking. It became more than a research topic. It became a way to explore what it means to design for support, clarity, and alignment in high-stakes environments.

I am grateful to everyone at Accenture Song who helped shape this project. Special thanks go to the D&DP team, and to all those who offered their time, ideas, and openness throughout the research. Your contributions helped ground the work in practical realities while leaving space for creativity. **Raban** brought structure and a sharp strategic mindset, helping me ground the work in real-world problems while always encouraging me to step back and see the bigger picture. **Kay** was both a creative sparring partner and a source of steady support, skilled at coaching and always bringing energy and focus to our sessions. **Ynhi** was the true jack of all trades: present when needed, unafraid of any question, and quick to offer clarity or a fresh perspective.

I also want to thank my TU Delft supervisors for their thoughtful feedback and guidance. **Bart** provided steady support and consistently encouraged me to maintain a strong design lens, while **Senthil** offered sharp critique that pushed me to strengthen my arguments and deepen my analysis. Your input helped me refine the story while staying true to the insights that emerged through research. I'm especially grateful for the freedom you gave me to explore, and the support you offered when I needed direction. :)

To my friends and family, informally and formally, thank you for being present during the more challenging parts of this journey. Your encouragement, patience, and reminders to pause made all the difference.

This thesis is a contribution to a broader conversation about how we work with AI. I hope it not only offers useful insights for improving proposal work, but also prompts reflection on how we want to shape future tools in service of better collaboration and creativity.

Enjoy reading!

Lotte Boekestijn

Bart   Senthil   Lotte   Raban   Ynhi   Kay

How to Read?

At the start of each phase, you'll find:

- A visual showing where we are in the Triple Diamond (Derived from Double Diamond Framework explained on pages 15-17)

- A short introduction summarising the goals of the chapter.

- A guiding question or quote to prompt reflection and open-minded thinking.

Some chapters close with Key Takeaways— short, clear summaries that distil the most important insights or outcomes. These are intended to make the thesis easier to navigate and to help connect the dots between research, design, and strategy.

This format supports both linear reading and selective navigation. Whether you're interested in GenAI's role in consulting, the RFP workflow at Accenture Song, or how design can bridge strategy and practice, you can dip into the chapters most relevant to your interest

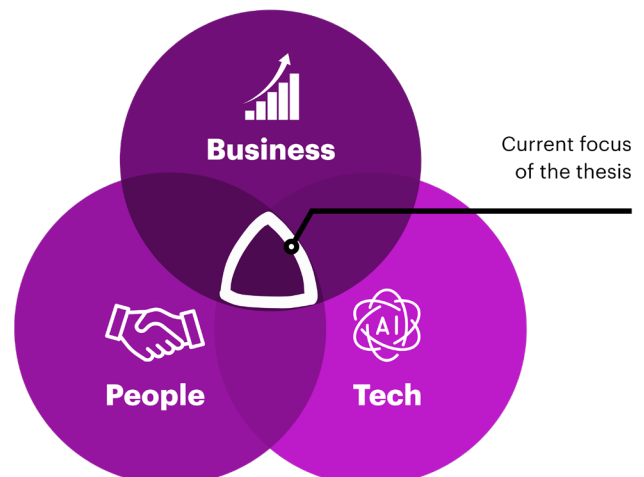

Chapter start

Key take aways

Current focus of the thesis

Figure 1: Focus of Thesis

Abbreviations

AI = Artificial Intelligence
D&DP = Design & Digital Products
GenAI = Generative Artifical Intelligence
RFP = Request for proposal
TU delft = Technical University of Delft

LLM: Large Language Model
SME: Subject Matter Expert
FMEA: Failure Mode and Effects Analysis
KPI: Key Performance Indicator
CAL: Client Account Lead
MD: Managing Director
RAG: Retrieval-Augmented Generation
NLP: Natural language processing

Table of Content

1 Introducing the Project

The rapid pace of change in technology, data, and artificial intelligence—including the rise of GenAI—coupled with shifting consumer preferences and evolving workforce dynamics, has created a unique moment of transformation for businesses across all industries. Companies are now faced with the imperative to rethink how they compete, how they define and deliver value, and how they build agility and operational excellence. These shifts also demand a reimagining of talent strategies. In essence, this is a time to embrace reinvention, to evolve into the next best version of your organization, and to seize the opportunities that change presents (Accenture, 2025).

1.1 Project Context

The Dutch management consulting industry is valued at approximately €28.8 billion in 2025 and has grown at a compound annual growth rate of 2.9% between 2019 and 2024 (IBISWorld, 2024). This steady expansion reflects continued demand for strategic, operational, and digital expertise across industries. Accenture holds the largest market share within this sector, underscoring its central role in shaping consultancy services in the Netherlands.

However, this growth is unfolding under increasing structural pressure. Demographic shifts are reducing the availability of skilled labour: by 2050, the global worker-to-retiree ratio is expected to drop from 8:1 to 4:1 (World Economic Forum, 2022). Although

Dutch-specific projections vary, the trend mirrors local challenges. At the same time, productivity growth in the Netherlands has slowed significantly—averaging only 0.2% annually over the past decade (CBS, 2023). These developments intensify the need for innovation in how consultancy work is organised and delivered.

One internal process under particular strain is the RFP workflow. This workflow is critical for winning new business, yet remains highly manual and inefficient—reliant on repetitive content creation, fragmented collaboration, and limited reuse of prior work. These inefficiencies contribute to higher workloads, slower response times, and reduced employee satisfaction (Guida et al., 2023).

GenAI offers a promising response. With capabilities such as text generation, summarisation, visual content creation, and retrieval of relevant case materials, GenAI can reduce routine effort and enable consultants to focus on strategic thinking and client engagement. This is especially relevant for firms like Accenture Song, where high proposal volume and tight timelines are the norm.

The Netherlands is well-positioned to adopt such innovations. An estimated 43% of jobs in the Dutch economy are seen as complementary to AI—higher than in neighbouring countries such as Belgium (39%), France (39%), and Germany (35%) (ING, 2025). This readiness is further supported by a robust digital infrastructure

and a strong innovation ecosystem, as recognised by the IMF's AI Preparedness Index.

Early signals of change are already visible. Dutch startup Brainial has attracted significant investment for its AI-based tendering tools (Quotenet, 2025), and models like DeepSeek show the rapid evolution of generative technologies in supporting automation, collaboration, and content structuring (ING, 2025). Together, these developments signal a shift—not just in tools, but in how consultancy work can be reimagined for the future.

1.2 Project Assignment

1.2.1 Company Relevance

Accenture Song is the world's largest tech-enabled creative group, blending strategy, design, and technology to help clients stay relevant in an increasingly dynamic marketplace (Accenture, 2025). Winning new client work is central to its business model, and the RFP process plays a vital role in this effort. Within the organization, the D&DP practice supports the creation of these proposals by working cross-functionally to produce tailored, visually compelling responses.

While the team often succeeds in delivering high-quality outputs, the underlying process is heavily dependent on manual work. Consultants spend considerable time conducting discovery, coordinating feedback, drafting responses, and formatting materials—often under tight timelines and with limited resources. As a result, inefficiencies in the RFP process lead to missed opportunities, strain internal budgets, and contribute to consultant fatigue.

Accenture Research estimates that LLMs could affect up to 40% of total working hours (Ghosh et al., 2023). Moreover, 98% of global executives acknowledge that foundational AI models will be a significant component of their organizational strategies within the next three to five years (Ghosh et al., 2023). The uptake of GenAI in day-to-day RFP development remains limited. This underutilization points to a gap between technological capability and organizational practice.

The timeliness of this research amplifies its relevance. With GenAI advancing rapidly and the consulting industry increasingly embracing AI-driven solutions, Accenture Song stands at a pivotal moment. Optimizing the RFP process with GenAI not only addresses immediate operational challenges but also positions the company to maintain its competitive edge. By improving efficiency, reducing pain points, and thus boosting employee satisfaction, this study offers actionable insights for Accenture Song while contributing to the broader discourse on AI's transformative potential in business processes.

Accenture Song

Figure 2: Logo Accenture Song

1.3 Research Assignment

Given the market pressures and technological opportunities outlined above, this thesis focuses on improving the RFP workflow within Accenture Song's D&DP practice

This research explores how GenAI might support a more efficient and engaging RFP process by addressing current workflow pain points and rethinking the role of tools in daily work. The goal is not just to introduce new technology, but to understand how consultants interact with it and how it could be applied in ways that deliver meaningful improvements.

The central research question is:

How might GenAI support greater efficiency and employee satisfaction within the Design & Digital Products Request For Proposal workflow at Accenture Song?

In this thesis, efficiency is not defined merely as speed or the reduction of time spent on individual tasks. Instead, efficiency is approached from a more holistic and strategic perspective, focusing on minimizing redundant work, decreasing cognitive overload, and reducing unnecessary iterations.

To explore this question, the research is structured around the Double Diamond framework, a widely used design methodology that alternates between divergent exploration and convergent definition explained in the next section. The study unfolds in two primary phases:

1. Understanding the Current State

This phase investigates how the RFP process currently functions, identifying key steps, bottlenecks, and inefficiencies. It also maps the tools and systems in use today, assessing how they support or hinder the workflow.

Sub questions:
RQ1.1 What are the current stages, activities, and key stakeholders in Accenture Song's D&DP RFP workflow?

RQ1.2 What are the primary challenges and inefficiencies faced by consultants in this process?

2. Exploring AI-Driven Opportunities

This phase focuses on identifying GenAI-based tools or concepts that could enhance the process. The aim is to understand where GenAI can add value, how it might change the way consultants work, and what conditions are needed to support adoption.

Sub questions
RQ2.1 What GenAI-driven solutions could be applied to mitigate these challenges and enhance the RFP process?

RQ2.2 What are the potential barriers to implementing GenAI solutions, and how can they be overcome to ensure successful adoption?

1.4 Project Approach

This project applies the Double Diamond framework developed by the British Design Council (2005) and the 4W framework (Liedtka, 2014) to guide the overall process.

The Double Diamond framework was selected for its balance between divergent exploration and convergent focus, making it well-suited for addressing complex, system-level challenges like the RFP workflow at Accenture Song. Its clear structure supports in-depth understanding of user needs while allowing space for iteration and refinement—both essential when working with emerging technologies such as GenAI. While the 4W model captures the shifting nature of creative energy and focus.

The Double Diamond model consists of two connected phases that alternate between broad exploration and focused refinement. The first phase involves expanding the understanding of a challenge, while the second focuses on narrowing down insights to shape a clear and practical solution. For the purpose of this thesis, a **third, intermediary diamond** has been introduced between Define and Develop. This central phase focuses specifically on identifying and evaluating GenAI-driven opportunities, acting as a conceptual bridge between problem analysis and solution design.

This "Triple Diamond" structure allows the project to better accommodate the complexities of reimagining the RFP workflow at Accenture Song, especially within the context of emerging technologies like GenAI.

It offers a structured yet flexible roadmap that supports iteration, learning, and alignment with both user needs and organizational strategy.

Alternative frameworks were considered, including Design Thinking, which emphasizes empathy and rapid ideation, and Lean UX or Agile, which prioritize fast iteration but assume a predefined problem. Service Design was also explored, particularly for mapping workflows, but was ultimately used as a supporting method rather than the overarching structure due to its narrower focus on customer journeys. The Double Diamond's adaptability and user-centered logic made it the most fitting choice for this

Double Diamond
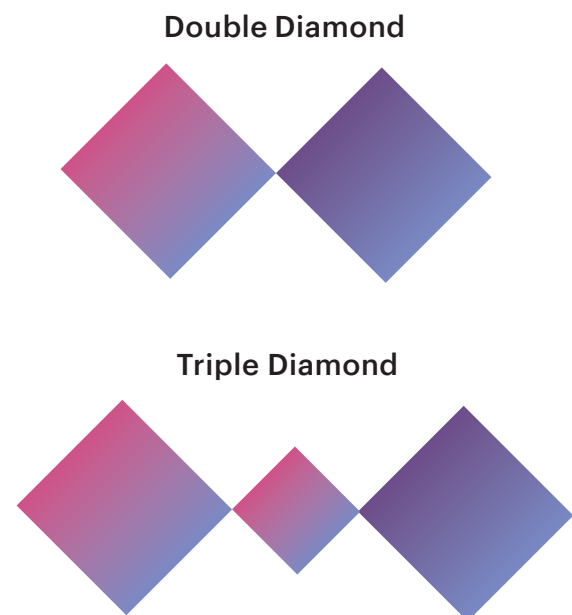
Triple Diamond

Figure 3: Double Diamond vs Triple Diamond

research. Overview of the process can be found in figure 4 on the next page.

Discover
This initial phase aims to understand the current RFP workflow and identify key challenges. The research began with a literature review on GenAI, consulting practices, and common RFP inefficiencies. This was followed by exploratory interviews with Accenture employees, a mapping workshop to visualize the process across roles, and a shadowing session to observe a live RFP in practice. Together, these methods provided a detailed view of the workflow and surfaced pain points that informed the next phase.

Define
In this phase, insights from the exploratory research are analyzed to identify recurring themes, bottlenecks, and stakeholder needs. Using a qualitative coding approach, challenges are grouped into broader categories such as workflow inefficiencies, collaboration issues, and tool limitations. This analysis forms the foundation for defining opportunity areas that will guide the design of potential solutions. These findings help clarify not only what the problem is, but also where GenAI may offer the most value.

Develop
This phase focused on generating and refining ideas based on the defined opportunity areas. Over 30 concepts were created and evaluated using impact–effort and strategic criteria. Four were developed further and tested with stakeholders. Based on feedback, two concepts were combined into one integrated solution that supports proposal teams during the early development phase.

Deliver
The final concept was translated into a working prototype and supported by an implementation roadmap. Integration into the workflow was explored through a process model and RACI matrix, with supporting materials designed for onboarding. The concept was validated across product, process, and strategic layers, ensuring alignment with Accenture Song's goals and GenAI ambitions.
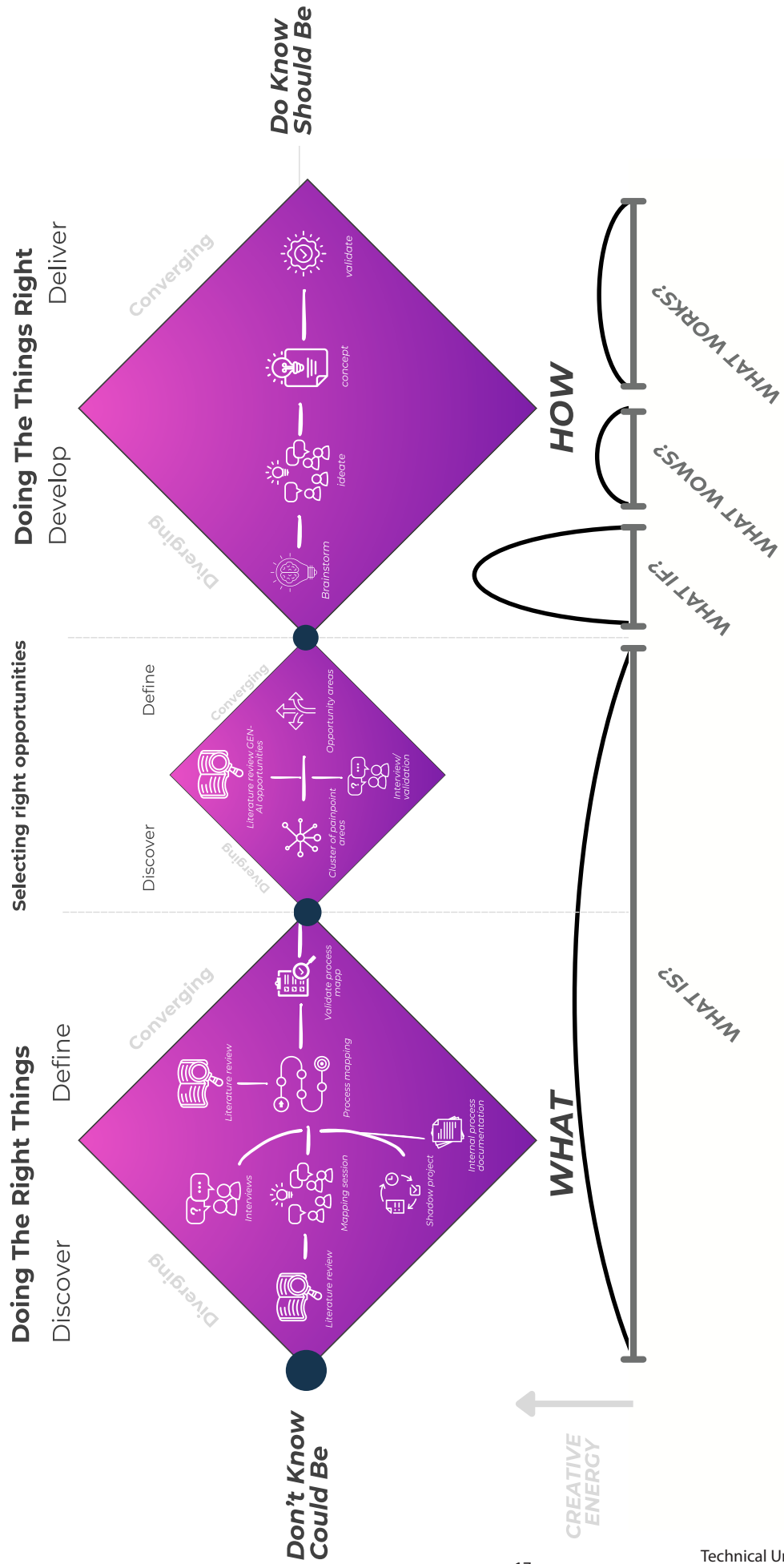
Figure 4: Project Process using 'Triple Diamond'

Don't Know
Could Be

Doing The Right Things
Discover   Define

Diverging   Converging

Literature review · Interviews · Mapping session · Shadow project · Internal process documentation · Literature review · Process mapping · Validate process mapp

Selecting right opportunities
Discover   Define

Diverging   Converging

Literature review GEN-AI opportunities · Cluster of painpoint areas · Interview/validation · Opportunity areas

Doing The Things Right
Develop   Deliver

Diverging   Converging

Brainstorm · ideate · concept · validate

Do Know
Should Be

WHAT   HOW

WHAT IS?   WHAT IF?   WHAT WOWS?   WHAT WORKS?

CREATIVE ENERGY

Technical University of Delft

This page is intentionally left blank

Discover

The Discover phase establishes the foundation for this project by combining external research with internal insights into how the RFP process plays out within Accenture Song's D&DP team. The aim was not to define solutions, but to uncover the realities of day-to-day proposal work. What slows teams down, where clarity breaks down, and which moments cause the most friction.

This chapter begins with a literature review to exploring three pillars tech, process and people (explained in the next page). It then zooms in through qualitative research: interviews, mapping sessions, shadowing, and internal documentation. Together, these inputs paint a detailed picture of the as-is RFP process that is high-stakes and fast-paced, yet often manual and shaped by structural inefficiencies. These findings uncover the recurring frictions that set the stage for meaningful intervention.

Literature review: A Three-Pillar Perspective

Tech   **Process**   **People**

To understand how GenAI might meaningfully support the RFP workflow, this literature review is structured around three foundational pillars: **technology, process,** and **people**.

These lenses were chosen because they reflect the interdependent nature of workflow transformation. **Technology defines what is possible**, **process reveals where inefficiencies occur**, and **people ultimately determine whether tools are adopted, adapted, or rejected**. This structure also aligns with both academic and industry perspectives on digital transformation, which consistently stress that sustainable innovation requires not only technical capability, but also organisational readiness and human alignment (Westerman et al., 2014; Accenture, 2023).

In the context of this thesis, the three pillars also serve a practical function: they connect the promise of GenAI to the real-world challenges observed in Accenture Song's D&DP team. By reviewing each pillar in turn, the chapter builds a comprehensive understanding of where GenAI can support, not by replacing consultants, but by augmenting their capabilities in ways that are contextually relevant, operationally feasible, and ethically sound. This framing ensures that subsequent design efforts are grounded in both research and organisational realities.

2.1 Technological Foundations of GenAI in Consulting

2.1.1 Defining GenAI and Its Capabilities

GenAI represents an important advancement within artificial intelligence. It differs significantly from earlier AI technologies, which primarily focused on analyzing existing data and recognizing patterns (Hancock & Puri, 2023). In contrast, GenAI uses deep learning models to create original content—such as text, images, speech, video, and even software code—in response to user inputs (Lim et al., 2023). These AI models achieve their capabilities by being trained on massive datasets, typically sourced from publicly available information online. As a result, the quality and usefulness of the content they produce directly depend on the volume and diversity of this training data (Lim et al., 2023; Nah et al., 2023).

At its core, GenAI is built around neural networks, which are computational models inspired by the structure and function of the human brain (IBM, 2023). A crucial step in this process is "tokenization," where data—such as text, images, or audio—is segmented into smaller components called "tokens." These tokens are then processed by sophisticated neural network architectures known as Transformers. Transformers predict subsequent tokens based on statistical likelihood, enabling GenAI systems to produce coherent, contextually appropriate outputs (Analytics Vidhya, 2023).

McKinsey (2023) categorizes GenAI's capabilities into four main areas:

- Content Generation: Automatically producing written content, visual elements, audio, and video.

- Information Synthesis: Quickly summarizing large volumes of data into actionable insights.

- User Engagement Augmentation: Enhancing interactions with users through personalized, conversational experiences.

- Acceleration of Software Development: Assisting in software programming tasks by automating code generation and debugging.

Given these capabilities, has significant potential to transform consulting practices, enhancing both internal operational efficiency and client-facing service quality. However, effectively integrating GenAI into consulting workflows requires careful consideration of its strengths, limitations, and ideal applications within existing organizational structures.

Technical University of Delft

2.1.2 Industry Adoption and Economic Impact

The consulting sector has been among the earliest adopters of GenAI, recognizing its potential to enhance service quality, drive business growth, and address operational inefficiencies. For instance, Accenture has committed $3 billion to GenAI initiatives, reporting approximately $600 million in quarterly revenue directly tied to these efforts, underscoring the technology's economic impact (Marr, 2024). Similarly, firms like EY and KPMG have introduced specialized GenAI services, reflecting a broader industry shift toward integrating this technology into core operations (Minevich, 2024). This chapter examines GenAI's adoption in consulting, its influence on job roles, market sentiment, and the transformation of traditional consulting practices, with a focus on its relevance to Accenture Song's D&DP RFP workflow.

GenAI distinguishes itself from earlier AI technologies by creating original content, such as text, images, and code, rather than solely analyzing data (Brynjolfsson et al., 2018). This capability extends its impact beyond routine tasks, significantly affecting high-skilled professional and managerial roles in consulting (Lassébie & Quintini, 2023; Milanez, 2023; Webb, 2020). For example, consultants can use GenAI to draft proposals, synthesize client requirements, or generate strategic insights, tasks traditionally requiring extensive human effort (EY, 2023). However, this potential comes with challenges, including concerns about algorithmic bias, which can perpetuate stereotypes if training data is flawed, necessitating robust governance and human oversight (Minevich, 2024).

Accenture compares GenAI's current state to the early days of cloud computing: foundational yet maturing, with its full potential still unfolding (Accenture, 2023). This perspective aligns with Accenture Song's strategic focus on blending technology and creativity to deliver client value, as seen in initiatives like its partnership with Aaru to enhance customer experience design through AI-driven simulations (Accenture, 2023). In the RFP workflow, GenAI can automate repetitive tasks like drafting standard sections or summarizing client briefs, reducing time and resource demands while allowing consultants to focus on creative and strategic work, potentially improving job satisfaction (McKinsey & Company, 2023).

Market sentiment toward GenAI is highly positive, with 89% of business buyers anticipating improvements in productivity and service quality, and 94% expecting significant efficiency gains (IBM, 2025). Yet, adoption remains cautious, with 92% of firms planning increased AI investments but primarily engaging in pilot projects (McKinsey & Company, 2024). This gap reflects challenges such as data quality, ethical concerns, and the need for integration into existing workflows. For Accenture Song, these challenges are particularly relevant, as the RFP process is manual and resource-intensive, with limited budgets for proposal creation (Guida et al., 2023).

The shift toward GenAI adoption is redefining consulting practices, moving from opinion-driven to evidence-based,

AI-enhanced workflows. Figure 5 illustrates this transformation, comparing traditional linear consulting methods to collaborative, AI-driven approaches that leverage data-driven insights and automation (IBM Institute for Business Value, n.d.). Additionally, Figure 6 highlights the exposure and complementarity of occupations to AI, showing that consulting roles like analysts and software engineers are highly suited for GenAI integration, offering significant potential for efficiency gains (ING, 2025).

Despite its promise, GenAI adoption in consulting faces hurdles. Ethical concerns, such as bias in AI outputs, require careful management to maintain client trust (Minevich, 2024). Data governance is another critical issue, as GenAI's effectiveness depends on high-quality, diverse training data (Lim et al., 2023). Furthermore, balancing AI automation with human expertise is essential, as clients value human judgment in strategic decision-making (AlphaSense, 2024). Accenture Song's $3 billion AI investment positions it to address these challenges, but strategic implementation—through training, governance, and workflow redesign—is crucial for success (Accenture, 2023).
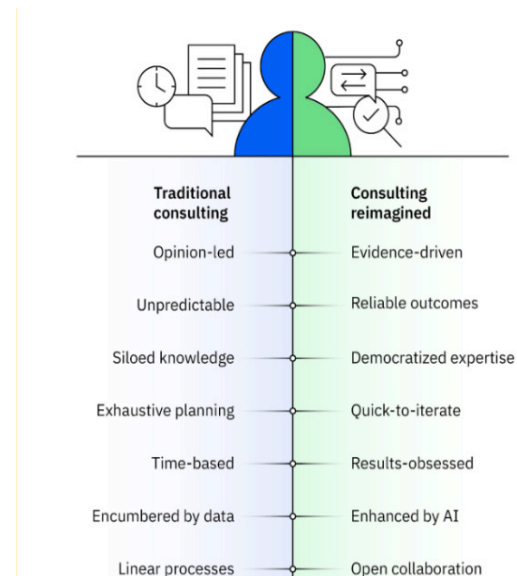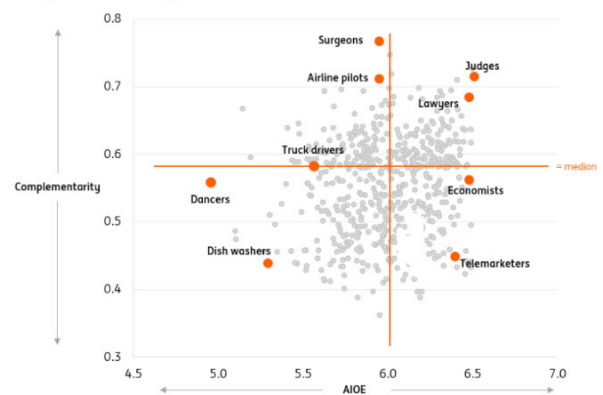

Figure 5: Traditional consulting vs reimagined consulting

Conceptual diagram of AI Occupational Exposure (AIOE) and Complementarity

Source: Felten, Raj, and Seamans (2021); Pizzinelli and others (2023); IMF staff calculations

Figure 6: AI Occupational Exposure and Complementary

2.1.3 Practical Implications and Limitations

GenAI offers transformative opportunities for consulting, particularly for firms like Accenture Song, where the D&DP RFP workflow is central to securing client projects. By automating tailored RFP responses, summarizing large datasets, and enhancing client engagement through personalized interactions, GenAI can address inefficiencies inherent in manual processes (McKinsey & Company, 2024). Additionally, LLMs, when trained on industry-specific datasets, can produce detailed, domain-specific content such as contracts and complex documentation, further streamlining consulting tasks (EY, 2023). These capabilities align with Accenture Song's need to optimize its RFP process, where time-intensive tasks and high workloads often challenge efficiency and consultant satisfaction.

Despite widespread enthusiasm, documented real-world implementations of GenAI in consulting workflows remain scarce. Much of the discourse focuses on theoretical benefits rather than tangible outcomes, underscoring a critical need for empirical research to assess GenAI's practical effectiveness in day-to-day consulting scenarios (AlphaSense, 2024). This gap is particularly relevant for Accenture Song, where the RFP process is predominantly manual, and the potential of GenAI to deliver scalable, proven solutions remains underexplored. Research is needed to distinguish between preliminary pilot projects and robust, enterprise-wide applications that can reliably enhance productivity and morale.

GenAI also presents several limitations that consulting firms must navigate carefully.

One significant issue is "hallucination," where AI models generate plausible but factually incorrect information, posing risks in high-stakes RFP contexts (Huang et al., 2023). Biases embedded in training datasets can lead to outputs that inadvertently discriminate or misrepresent, raising ethical concerns that require robust governance frameworks (Bender et al., 2021). The opaque nature of GenAI systems complicates transparency and accountability, as their internal logic is often difficult to interpret (Rudin, 2019). Furthermore, unresolved concerns about intellectual property rights and privacy risks associated with extensive data usage create additional hurdles for adoption, particularly in consulting, where client confidentiality is paramount (Brown et al., 2020).

2.2 Process Optimization: Enhancing Consulting Workflows with GenAI

2.2.1 The RFP Workflow: Challenges and Painpoints

The Request for Proposal (RFP) process is a cornerstone of consulting firms' ability to secure client engagements and sustain business growth, particularly for large-scale consultancies like Accenture Song. However, this process is often labor-intensive, contributing to significant inefficiencies that impact both operational performance and employee satisfaction. Common challenges include repetitive content creation, manual research, unclear client requirements, and disjointed communication, which lead to increased workloads, delays, and suboptimal proposal quality (Putnam Consulting Group,

Figure 7: Illustration of current challenges in RFP

2014; Consource.io, 2023; Rajbhoj et al., 2020). This chapter examines these inefficiencies, their impact on consulting firms, and the potential for solutions like GenAI to address

them.

A survey by Responsive revealed that 84% of professionals in proposal teams rely heavily on non-automated, manual approaches, with a notable difficulty being the inability to locate essential content quickly during proposal development, resulting in delays and inconsistent outputs (Responsive, 2019). For instance, manual processes often involve recreating standard proposal sections, such as methodologies or team bios, which consumes significant time and resources (Evalueserve, 2022). Additionally, unclear or ambiguous client requirements exacerbate these issues, leading to prolonged clarification processes that delay submissions and increase costs (Consource.io, 2023). Disjointed communication, often managed through emails and scattered team interactions, further complicates collaboration, reducing visibility into progress and increasing the risk of errors (Shankar, 2017).

Time constraints amplify these challenges. A case study by Evalueserve highlighted how tight submission deadlines often result in incomplete proposals or rushed work, creating additional stress and resource inefficiencies within teams (Evalueserve, 2022). For example, employees at a global consulting firm were found to recreate proposals from scratch without referencing past successful submissions, due to knowledge silos across business units and a lack of centralized

content management (Evalueserve, 2022). Similarly, Shankar (2017) noted that subject matter experts (SMEs) experience frustration when pulled from primary duties to contribute to RFPs, while sales teams face pressure from urgent deadlines, risking missed opportunities if key contributors are unavailable.

For Accenture Song, operating at a high volume of RFPs, these inefficiencies have significant implications. The firm's reliance on manual processes strains limited budgets allocated for proposal creation, impacting profitability and competitiveness (Guida et al., 2023). While specific data for the Netherlands is unavailable, Accenture Song's substantial contribution to Accenture's global revenue—bolstered by its $3 billion investment in AI—underscores the importance of optimizing the RFP workflow to maintain long-term performance (Accenture, 2023). Inefficiencies like repetitive drafting and poor communication not only reduce win rates but also increase consultant workloads, contributing to burnout and lower job satisfaction.

Emerging solutions, such as Evalueserve's AI-powered Publishwise platform, demonstrate potential to address these inefficiencies by automating content reuse and improving knowledge management across global teams (Evalueserve, 2022). Similarly, Responsive's RFP software highlights the value of centralized content libraries to streamline proposal development, reducing time spent on manual tasks by up to 50% (Responsive, 2019). However, the adoption of such tools in consulting remains limited, with many firms still relying on traditional methods (McKinsey & Company, 2024). This gap emphasizes the need for empirical research to validate the effectiveness of AI-driven solutions in the RFP process, particularly for enhancing efficiency and consultant satisfaction at firms like Accenture Song.

2.2.2 Gaps in Process Research

GenAI holds significant promise for transforming proposal work within consulting, particularly in addressing inefficiencies in the RFP process at firms like Accenture Song. However, there is a notable lack of empirical research examining GenAI's impact on the RFP process from a holistic, work-system perspective. Existing studies have not systematically tracked how GenAI influences specific stages—such as discovery, drafting, or internal review—nor have they quantified improvements in cycle time, accuracy, or win rates (AlphaSense, 2024). This chapter synthesizes the limited academic literature on RFP pain points and GenAI applications, highlighting critical research gaps and their implications for consulting workflows.

The broader literature on RFP inefficiencies is sparse, with only a few studies directly addressing the end-to-end process. Two exploratory papers in the telecommunications field by Regnell and Damian (2012) and Leiro (2018) identify challenges such as large, complex RFPs, tight deadlines, and limited client communication, which align with consulting contexts. However, most research focuses on adjacent tasks rather than the comprehensive consulting workflow. For instance, studies explore AI applications in narrow functions: requirement extraction (Motahari-Nezhad et al., 2016), information retrieval for project initiation (Rajbhoj et al., 2020), and automated response generation using retrieval-augmented generation techniques (Bilal & Åström, 2024; Nistala et al., 2024). These confirm that natural language processing and machine learning can enhance isolated steps, but they fall short of assessing GenAI's system-level contribution to efficiency, quality, or employee experience.

For consultancies like Accenture Song, which manage high volumes of RFPs, this lack of sector-specific evidence creates uncertainty about GenAI's return on investment and the organizational changes needed for adoption. The absence of Dutch market data further complicates the picture, as local factors—such as the Netherlands' high AI complementarity (43% of jobs, per ING, 2025)—may influence implementation strategies. Industry reports, such as those from Evalueserve (2022), suggest AI can address inefficiencies by automating content reuse, but these lack the rigor of academic studies. Similarly, Responsive (2024) highlights issues like disjointed communication and manual content searches, but these insights are not grounded in peer-reviewed research.

The research gap is clear: consulting firms need targeted studies that measure GenAI's impact across the full RFP lifecycle, from discovery to submission. Such studies should quantify improvements in cycle time, proposal accuracy, and potentially win rates while exploring effects on employee satisfaction, particularly in high-pressure environments like Accenture Song's D&DP workflow. Addressing this gap would shift the discourse from theoretical potential to actionable insights, guiding firms in leveraging GenAI effectively.

Technical University of Delft

2.3 Human-AI Collaboration and Adaptation in Consulting

2.3.1 The evolving role of humans in an AI-Driven Era

GenAI is advancing faster than most organisational structures can adapt. As new tools enter daily workflows, consultants are reassessing how they collaborate with intelligent systems (Kagermann, 2015; Maedche et al., 2016). Uptake, however, is uneven. Recent estimates suggest that around three-quarters of knowledge workers have experimented with GenAI, yet depth of use varies widely and reliable data remain scarce.

Accenture frames this shift as a "New Learning Loop." As consultants use AI, the models improve. Better models, in turn, encourage broader adoption, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of capability building (Accenture, 2024). In practical terms, GenAI extends human capacity. It can draft content, summarise extensive research, automate routine tasks, and surface tailored recommendations. The aim is not to replace consultants but to free them for higher-value work that requires judgment and creativity (Wilson & Daugherty, 2018).

Even so, integration brings friction. Surveys by Accenture show that lack of time for up-skilling is the primary barrier to effective AI use (Accenture, 2025). Without structured support—training programmes, clear governance, and space to experiment—many employees risk falling behind just as new demands emerge.

In this environment, successful adoption hinges on thoughtful change management. Firms must provide targeted learning opportunities, encourage cross-functional collaboration, and establish guardrails that maintain quality and ethical standards. By pairing human expertise with GenAI's "infinite" skills, consultancies can boost productivity while keeping strategic control firmly in human hands.

2.3.2 Human Adaptation Challenges and Perceptions

Despite the promise of GenAI, adoption is far from friction-free. Employees worry about job displacement, data security, and the reliability of AI-generated outputs. Recent studies show a workforce split: some view GenAI as a creative partner, others as a potential threat (Guida et al., 2023; McKinsey & Company, 2025).

The way organisations frame GenAI strongly influences uptake. Positioning the technology purely as an automation tool can dampen enthusiasm, while presenting it as an enhancement to human expertise results in potential curiosity and engagement. Two persistent design hurdles compound this challenge. First, model opacity makes it hard for users to understand how GenAI arrives at specific answers. Second, highly complex outputs can overwhelm those unfamiliar with AI terminology or logic, reducing trust and willingness to rely on the tool (Yang et al., 2020).

Evaluating success therefore calls for clear metrics. A straightforward option is return on investment, where time saved on activities such as RFP drafting translates into measurable cost reductions or additional project capacity. A broader perspective can be obtained using a balanced scorecard that tracks financial outcomes alongside client satisfaction, internal process efficiency, and employee development (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Combining both views provides leaders with a rounded picture of GenAI's value while keeping human factors in sight.

Ultimately, sustaining adoption hinges on transparency, adequate training, and governance structures that protect data and ethical standards. Addressing these concerns early helps move perceptions from scepticism to pragmatic confidence, allowing consultants to embrace GenAI as a trusted ally rather than an opaque black box.

2.3.3 Facilitating Adoption Through Change Management

As GenAI takes over routine tasks such as data analysis and first-draft report writing, consultants are expected to move up the value chain. Their focus shifts to interpreting AI-generated insights, crafting strategic recommendations, and nurturing client relationships (Wilson & Daugherty, 2018). To thrive in this environment, consultants need new competencies: stronger data literacy, a grasp of AI ethics, and the ability to translate algorithmic output into business value. Structured training and up-skilling programmes are therefore essential.

Change-management frameworks can guide this transition. Kotter's eight-step model stresses the importance of building urgency, assembling cross-functional champions, and sustaining momentum with short-term wins (Kotter, 2012). The ADKAR model offers a granular lens on individual adoption, progressing from awareness to reinforcement (Hiatt & Creasey, 2012). Applied to GenAI in RFP work, both models underline that technology matters less than people: leadership alignment, clear communication, and iterative feedback loops are what turn pilots into lasting practice.

Accenture's internal studies reinforce this point, showing that GenAI delivers the greatest value when it augments—rather than replaces—human decision-making (Accenture, 2024). This resonates with research by Seeber et al. (2019) and Abdul et al. (2018), who argue that effective AI systems preserve user agency and foster mutual learning between humans and machines.

The market's early missteps illustrate the risk of skipping the human element. Some firms have rolled out tools like Microsoft Copilot without explaining use cases or providing hands-on training, leading to confusion and under-utilisation (Kane, 2025). In contrast, organisations that invest in guided learning pathways and embed AI champions within teams report higher adoption rates and smoother cultural integration (Sternfels & Atsmon, 2025).

In short, successful GenAI deployment is as much a people project as a technical one. Consulting firms that pair robust change-management practices with targeted skill development will be better positioned to unlock GenAI's full potential—turning automation anxiety into a catalyst for higher-level, human-led innovation.

2.3.4 The Virtuous Cycle and employee Satisfaction

The consulting industry, driven by creativity and client-specific solutions, is being reshaped by GenAI, which fosters a virtuous cycle where usage refines AI models, boosts user confidence, and drives broader adoption. This feedback loop delivers three key benefits: enhanced operational efficiency, accelerated idea generation, and increased focus on strategic work, particularly in labor-intensive processes like RFP responses, which are critical for securing assignments (Pham-Keskinen, 2013).

GenAI streamlines workflows by automating repetitive tasks such as research and drafting, with McKinsey (2023) estimating it can automate 60-70% of tasks, contributing to 0.1-0.6% annual productivity growth through 2040. In RFP workflows, tools like AlphaSense's Smart Summaries cut research time, with 65% of professionals using AI for such tasks in 2023 (AlphaSense, 2023).

GenAI also accelerates innovation by generating tailored content and fostering collaboration, enabling consultants to craft responsive proposals, as EY (2023) notes in its support for rapid scenario exploration. By automating routine tasks, GenAI frees consultants for strategic activities, with McKinsey (2023) reporting a 34% increase in automation potential for decision-making since 2017, and AlphaSense's ASLLM tool aiding market predictions (AlphaSense, 2023). While early evidence suggests morale improves by reducing repetitive tasks (EY, 2023), long-term effects on satisfaction and skill growth remain understudied, especially in high-performance consulting environments like Accenture Song's Dutch operations, where localized data is needed.

2.3.5 Ethical Considerations

The adoption of GenAI in consulting raises ethical challenges that demand robust governance to maintain trust and responsibility, particularly in client-facing work like RFPs. GenAI risks perpetuating biases in training data, potentially exacerbating inequality, as Bender et al. (2021) warn, citing cases like Amazon's biased AI hiring tool; regular audits and diverse test sets are essential to promote fairness (IBM, 2024; MDPI, 2024).

Protecting client data is critical, with GenAI posing risks of exposing sensitive information without safeguards like GDPR-compliant anonymization and selective fine-tuning (TechTarget, 2025; MDPI, 2024). Transparency is vital, as clients need clarity on GenAI's role in projects to trust its outputs, supported by clear disclosures (IBM, 2024; MDPI, 2024). Firms remain accountable for AI errors, requiring human oversight and review checkpoints to ensure reliability (IBM, 2024; TechTarget, 2025).

Ownership of AI-generated content, especially across clients, is unclear, necessitating new legal frameworks and guidelines on content use (MDPI, 2024; IBM, 2024). Addressing these issues ensures GenAI enhances consulting while maintaining ethical integrity, though further research is needed on long-term workforce and ethical impacts, particularly in the Dutch context.

2.4 Key take aways literature review

Technological Potential Is Clear, but Integration Remains Complex

GenAI offers a versatile set of capabilities that align well with RFP challenges: content generation, summarisation, knowledge retrieval, and conversational assistance. Leading firms like Accenture, EY, and KPMG are already exploring its use in drafting proposals, synthesising requirements, and automating repetitive tasks. These applications promise improvements in both efficiency and service quality. However, the literature warns of risks such as hallucination, embedded bias, and opacity in decision-making. Adoption, therefore, must be paired with strong governance, transparent workflows, and appropriate human oversight.

RFP Processes Are Ripe for Intervention, but Research Gaps Persist

The RFP process is both strategically critical and operationally strained—especially in firms like Accenture Song, where volume and complexity are high. Studies confirm pain points such as duplicated effort, content fragmentation, and communication breakdowns. Yet, academic research remains fragmented, often focused on narrow tasks like requirement extraction or proposal drafting. Very few studies examine the end-to-end RFP workflow in consulting settings. This gap suggests a pressing need for empirical work that evaluates GenAI's system-level impact on proposal efficiency, quality, and employee experience.

People Shape the Outcomes—Not Just the Tools

Organisational readiness and human factors are central to GenAI success. While many consultants are curious and optimistic, fears around job displacement, data privacy, and unclear tool logic remain. The way GenAI is introduced—whether as an assistant or as an automation substitute—strongly shapes adoption behaviour. Effective change management, as described in models like ADKAR and Kotter's eight steps, will be essential. Equally, success should be measured not just through time saved, but through metrics like employee satisfaction, perceived task value, and learning opportunities.

The literature provides clear direction for where GenAI can support the RFP process: streamlining routine work, improving content reuse, and enhancing client customisation. At the same time, it signals that these benefits will only materialise if tools are carefully embedded into workflows, backed by robust data practices, and introduced in a way that supports—not sidelines—consultants. This framing justifies the thesis's focus on understanding GenAI's fit within the specific context of Accenture Song's proposal workflow.

2.5 Research Approach
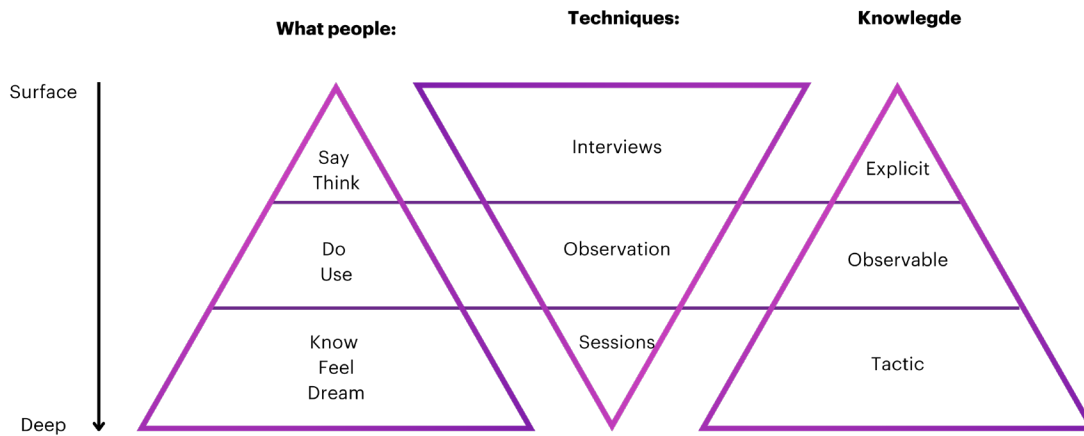
Figure 8: Research approach diagram

To build a grounded understanding of the RFP workflow at Accenture Song, a mixed-method qualitative research approach was used. This approach was designed to surface both explicit and tacit knowledge by combining multiple techniques, each targeting a different layer of user insight.

- Interviews capture what team members say and think. These provided firsthand perspectives on workflow pain points, expectations, and everyday challenges.

- Observation (shadowing) focuses on what people do and use in practice. By following a live RFP process, discrepancies between intended processes and actual behaviour became visible.

- The mapping session facilitates collaborative knowledge-building. It helps uncover tacit knowledge, what people know but do not always articulate, by making participants externalise their understanding of the end-to-end RFP process.

These methods were intentionally aligned with three dimensions of design research: what people articulate (explicit knowledge), what can be directly observed (observable knowledge), and what is deeply embedded or assumed (tacit knowledge). The diagram above visualises how each method contributes to this layered understanding.

Methodological Triangulation

Interviews, mapping session, shadowing, and internal document review were combined to achieve methodological triangulation (Fusch et al., 2018). Cross-checking these sources strengthened the credibility of the "as-is" workflow and ensured that insights rest on multiple, independent lines of evidence.

2.5.1 Sampling of Participants

A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to identify Accenture Song's D&DP employees who could provide the most relevant insights. Three criteria guided selection:

- Tenure and RFP Experience: Interviewees needed at least one year at Accenture Song to ensure first-hand involvement in the RFP workflow.

- Role Diversity: Participants represented a spread of job functions—analysts, designers, business strategists, and project leads—capturing perspectives that range from day-to-day execution to strategic oversight.

- Cross-Team Visibility – At least one senior team member with a sales or project-lead remit was included to offer a holistic view of parallel workstreams and organisational dependencies.

Table 1 presents an overview of the selected interviewees.

Participant selection for the workflow-mapping workshop followed the same purposive logic, with three additional checks:

- Direct RFP Involvement – Every attendee actively prepares, reviews, or executes proposals, ensuring first-hand process knowledge.

- Role Balance – Managers, consultants, and analysts were invited in roughly equal numbers to capture perspectives on both efficiency and satisfaction.

- Experience Range – The group blended recent hires with seasoned staff to surface differences across tenure.

All participants were drawn exclusively from the D&DP team, yet their day-to-day responsibilities span several sub-teams, providing a broad but coherent view of the current workflow. Table 2 presents an overview of the workshop participants.

Participants provided consent on analysing the workflow and use their input for this study. Confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing participants.

	Job title	Years at Song
P1	Growth Strategy Consultant	7
P2	Analyst	2
P3	Account lead director	10
P4	Sales	5
P5	Go to market Lead	10
P6	Senior Manager (US)	5

Table 1: Selected interview participants

	Job title	Years at Song
P7	Growth Strategy Consultant	6
P8	Growth strategy Analyst	2
P9	Growth strategy business designer	3
P10	Growth Strategy analyst	1
P11	Manager	6
P12	Growth Strategy analyst	3

Table 2: Selected workshop participants

2.5.2 Data Collection

The semi-structured interview guide was developed in line with Patton's (2002) four design principles; **openness**, **neutrality, clarity,** and **singularity**. Each main question invites broad reflection, while targeted probes encourage concrete examples.

Openness and Neutrality: Leading language was avoided (e.g., replacing "Do you struggle with proposal deadlines?" with "How do proposal deadlines influence your work?").

Clarity and Singularity: Each question addresses a single concept, reducing ambiguity and cognitive load.

The interviews with D&DP team employees were organized around three key themes, each with targeted questions and follow-ups. The first theme explored the current structure and steps of the RFP workflow, aiming to map the "as-is" process. The second theme focused on the challenges and inefficiencies employees face during RFP preparation and execution. The final theme addressed perceptions of the tools and technologies used in the workflow, including where they fall short in supporting efficiency and satisfaction. The sequence of themes was deliberately chosen to ease participants into the discussion, starting with familiar aspects of their current work and gradually moving toward reflections on pain points and tool limitations.

Interviews lasted 30–50 minutes and were conducted either in a quiet meeting room at Accenture Song's Amsterdam office or, when schedules required, via a secure video call.

Sessions were recorded with consent and transcribed for analysis. See appendix A for the interview guide.

A one-hour online mapping workshop, hosted on a structured Miro board, complemented the interview data. The session validated emerging findings and surfaced additional tool limitations. Time constraints ruled out a pilot workshop; instead, the agenda and prompts were refined after reviewing similar internal mapping exercises.

For direct observation, members of the D&DP team were shadowed during a live RFP cycle. An observation checklist captured task coordination, communication patterns, and tool usage. The checklist was updated after each progress meeting to incorporate new themes while minimising disruption to daily work. The checklist can be found in appendix B.
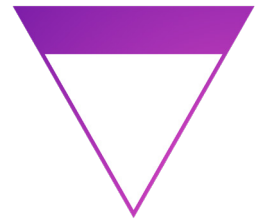
2.5.3 Data Analysis and Synthesis

Interviews

Given the qualitative nature of the data, derived from semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis was selected as the primary method. This approach, widely recognized for its flexibility and depth (Braun & Clarke, 2006), enables the identification of patterns and themes within the data, offering insights into employees' experiences and the operational realities of the RFP workflow.

.
The first step of the thematic content analysis involved familiarizing the researcher with the data gathered from the interviews. This was done by re-listening to the recorded audio and carefully reviewing and cross-checking the transcripts for accuracy.

In the second step, each transcript was coded individually to simplify the data and facilitate comparisons.

During the third step, the online application Miro was used to organize the codes into a visual overview. All the codes from the interviews were clustered into overlapping themes.

The fourth step involved reviewing these themes and grouping them into broader, overarching categories. In the final step, the themes were named and defined, resulting in a thematic map.

Appendix C contains all the themes, their associated codes, and relevant quotes. The interviews revealed insights into the painpoints and tools used in the RFP workflow.

To validate the findings from the thematic content analysis and explore additional perspectives, two external reviewers were consulted. This investigator triangulation strengthens the credibility of the analysis (Fusch et al., 2018).

The first reviewer, a Strategic Product Design student unfamiliar with the topic, found the outcomes to be coherent and logical. She recommended considering asking about 'where humans come into play and have the final say during the process'. The second reviewer, an strategist, agreed with the insights and suggested expanding on certain points. His feedback also included additional context on the challenges and goals of RFP processes. The refined results, based on these validations, are presented in the following chapter.
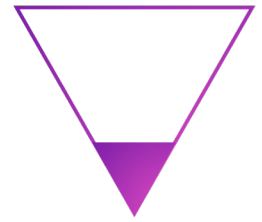
Mapping session

The mapping session followed a collaborative format, involving both individual contributions and group discussions. Participants were asked to outline each step in the RFP workflow, from the initial client request to the final proposal submission. This process was documented using a combination of sticky notes and stickers, which allowed for real-time visualization of the workflow stages. Liberating Structures were used to facilitate the process mapping session as a means to overcome the limitations of conventional meeting formats, which often swing between being overly controlled. These structured-yet-flexible methods support inclusive, creative engagement by giving all participants an active role in shaping outcomes, making them especially valuable when exploring complex workflows (Lipmanowicz & McCandless, 2013).

The data from the mapping session was then analyzed to identify recurring patterns and bottlenecks in the workflow. To ensure accuracy and reduce bias, the session outputs will be reviewed and cross-checked by a second person. These insights were later integrated into big as-is workflow mapped in the Confidential Appendix
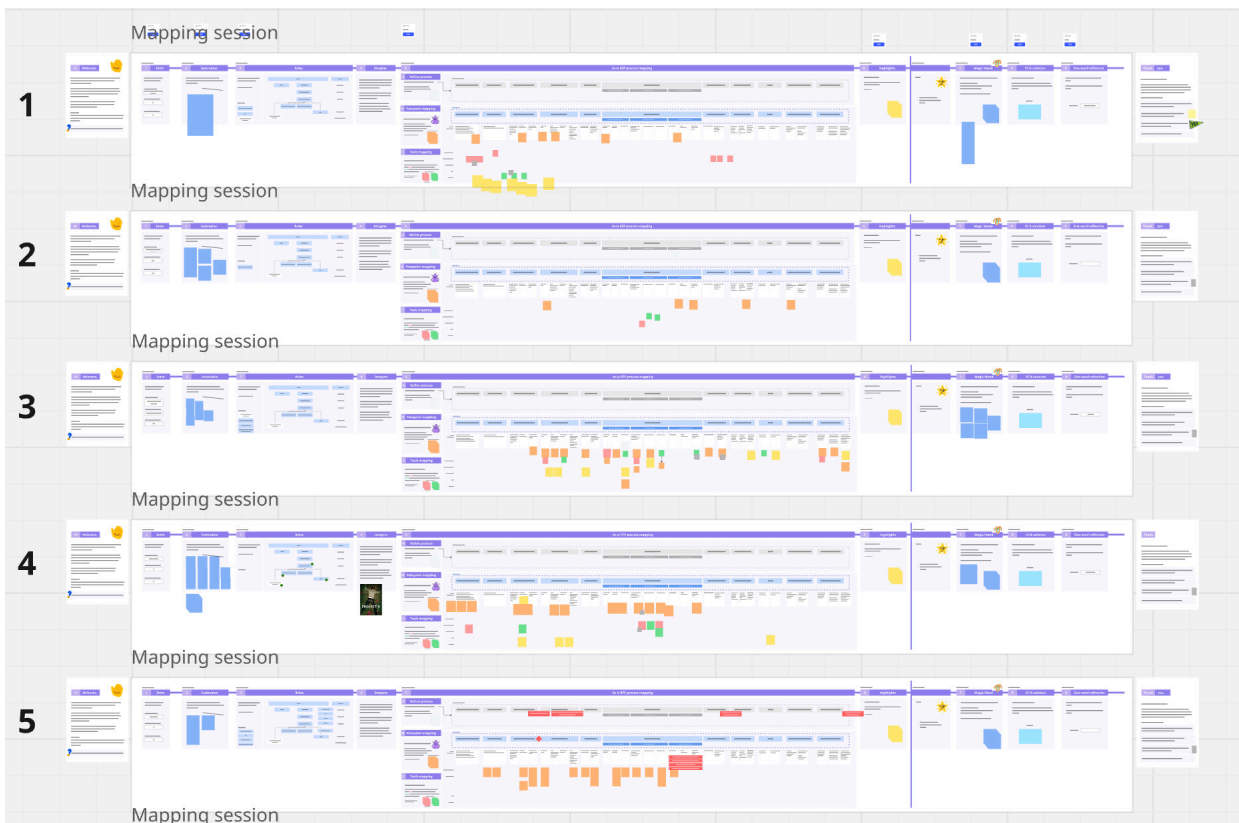
Figure 9: Mapping session created in Miro , (Appendix D)
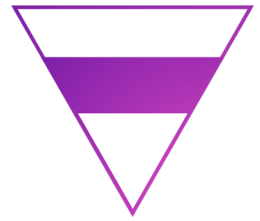
Shadowing of RFP process

The shadowing took place over the course of one RFP cycle, during which the researcher closely observed the activities of the team. The process involved attending meetings, observing communications, and tracking the steps in the development of a proposal. Key stages were carefully documented.

During the shadowing sessions, the researcher took notes, focusing on the time spent at each stage, the tools and resources used, and the nature of interactions between team members. Particular attention was given to areas where bottlenecks, redundancies, or delays were observed.

Technical University of Delft

This page is intentionally left blank
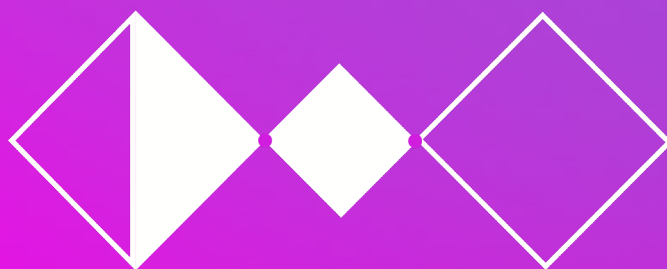
Define

With a foundation of qualitative research in place, this chapter shifts from exploration to synthesis. Through thematic analysis, recurring frictions were clustered into core patterns that clarify where breakdowns occur in the current proposal process.

A key outcome is the detailled mapped RFP workflow, which visualises the full process for the first time and highlights critical points of friction. This shared view informed the identification of opportunity areas where GenAI could offer meaningful support, not by replacing consultants, but by augmenting their work.

The chapter concludes by narrowing the design focus through a weighted criteria analysis and expert interview, leading to a clear design brief and guiding principles for the next develop phase.

3.1 Insights

This chapter presents the key insights that emerged from qualitative research into the current proposal creation process at Accenture Song. A combination of six in-depth interviews, a co-creative mapping session, shadowing of a live RFP process, and internal document analysis provided a detailed picture of both structural and interpersonal challenges faced during proposal development.

Thematic analysis of these research activities surfaced six recurring friction areas as stated to the right. These clusters, elaborated in Appendix E, reflect the most persistent tensions across teams and touchpoints.

While all six in-scope clusters have implications for both efficiency and employee experience, the analysis revealed that Internal Communication, Feedback and Iteration, and Proposal Development are particularly critical due to their frequency, systemic impact, and direct connection to GenAI's capabilities. These clusters form the foundation for the ideation and design phases that follow in Chapter 4.

The chapter continues with a synthesis of process-level insights derived from the mapping and shadowing work, culminating in a validated visualisation of the RFP workflow.

1. **Resource Allocation**

2. **Internal Communication**

3. **Feedback and Iteration**

4. **Client Interaction**

5. **Proposal Development**

6. **Team Dynamics and Role Clarity**

3.2 The RFP Mapping Outcome

To translate research findings into actionable design directions, a full mapping of the end-to-end RFP workflow was developed. This workflow was shaped by data from the mapping session, in-depth interviews, and shadowing of a live proposal cycle. The resulting process map highlights how proposals move from initial client outreach through to submission, negotiation, and contract finalization, with clear attribution of responsibilities across different roles.

A blurred version of the workflow is included in Figure 10 on page 44, while the full visual and annotated steps can be found in the Confidential Appendix. The highlevel outcome of the RFP workflow is shown in figure 11 on page 44.

The map does more than outline a sequence of tasks. It illustrates how the RFP workflow unfolds across different roles, highlighting key moments of interaction, coordination, and dependency. Rather than focusing solely on process steps, it captures how team members such as Proposal Owners, SMEs, Legal, and Sales collaborate throughout the proposal journey. The visualisation makes visible where these interactions become pressure points, often resulting in misalignment or inefficiency. It also includes notations of relevant tools, such as Teams, PowerPoint, and internal repositories, alongside specific touchpoints where frictions were observed. By mapping the actual working relationships and handovers, the diagram reveals that much of the complexity lies in collaboration rather than in the individual steps.

This visualisation was then reviewed and validated by two experienced members of the D&DP team. Their input confirmed the relevance of the sequencing, the accuracy of pain point annotations, and the added value of the map for aligning shared understanding across functions.

In parallel, eighty pain points identified throughout the process were coded and thematically clustered using a grounded analysis approach. The final six clusters, which structure the rest of this chapter, represent not isolated problems but interconnected issues that ripple across the workflow. These clusters not only help define the problem space but also set the stage for identifying where GenAI may offer the greatest leverage.
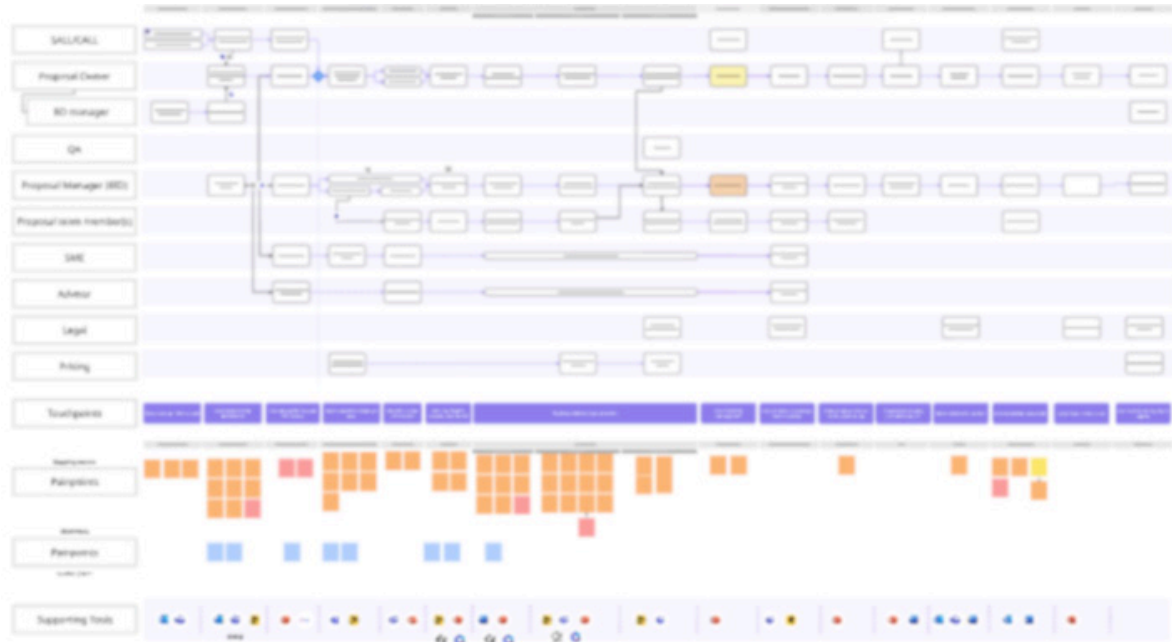
Figure 10: Blurred RFP detailled workflow

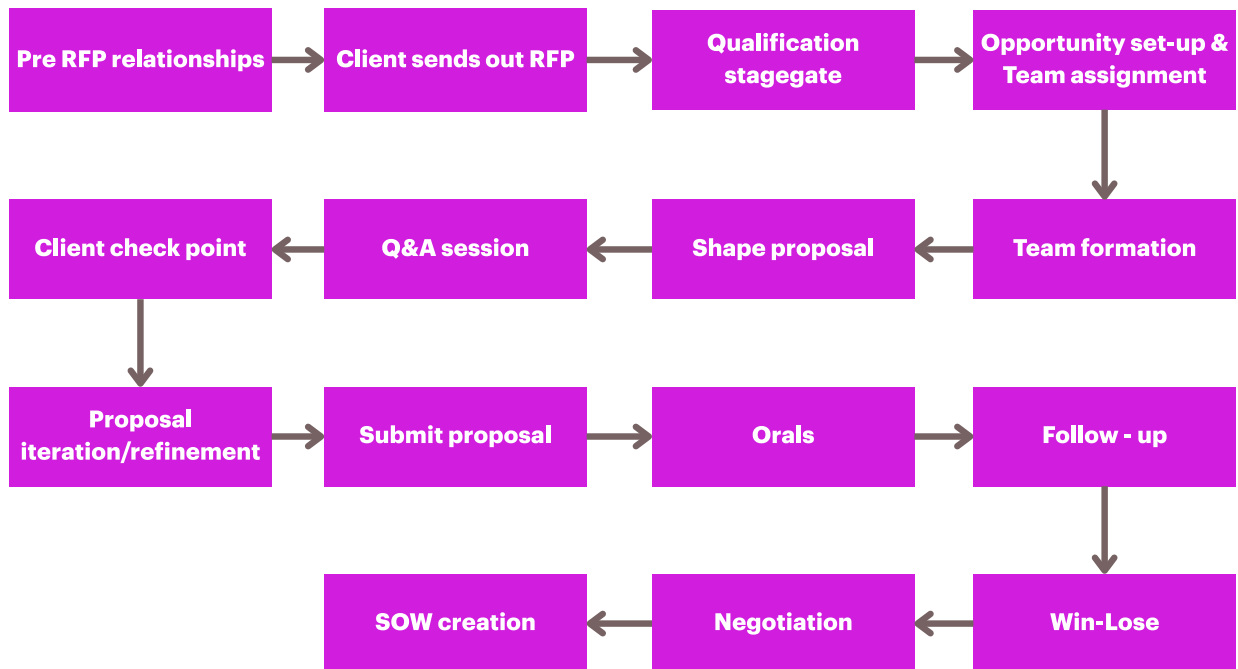|			
Pre RFP relationships →	**Client sends out RFP** →	**Qualification stagegate** →	**Opportunity set-up & Team assignment**
Client check point ←	**Q&A session** ←	**Shape proposal** ←	**Team formation**
Proposal iteration/refinement →	**Submit proposal** →	**Orals** →	**Follow - up**
	SOW creation ←	**Negotiation** ←	**Win-Lose**

Figure 11: High level RFP workflow

3.3 Clusters

1. Resource Allocation

Efficient resource allocation proves to be a recurring challenge across proposal development projects. Many teams face constraints in securing the right subject-matter experts (SMEs) due to limited availability or competing priorities. Additionally, individuals are often assigned based on availability rather than relevance or expertise, leading to mismatched profiles and suboptimal outcomes. Budget limitations and misaligned schedules further complicate assembling the ideal team. These frictions not only impact the quality of the proposal but also add stress and could delay to the process.

"Securing the right expert at the right moment can be challenging, because they're either unavailable or already assigned."

"Co-ordinating calendars often takes longer than outlining the actual work"

2. Internal Communication

Internal communication issues manifest in both the over- and under-sharing of information. Team members report that essential context from client calls often doesn't reach everyone, while at the same time, communication channels like email and Teams become overwhelming and difficult to manage. Misalignment in tools, unclear briefings, and inconsistent updates contribute to misunderstandings and inefficiencies. The lack of structured and shared communication practices negatively impacts collaboration, trust, and alignment within proposal teams.

"Occasionally, the briefing misses a few details we need to move forward."

"If one colleague attends a client call, the rest of us may not catch the full nuance of what was discussed."

3. Feedback and Iteration

While iterative development is critical to refining a proposal, the feedback process is often unstructured, delayed, or overwhelming. Employees report that feedback tends to arrive too late to influence the output meaningfully, or it comes from multiple stakeholders at once without coordination—resulting in confusion and frustration. Moreover, shifting storylines and last-minute changes driven by senior opinions further destabilize the proposal direction. The absence of constructive, timely, and focused feedback hinders both learning and productivity.

"Last-minute comments can shift our direction when time is tight."

"Feedback sometimes comes too late and we can't take all the feedback into consideration to do something meaningful with it"

4. Client Interaction

Interactions with clients are an essential part of proposal development, yet these are frequently hindered by vague requests, slow responses, or unclear expectations. Consultants often find themselves interpreting ambiguous input, or providing free consulting without a formalized engagement. Remote communication further limits relationship-building, making it difficult to expand the internal client network. These challenges create tension between being responsive and maintaining professional boundaries, ultimately affecting the value and viability of the proposal

"Client questions occasionally arrive without enough context."

"Follow-up from the client side vary, which makes planning a moving target."

5. Proposal development

The production of proposal materials is described as both labor-intensive and inconsistent. Teams often lack standardized templates and spend excessive time formatting slides, aligning styles, or piecing together decks from older materials. The absence of visual and content guidelines can lead to inefficiencies and lower-quality outputs. Furthermore, proposals can become too process-heavy and abstract, failing to resonate with client expectations for clear, tangible value. These issues reflect a need for both design simplification and strategic coherence.

"Clarifying our unique value is essential to stand out in competitive bids."

"Slide cleanup is often left to junior team members and is highly time-intensive."

"Slides can grow detailed quickly, and the main message may lose impact."

6. Team Dynamics and Role Clarity

Role clarity and team coordination are key determinants of project success, yet many teams operate with ambiguous or informal structures. Roles are often assigned verbally or assumed, which leads to overlapping responsibilities, accountability gaps, or internal political sensitivities. The lack of a clear proposal owner or senior decision-maker creates confusion, especially under tight timelines. These issues are particularly acute during rushed project kickoffs, where alignment and ownership are not sufficiently established.

"I've found that defining roles can be tricky especially in flatter or cross-functional teams where responsibilities often overlap."

"I've noticed that when we don't clarify ownership early on, it can lead to confusion later about who's responsible for what."

3.4 Clusters with GenAI

This chapter narrows the scope of GenAI to LLMs, a subset of AI capable of understanding and generating human-like text. LLMs, offer significant potential to address pain points in these clusters through capabilities like text generation, summarization, and question-answering. For each cluster, this chapter identifies specific pain points and proposes actionable directions for leveraging LLM capabilities to mitigate these challenges, ensuring solutions are both practical and user-centered.

LLMs offer a versatile toolkit—text generation, summarisation, knowledge retrieval, rewriting, extraction, and conversational support—that maps well to content-heavy processes such as proposal work (Brown et al., 2020; Bommasani et al., 2021).

1. Resource Allocation
LLMs can analyse historical project text—post-implementation reviews, timesheets, and staffing notes—to predict typical effort and surface the most relevant subject-matter experts (BCG, 2025). A conversational layer allows project leads to ask, "Which designer with fintech experience is available next week?" accelerating decisions and reducing scheduling conflicts.

2. Internal Communication
Email chains and chat logs often bury critical context. Summarisation models compress lengthy threads into key actions, while chat-style interfaces provide on-demand answers (Salesforce, n.d.). This reduces cognitive load and keeps the full team aligned without constant meetings.

3. Feedback and Iteration
When comments arrive from multiple reviewers, LLMs can cluster feedback, identify common themes, and generate an integrated change list (McKinsey, 2023). Draft-generation capability then rewrites affected sections, shortening revision cycles and lowering rework.

4. Client Interaction
LLMs support client responsiveness by drafting personalised updates and handling routine inquiries. Multilingual generation expands reach in global bids, and controlled-tone rewriting ensures communications match client formality preferences (GAO, 2023).

5. Proposal Development
Text-generation models populate boilerplate sections, retrieve relevant case studies, and adapt language to emphasise client priorities (TechTarget, 2025). Automatic rewriting brings visual and narrative consistency, freeing consultants to refine strategic content.

6. Team Dynamics and Role Clarity
Clear ownership reduces duplication. LLMs can auto-draft role descriptions based on project scope and answer clarifying questions about task responsibility, supporting smoother collaboration (Wilson & Daugherty, 2018).

3.5 Decision

3.5.1 Exploring Gen-AI fit: Expert Interview

An expert interview was conducted with a Generative AI lead at Accenture France, who works at the intersection of go-to-market strategy and AI adoption in professional services. The conversation served two purposes: first, to assess the business relevance of the six identified pain point clusters; and second, to explore where GenAI—particularly large language models (LLMs)—could offer the most meaningful impact.

The expert confirmed the clusters as relevant and highlighted that GenAI is best suited for content-heavy, repetitive, and highly contextual tasks—such as document refinement, summarisation, and knowledge retrieval. These areas closely align with known LLM strengths and present clear opportunities for augmentation in the RFP workflow.

Two broader insights stood out. First, adoption challenges are less about tools and more about behaviour. As he put it, **"The biggest issue with GenAI is that most teams who complain just haven't changed their way of working yet. It's not a tool problem. It's a human problem."** This underscores the need for change management that supports new habits, not just new technologies.

Second, he emphasised how LLMs can help build confidence and momentum, especially in early-stage proposal shaping. Access to better contextual data and more targeted narratives can reduce delays and internal friction. **"Momentum is created by confidence, and it moves the opportunity through the business faster,"** he noted—reinforcing GenAI's potential to accelerate alignment and decision-making

Finally, he pointed to information collection as a universal bottleneck—especially in smaller RFPs, where resources are tight and timelines compressed. Tasks like consolidating past cases or aligning on key differentiators are often rushed or skipped. As he put it, **"Information gathering is really painful."** Here, LLM-powered retrieval and summarization could meaningfully reduce friction by surfacing relevant insights early and reliably.

3.5.2 Weighted Criteria

To support a grounded and justifiable decision on which cluster to pursue, a weighted criteria analysis was conducted. This method is commonly used in both design research and strategic decision-making to compare multiple options across a consistent set of dimensions (Pugh, 1990; Hanington & Martin, 2012). By applying weights and scoring each option on a common scale, it becomes easier to make transparent trade-offs and reduce subjectivity.

The criteria were developed based on insights from research activities, conversations with stakeholders, and the core goals of the thesis. Five key evaluation dimensions were defined

1. Strategic Relevance – How well does the opportunity align with Accenture's broader strategic direction, including digital transformation and AI adoption?

2. Feasibility – To what extent can this opportunity be meaningfully addressed within the scope and timeframe of the thesis?

3. GenAI Potential – How well do current GenAI capabilities align with the challenges in this area ?

4. Impact on Efficiency – To what degree could improvements in this area reduce time, rework, or friction in the proposal process?

5. Impact on Employee Satisfaction – How significantly would addressing this challenge improve team experience, reduce frustration, or increase motivation?

Each cluster was scored on a 1–5 Likert scale (1 = very low, 5 = very high) for each criterion. Weights were assigned to reflect the relative importance of each criterion based on discussions with stakeholders and the thesis goals.

The analysis led to the prioritization of Cluster 5: Proposal Development. This area scored high on both GenAI applicability and practical relevance. The tasks within this cluster—such as content structuring, slide formatting, and storytelling refinement—are currently time-intensive and repetitive. At the same time, they require consistency and quality, making them strong candidates for GenAI augmentation. Importantly, improving this area could free up valuable human time for more strategic thinking, without displacing critical human judgment.

While other clusters, such as "Feedback and Iteration" or "Internal Communication," also presented meaningful friction, they involved more interpersonal or structural dependencies, making them less immediately actionable for a technology-driven intervention within the scope and timeline of this thesis.

Cluster	Strategic Relevance (30%)	Feasibility (20%)	GenAI Potential (20%)	Impact on Efficiency (15%)	Impact on Employee Satisfaction (15%)	Total Score
1. Resource Allocation	3	3	4	4	3	**3.35**
2. Internal Communication	4	4	3	4	4	**3.7**
3. Feedback & Iteration	4	3	4	3	4	**3.6**
4. Client Interaction	3	3	2	3	2	**2.85**
5. Proposal Development	4	4	5	5	3	**4.15**
6. Team Dynamics & Roles	4	3	3	3	3	**3.3**

Table 3: Weighted Criteria of the clusters

3.6 Justification of the "Proposal Development" cluster

As mentioned before the proposal development process emerged as a high-impact domain through multiple qualitative research activities, including semi-structured interviews, process mapping, and direct shadowing of proposal teams. Across these methods, several recurring pain points were identified, such as inefficiencies in drafting, fragmentation of slide creation workflows, inconsistent visual standards, and unclear messaging. These challenges underscore the strategic and operational weight of this cluster. Below, the weighted critera is explained in detail across the five criteria for that cluster:

Strategic relevance

Proposal development is a critical component of business development in consulting, directly influencing client acquisition and firm reputation. My interviews with proposal managers and sales leaders consistently highlighted the proposal as "our shop window" and "the moment of truth" where the firm's capabilities are translated into client value. Errors, inconsistency, or weak storytelling at this stage not only risk losing deals but can also damage client trust. Given the competitive landscape and the consultative nature of proposals, this process is of high strategic relevance.

"Clarifying our unique value is essential to stand out in competitive bids." — Proposal Manager

Feasibility

The feasibility of addressing the challenges in proposal development through interventions—particularly AI-enhanced solutions—is moderate to high. Many of the pain points identified relate to repeatable, cognitive-heavy but low-creativity tasks such as aligning styles, creating templates, and adapting past materials. These are well-suited to augmentation through GenAI or structured tooling. Furthermore, the existence of similar interventions (e.g., AI-based slide generation tools) in adjacent domains suggests technical viability. However, feasibility may be tempered by issues such as tool adoption, integration into existing workflows, and user training.

GenAI Potential

Based on shadowing and process mapping exercises, large portions of time are dedicated to synthesizing content, drafting client-specific narratives, and visually shaping complex decks. GenAI has the potential to assist in these areas through content suggestion, narrative shaping, tone alignment, and even slide formatting. Several participants indicated interest in "smart templates" or "storyline assistants," affirming that the current state of work is highly augmentable.

"Slide cleanup is often left to junior team members and is highly time-intensive." — Consultant

Technical University of Delft

Impact on Efficiency

Efficiency gains in this cluster are potentially substantial. Time logs and anecdotal input indicate that drafting and formatting are among the most time-consuming tasks in the proposal lifecycle. The absence of standardized templates or coherent content repositories leads to redundant work and last-minute fire drills. AI solutions that support content reuse, suggest structure, or auto-format deliverables could significantly reduce proposal turnaround times (also under tight RFP deadlines)

Impact on Employee Satisfaction

Employees frequently described the proposal process as frustrating, especially when it comes to unclear expectations, repetitive edits, or last-minute revisions. Junior staff, in particular, mentioned that a lot of their time is spent on polishing slides rather than contributing to content. Streamlining these tasks and offering better support could make the process feel more meaningful and less stressful, which in turn could improve morale and team engagement.

"Proposals tend to become overly detailed and lengthy, which can dilute key messages." — Proposal Team Member
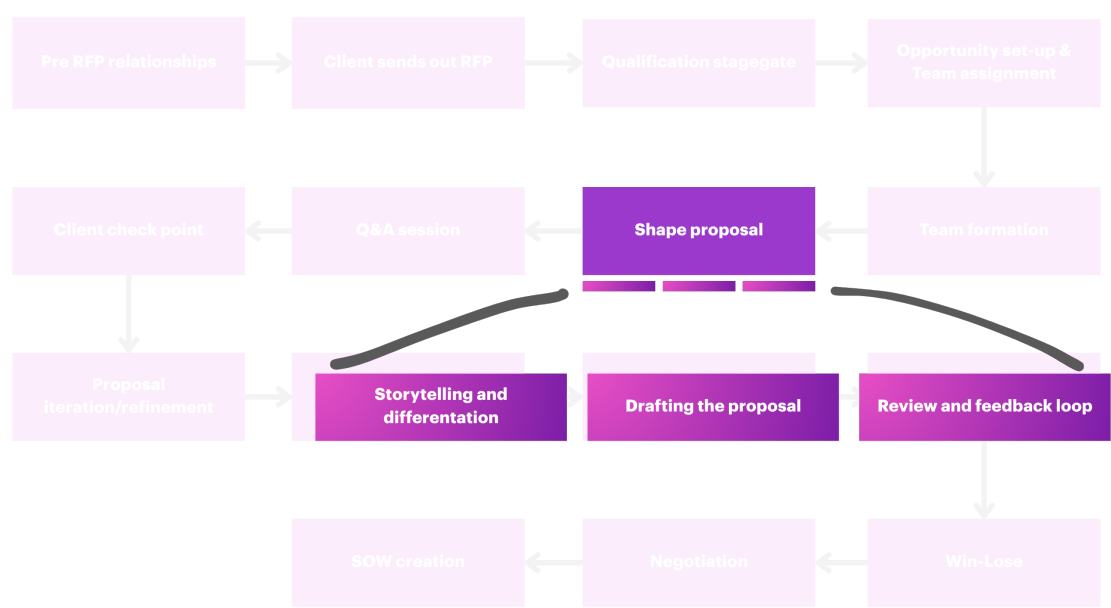
Figure 12: RFP workflow, shape proposal highlighted where proposal development takes place

3.7 Design Brief

As mentioned in the previous chapter, within the RFP workflow at Accenture Song, the proposal development phase is marked by inefficiencies. Teams face recurring issues such as unclear differentiation, scattered feedback, inconsistent messaging, and difficulty accessing relevant expertise, all of which impact the quality of proposals and the employee experience.

Design Goals

- Increase efficiency by reducing repetitive manual work during proposal development.

- Enhance clarity, consistency, and quality of proposal narratives.

- Improve employee satisfaction by supporting focus, creativity, and ownership.

- Align GenAI interventions with current workflows and team dynamics.

Benefit

By reducing repetitive tasks and increasing clarity in the development phase, the solution can free up time for higher-value work, improve confidence and collaboration within teams, and ultimately enhance the quality of proposal outputs.

Target Group

Employees involved in proposal creation within the D&DP team at Accenture Song.

Product / Service

A GenAI-supported intervention that assists proposal teams during the development process. The solution may take the form of a tool, interface, or service that helps structure input, improve content, or streamline decision-making—depending on the specific concept direction.

3.8 Design principles

Derived from the research phase and used to evaluate the concept outcome

The following design principles translate research findings into actionable guidelines for designing GenAI interventions within the proposal development phase. These principles are informed by literature on GenAI in knowledge work, human–AI collaboration, and user needs observed within Accenture Song's proposal teams.

1. Enhance but do not replace human ownership

GenAI should support consultants by improving structure and clarity, while keeping control of the narrative with the human team. This ensures accountability and allows room for creativity and contextual decision-making. (Dow et al., 2009; Wilson & Daugherty, 2018)

2. Reduce cognitive load and friction

The tool must minimise the mental effort and task-switching caused by unclear feedback, inconsistent inputs, or scattered information. It should simplify, not complicate, the process. (Maedche et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2020)

3. Align with the existing workflow

The intervention must fit within current tools, habits, and roles. Minimal disruption supports adoption. Integration with platforms like PowerPoint or Teams is preferred over standalone tools. (Insight: employee session feedback)

4. Create early alignment and clarity

Successful proposals depend on clear internal understanding of client expectations. GenAI should surface, structure, or translate these early in the workflow.

5. Strengthen differentiation and consistency

Proposals must clearly articulate what sets the team apart. The tool should help teams express unique value while staying on-brand and aligned across slides and documents. (McKinsey, 2024; Interview feedback)

6. Encourage responsible and transparent use

The tool should make it clear where AI-generated content begins and ends. It must avoid hallucination and support critical review by the user. (Abdul et al., 2018
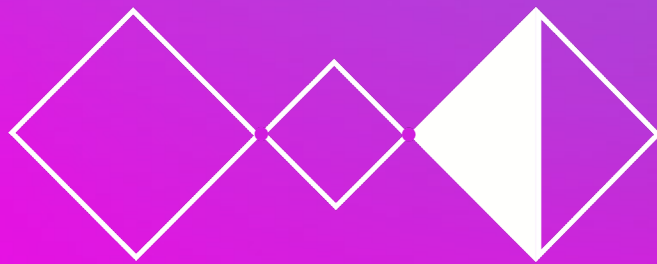
Develop

The develop phase bridges research insights with actionable design. Grounded in a clear understanding of the RFP workflow, it focuses on translating recurring pain points into realistic, GenAI-supported interventions. The emphasis is not on speculative innovation, but on practical concepts that help consultants in the RFP workflow defined opportunity areas

Several ideas were developed and refined through co-creation sessions and direct input from the D&DP team. From this process, one hybrid concept emerged that combines strategic alignment with creative differentiation, addressing both operational efficiency and the need to stand out in competitive bids.

This chapter demonstrates how design, when rooted in real-world constraints and team dynamics, can move beyond ideas to deliver solutions with the potential for lasting impact. It marks the shift from problem framing to purposeful change.

Develop Process Overview

| Explorative ideation | Clustering and plotting | Concept development | Prioritization | one concept | Prototyping | Validating |
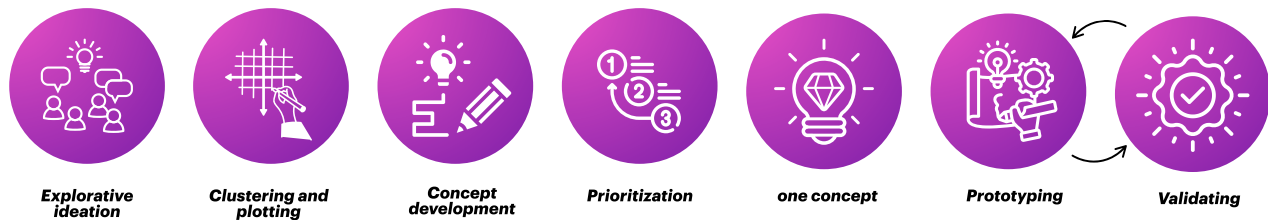
To translate research insights into a viable and grounded concept, a structured design process was applied—balancing creativity with feasibility and team relevance. The process began with broad exploration, including ideation sessions with both internal stakeholders and external peers, to ensure a wide perspective on potential GenAI applications.

Ideas were then plotted on an impact–effort matrix, helping to identify directions with strong potential and practical feasibility. From this, four concept directions were developed. These were shared during a co-creation session with members of the D&DP team, where participants gave feedback on desirability, usability, and fit with daily RFP work.

One hybrid concept was selected and refined. A high-fidelity prototype was developed and validated through user sessions, with feedback used to improve clarity and functionality. The result is a concept shaped by collaboration, iteration, and practical alignment with real RFP challenges.

4.1 Exploring and ideating

4.1.1 Brainstorm Session

To explore interventions, a two-part participatory brainstorm was organized, designed to blend fresh thinking with operational realism.
Intern-Focused Session: Strategic Exploration Aimed at divergent thinking, this session involved four Accenture Song interns and Strategic Product Design (SPD) students. The participants were relatively unburdened by existing process constraints, allowing for bold thinking about how GenAI might enhance or reframe proposal development.
Activities included

• Walkthrough of the RFP process and its painpoints
• Crazy 8s sketching: eight ideas in eight minutes

Outcomes:
• Over 30 speculative ideas, including AI-generated podcasts, auto-scheduling agents, virtual alignment assistants, and narrative coaches (Appendix F)
• Ideas were clustered thematically using Miro and assessed placed on a impact and effort matrix (shown in figure 13)

The focus was deliberately placed on the **"Quick Wins"** quadrant: concepts that offer high impact with relatively low to moderate implementation effort. This decision was grounded in three key factors:

1. Feasibility within the project timeline: As this thesis operates under a limited development window, concepts requiring large-scale platform integration or significant behavioral change were deprioritized.

2. Stakeholder traction: During early validations with consultants and managers, there was clear appetite for concepts that could improve day-to-day work without requiring major shifts in mindset or workflows. Quick wins were more likely to be adopted and championed internally.

3. Strategic alignment: Accenture Song has an innovation-friendly culture, but expects tangible value. By prioritizing concepts that demonstrate fast, visible benefits, such as reduced rework, clearer feedback cycles, or easier access to expertise, the selected directions can build momentum for broader GenAI adoption.
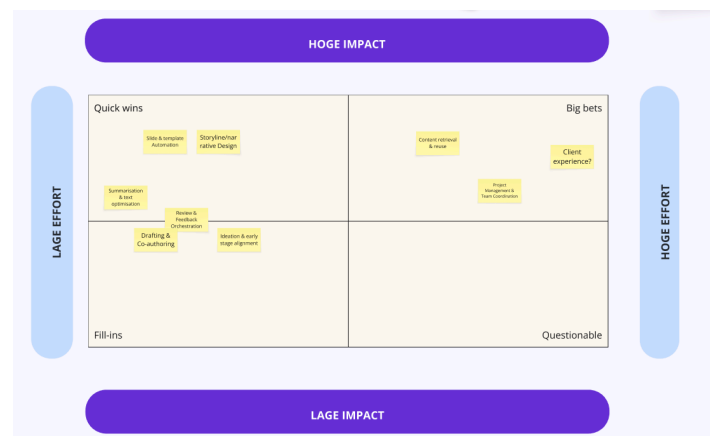
Figure 13: Impact effort matrix

Technical University of Delft

4.2 From Idea to Concept Direction

Following the brainstorming sessions, four core concepts were defined and developed into early-stage concept posters. Each poster included:
• Problem framing and user pain points
• GenAI intervention and value proposition
• Benefits, risks
• Early visual mockups (concept direction)

The four concepts selected for development were:
1. Differentiation Designer – Generates narrative angles and value storylines
2. Client Intent Lens – Converts RFPs and calls into prioritized client themes
3. Review Synthesizer – Consolidates scattered feedback into action plans
4. SME Agents – AI-powered domain chat for proposal drafting

These concepts will be explained in the next sections.

Quotes from the brainstorm sessions are notes as barrier and opportunities for all concept

The concept posters show a static version of the idea. For the clickable prototype refer to Appendix G for the link.

Concept 1: Differentiation Designer

In the fast-paced context of proposal development within the RFP workflow, teams at Accenture Song are often under pressure to quickly define a compelling narrative. Yet, proposals frequently start from scratch or rely on reused storylines that no longer fully reflect the client's context. This results in proposals that struggle to articulate what makes Accenture uniquely suited for the opportunity.

Differentiation Designer is a GenAI-powered assistant that helps proposal teams develop focused, client-relevant narratives more quickly. Based on the language in the RFP and known positioning principles, the tool suggests multiple storyline angles, each with supporting value statements drawn from internal reference materials.

By accelerating alignment and reducing uncertainty in the narrative phase, the tool supports both efficiency and confidence within the team, particularly during the early slide drafting process when clarity is essential.

Interpretation:
The concept was praised for its potential to accelerate ideation and sharpen storytelling. However, there are concerns about narrative dilution and brand tone.

🚧 Barrier

"We want to stay away from client's lingo."

"Risk of merging all storylines, which weakens the message."

"Assumes the RFP is good quality, but that's not always the case."

🔑 Opportunity

"AI should provide me questions to challenge and steer."

"Tailor storylines to industry/client."
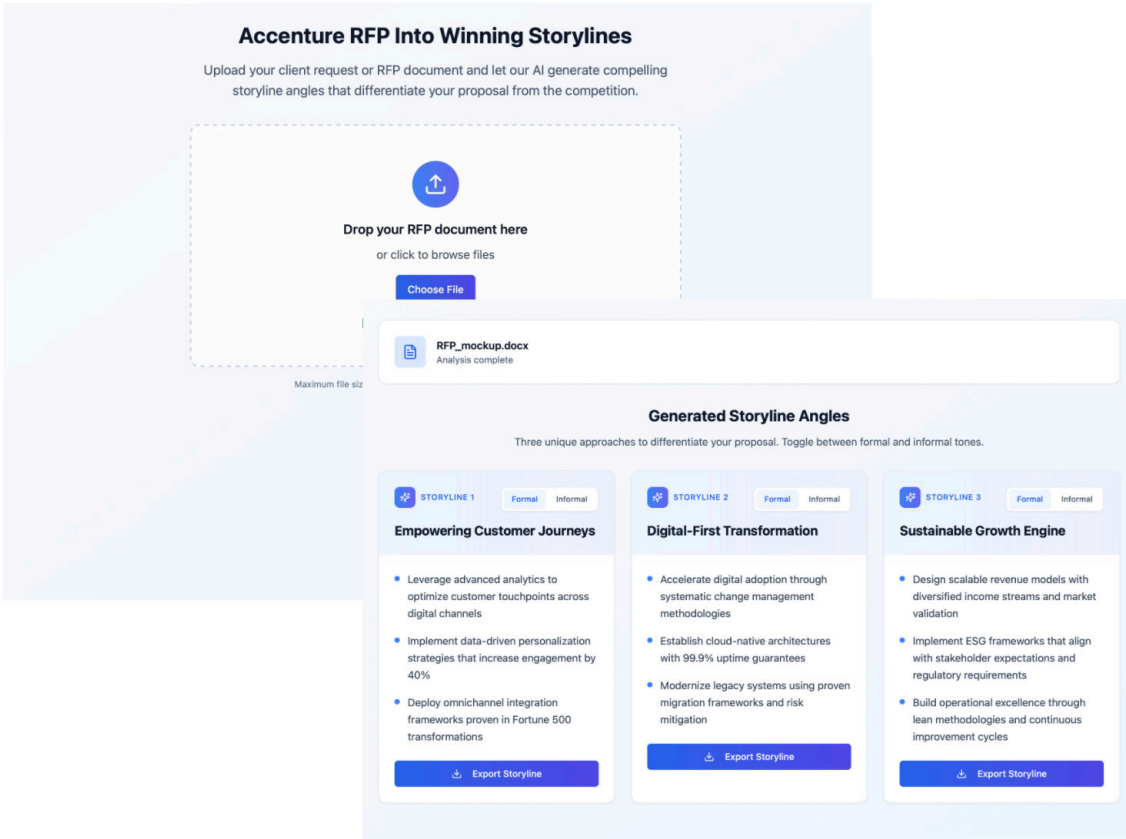
Figure 14: Concept 1 screenshot

Data input	Gen AI Task	Front-End Output
RFP document or client brief; internal case library snippets	Extract key themes → match relevant proof points → generate multiple tailored storylines	2–3 storyline options with bullets, tone switcher, export to outline or slides

Concept 2: Client Intent Lens

Proposal teams often struggle to interpret what a client truly prioritizes when RFPs contain broad or ambiguous language. Misreading the client's intent can result in unfocused proposals that miss the mark or require extensive rework. In the context of D&DP, where storytelling and design are central, this misalignment is particularly costly.

Client Intent Lens uses GenAI to analyze client-provided documents and call transcripts to extract underlying themes, concerns, and expectations. These are visualized as priority indicators and mapped to a suggested slide outline. This helps teams move faster from ambiguity to alignment and ensures that the proposal structure reflects the client's language and pain points.

The tool acts as a guide during the content planning phase, helping teams structure their work around what matters most, while supporting greater clarity and relevance from the start.

Interpretation:
Users appreciated how this concept could streamline early alignment, improve clarity, and support objective decision-making.

Barrier

"Not sure if senior stakeholders feel comfortable to follow AI blindly."

"AI might miss key info or be too generic."

"Does it work from a legal perspective?"

Opportunity

"Create a bullet-wise story line."

"Add competitor info."

"Link CAL/MD context into the heatmap."
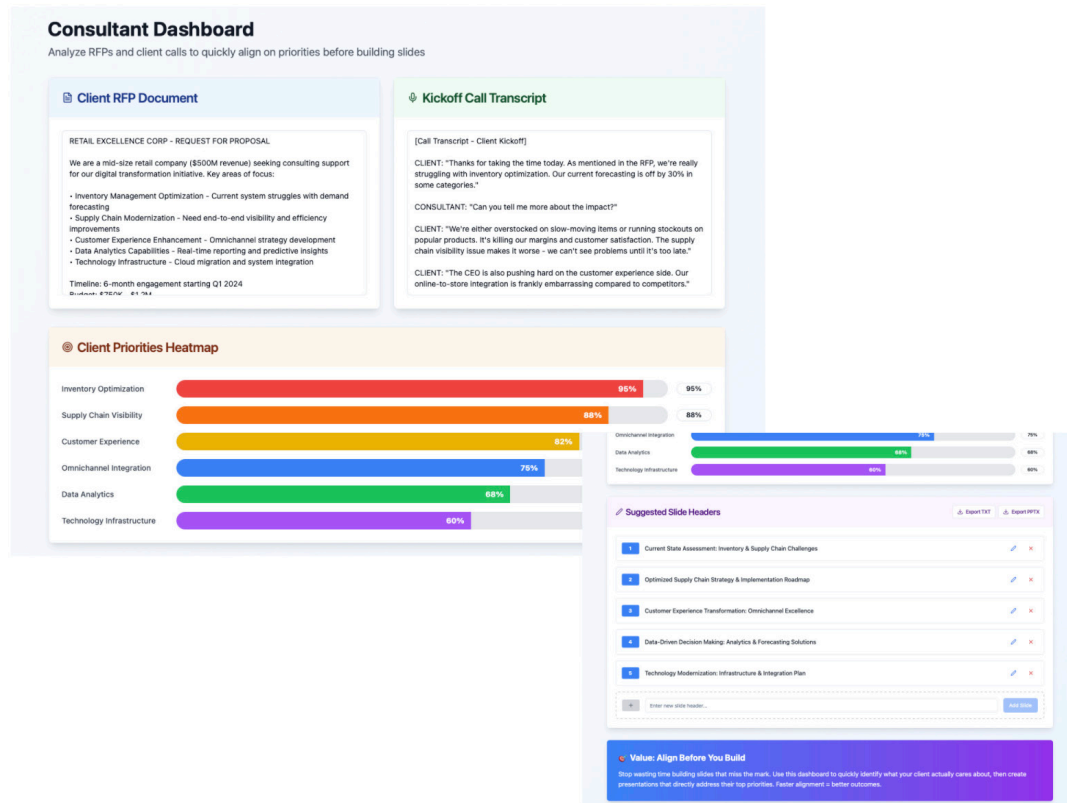
Figure 15: Concept 2 screenshot

Data input	Gen AI Task	Front-End Output
RFP document; optional client call transcript or notes	Entity + intent recognition → sentiment/priority mapping → generate structure suggestions	Heatmap of client priorities, slide outline suggestion, editable summary

Concept 3: Review Synthesizer

During proposal development, feedback often comes from multiple stakeholders—business leads, designers, legal, and subject experts. This feedback tends to arrive late, across various platforms, and with little coordination. As a result, proposal teams spend significant time consolidating comments, resolving contradictions, or guessing which edits take priority.

Review Synthesizer introduces a GenAI assistant that aggregates and organizes feedback from across documents, slide notes, chats, and email threads. It clusters similar comments, flags conflicting suggestions, and produces a single prioritized edit list.

This solution supports the iteration phase of the proposal process by reducing feedback overload, improving transparency, and freeing up time for meaningful revisions. For the D&P team, it ensures smoother collaboration without sacrificing design or narrative quality.

Interpretation:
While adoption is likely, users stressed the tool must go beyond existing comment tools and include prioritization, conflict detection, and possibly even follow-up loops.

Barriers:

"Looks like the comment section that is already in PowerPoint."

"Comments are often very nuanced."

"Needs access to all channels – goes against policies."

Opportunity

"AI should provide me questions to challenge and steer."

"Interesting to get feedback on slide flow."
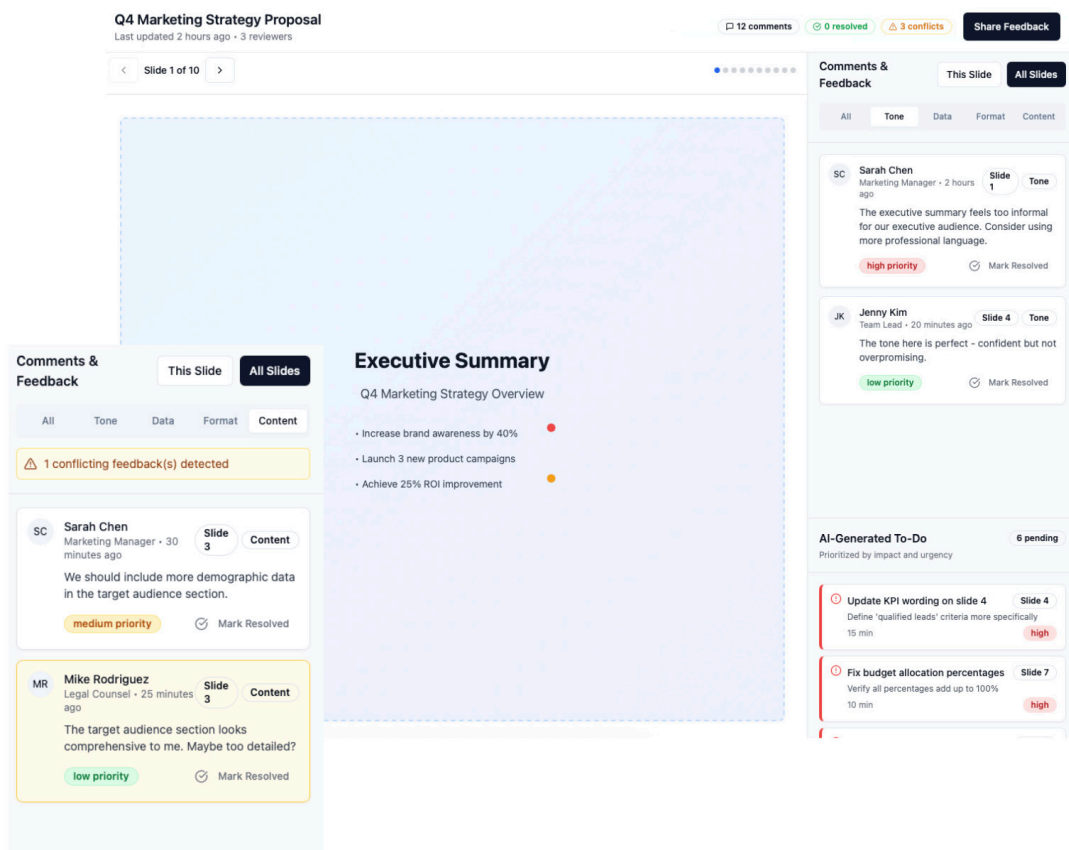
Figure 16: Concept 3 screenshot

Data input	Gen AI Task	Front-End Output
Draft proposal with comments (pptx, notes, emails, Teams exports)	Comment extraction → cluster feedback → detect conflicts → generate to-do list	Clustered feedback themes, action list by priority, edit checklist

Concept 4: SME Agents

Proposal teams regularly depend on SMEs to provide accurate and persuasive content in specific domains. However, SME time is limited, and their input often arrives late in the development cycle—if at all. This leads to incomplete proposals or rushed edits, affecting both quality and team stress levels.

SME Agents are GenAI-driven assistants trained on internal documentation and past proposals. They offer first-draft input, answer domain-specific questions, and surface reusable content that fits the current proposal topic. SMEs remain involved, but focus on reviewing and refining rather than starting from scratch.

In D&DP's fast-moving proposal timelines, this solution helps reduce friction in the writing process, ensures more consistent quality, and allows both SMEs and proposal teams to work more effectively.

Interpretation:
Users believe this could reduce workload for SMEs and help proposal teams move faster. However, quality, governance, and setup complexity are major concerns.

Barriers:

"Biggest challenge is to get knowledge into the LLM."

"Suggestions must be accurate."

"No governance and training of synthetic SME."

Opportunity

"Create proposal supported by a team of 6 agents."

"Incorporate past credentials and documents."

"AI could help identify which SME to involve."
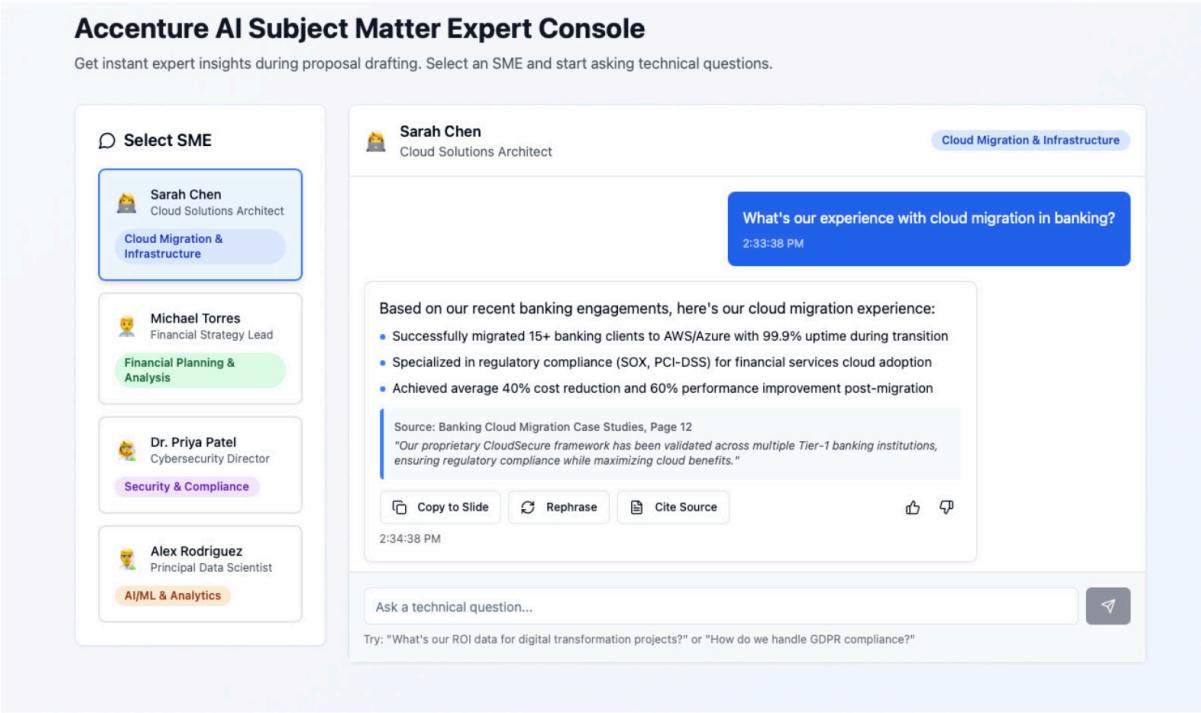
Figure 17: Concept 4 screenshot

Data input	Gen AI Task	Front-End Output
Domain-specific documents (PDFs, wikis, case decks); user prompt/question	Retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) → generate tailored response → source referencing	Chat-style Q&A, bullet-point outputs, "copy to slide," reference to document sources

4.3 Concept Refinement & Prioritization

Following the brainstorming sessions, four core concepts were defined and developed into early-stage concept posters. Each poster included:
- Problem framing and user pain points
- GenAI intervention and value proposition
- Benefits, risks
- Early visual mockups (concept direction)

The four concepts selected for development were:
1. Differentiation Designer – Generates narrative angles and value storylines
2. Client Intent Lens – Converts RFPs and calls into prioritized client themes
3. Review Synthesizer – Consolidates scattered feedback into action plans
4. SME Agents – AI-powered domain chat for proposal drafting

These concepts will be explained in the next sections.

To move from a broad set of GenAI concept directions to a strategically grounded design, a focused co-evaluation session was held with seven employees from Accenture Song's D&DP team. All participants had hands-on experience in proposal development and were able to assess the concepts not just for their novelty, but for how well they fit into the team's daily workflow, constraints, and priorities.

The goal of the session was to validate the relevance of the most promising ideas, compare them against real needs, and co-determine which direction held the most
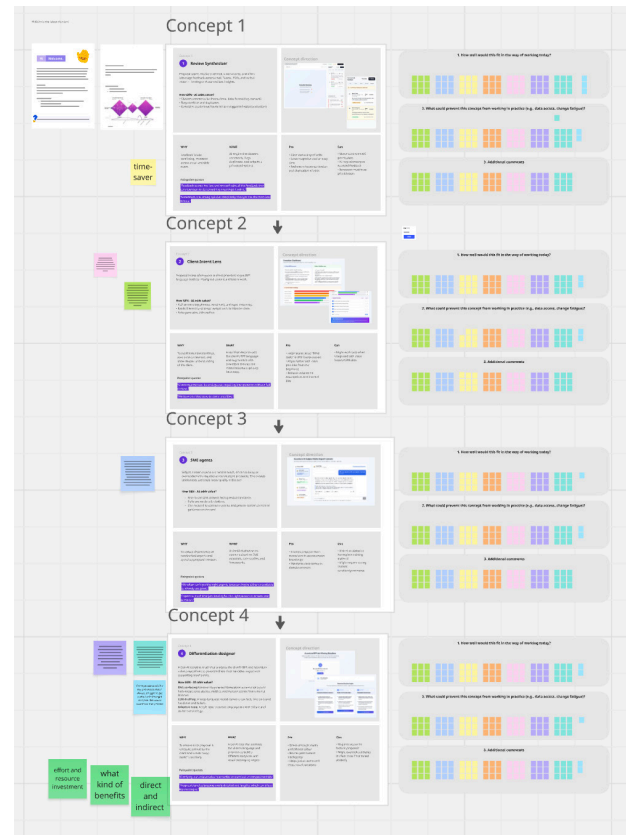
Session overview in Miro (Appendix H)

potential for further development.

The session was structured around three key steps:

- A walkthrough of the pain points and current RFP workflow to ensure shared understanding.
- A concept poster of each concept, summarising its aim, GenAI role, and intended benefit.
- Scenario-based discussions, where participants were asked how they would use each tool in actual proposal situations.

4.4 Key outcomes

To close the session, each concept was evaluated along four criteria:

1. Feasibility: How easily could the concept be implemented given current workflows and systems?

2. Strategic Viability: Would this direction support the long-term ambitions of the team and potentially the wider organisation?

3. User Desirability: Would this genuinely make the work easier, more effective, or more satisfying for the team?

4. Responsible Use of AI: Would this concept support ethical and trustworthy use of AI, keeping human judgment in control?

See appendix G for the concept posters

Participants expressed the highest interest in tools that would:
- Reduce repetitive or manual work (such as reformatting or rewriting)
- Improve clarity in the proposal narrative
- Provide structure early in the development process without being overly prescriptive

Many speculative or abstract ideas were merged into more grounded versions. Most notably, participants saw clear potential in combining two of the previously separate concepts, Client Intent Lens and Differentiation Designer. This fusion was seen as a way to address both internal alignment and client relevance by using GenAI to:

- Surface what matters most to the client based on their request
- Support the shaping of a clear, strategic, and differentiating storyline in response

This integrated direction was selected for further development and will be justified further in the next section.

The comparative evaluation table that is used is included as Table 4.

Quotes from the brainstorm sessions are notes as barrier and opportunities for all concepts

| Concept	Feasibility (Tech & Org)	Viability (Strategic Fit)	Desirability (Users)	Responsibility (Trust, Control)
1. Differentiation Designer	**High** – Uses internal pitch material, case libraries, and templates. Easy to implement using existing LLMs. "Accelerates the process in the first days."	**Medium–High** – Supports creativity and positioning but must be clearly integrated with existing tools. "Could work well, especially together with something like Concept 2."	**High** – Seen as highly valuable for ideation and early narrative framing. "It helps fine-tune the storyline… inspires the real story."	**Medium** – Risk of generating too many options or diluting messaging. Requires curation and editing. "Sometimes it works well to sound like a fresh new perspective, but we want to stay away from the client's lingo."
2. Client Intent Lens	**High** – Works with standard RFP formats and meeting transcripts. Technically achievable using NLP models. "Very time efficient—this happens often."	**High** – Strong alignment with business need for early clarity. Fits seamlessly into existing RFP workflows. "Wouldn't change the WoW directly… gets accepted seamlessly."	**High** – Recognized as solving a core frustration in understanding vague RFPs. "We too often lose track of what the client actually asked."	**Medium–High** – Requires access to sensitive client inputs (e.g. call transcripts). Trust and transparency are essential. "Not sure if senior stakeholders feel comfortable to follow AI blindly."
3. Review Synthesizer	**Medium–High** – Comment clustering and text parsing are implementable. Can build on PowerPoint and Teams workflows. "Would work well, if it goes beyond what's already in PPT."	**Medium** – Adds clear process value, but more incremental than transformative. "Looks a lot like what we already have."	**Medium–High** – Helps reduce feedback chaos and increases clarity. "Too many edits from different angles with no structure."	**Medium** – Risk of misinterpreting tone or prioritizing wrong feedback. Requires human review.
4. SME Agent	**Medium** – Technically feasible but requires setup and accurate knowledge capture. "Knowledge resides in people's heads, it will take time to build."	**Medium–Low** – Ambitious, but harder to implement quickly. Needs strong governance. "Not a quick win."	**Medium–High** – Strong excitement from users. High perceived value in long term. "This is the dream."	**Medium** – Risk of outdated/hallucinated content. Needs ownership by real SMEs. "This must be governed by someone who knows the field."

Table 4: Comparative evaluation of concepts

Technical University of Delft
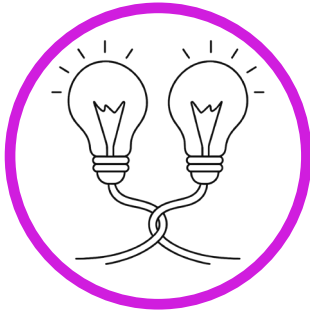
Concept Merge
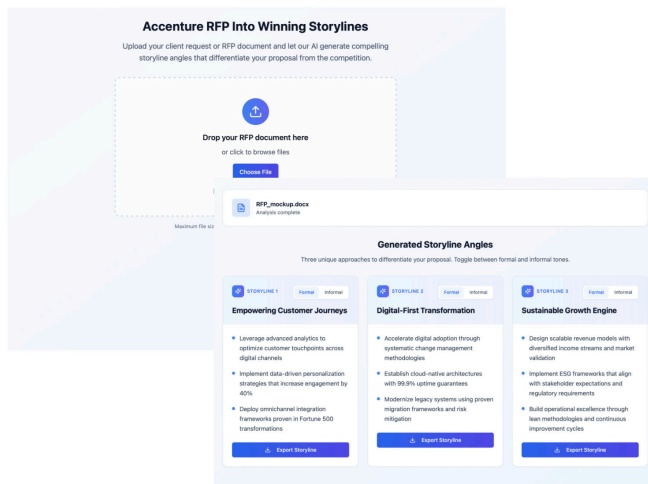
Concept 1: Differentiation Designer
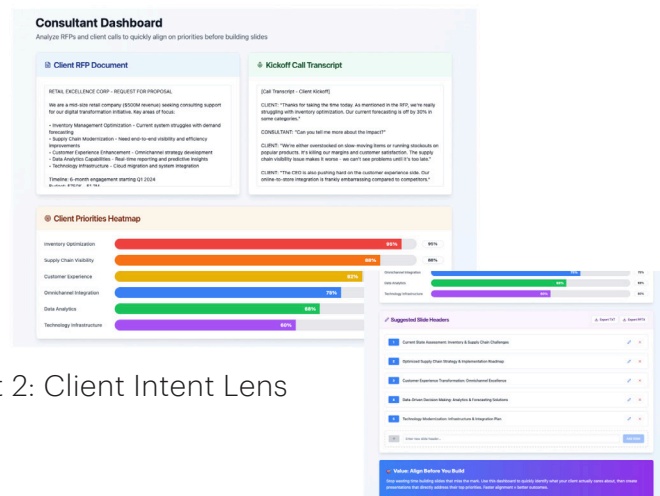
Concept 2: Client Intent Lens

4.5 Concept selection justification

The decision to focus on a combined concept integrating both the Differentiation Designer (Concept 1) and the Client Intent Lens (Concept 2) emerged from a structured evaluation of stakeholder feedback and synthesis of previously gathered research insights. This section outlines the rationale behind this direction and demonstrates how it aligns with both user needs and the strategic intent of the thesis.

Concept 1: Differentiation Designer was seen as highly beneficial during the early stages of proposal development. Stakeholders emphasized its value in "accelerating the process in the first days," its ability to "inspire the real story," and "its strength in supporting narrative refinement". It was appreciated not as a tool that automates content, but one that boosts creativity and helps consultants frame a more strategic and compelling storyline. Several participants also noted its synergy with Concept 2.

Concept 2: Client Intent Lens addressed a pressing challenge identified across research phases: the frequent disconnect between the proposal output and the original intent behind the client's request. Stakeholders consistently cited its potential to "create alignment from the get-go," improve team collaboration, and reduce ambiguity around client expectations. It was also perceived as seamlessly integrable into the current workflow without requiring significant change management
.

Closed loop between internal capability and external expectation

Together, these two concepts were frequently mentioned as complementary — with Concept 2 providing alignment and structure upfront, and Concept 1 supporting differentiation and creative framing as the proposal narrative takes shape.

Research Synthesis Alignment
Findings from earlier research activities; including shadowing, internal interviews, and friction mapping, revealed three recurring issues in the proposal development phase:

1. Ambiguity in client requests, which forces teams to make assumptions that lead to misalignment.

2. Weak differentiation, with proposals often failing to clearly communicate Accenture's added value.

3. Time pressure and cognitive overload, especially in early ideation and storyline framing.

The combined concept directly addresses these pain points. The Client Intent Lens improves understanding of what the client actually wants by parsing requests and Q&A data, thereby reducing interpretative guesswork and improving internal alignment early in the process. The Differentiation Designer ensures that the resulting proposal stands out with a compelling and client-relevant narrative, improving clarity and reducing the likelihood of rework.

Moreover, both concepts align with the overarching thesis goal of **increasing efficiency and employee satisfaction:**

Efficiency is supported by reducing time spent on manual alignment and narrative drafting. Employee satisfaction is supported through a reduction in cognitive overload, clearer starting points, and more structured collaboration which will be validated in chapter 6.

Strategic Fit
Finally, this combined concept direction fits within Accenture Song's broader ambition to embed GenAI tools in ways that support, not replace, human creativity and expertise. Rather than automating the entire proposal creation process, this solution augments the most friction-prone stages where human input is still critical but often fragmented or inefficient.

4.6 Risks for chosen concept

Before moving toward implementation, it was essential to assess the potential risks and failure points associated with deploying the Proposal Intelligence Assistant in Accenture Song's RFP workflow. A tailored Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA) was conducted to systematically evaluate where the concept might break down, cause unintended consequences, or introduce new friction in daily practice. See tabel 5.

The FMEA focused on four categories of potential failure: misalignment with client expectations, narrative inconsistency, over-reliance on AI suggestions, and data privacy concerns. For each, the likelihood of occurrence, severity of the outcome, and ability to detect or prevent the issue were scored and combined into a Risk Priority Number (RPN). This helped identify which risks required mitigation strategies in the implementation phase.

Key insights included:

- AI outputs must be reviewed, not blindly followed, to avoid strategic misalignment.
- Human oversight is needed to ensure brand tone and client nuance are preserved.
- Sensitive data (such as RFPs and transcripts) must be handled in line with internal compliance protocols.
- Narrative fragmentation can occur if multiple storyline options are not properly consolidated by the team.

These insights directly informed the design of the product's role within the workflow (co-pilot, not lead), the user controls (editable output, tone toggles), and the strategic emphasis on augmentation over automation.

This assessment provides a foundation for responsible deployment and ties directly into the layered implementation approach described in the following section.

Failure Mode	Potential Effect	Severity (S)	Cause	Probability (P)	Detection (D)	RPN (Risk Priority Number)	Recommended Action
AI misinterprets vague RFP input	Misaligned storyline or missed client priority	6	Poor data quality / vague RFP wording	4	3	72	Add human review step for top 3 AI-generated insights
Narrative feels generic or templated	Client sees proposal as low effort or unconvincing	5	Over-reuse of patterns / weak tailoring	3	4	60	Include prompts for manual tailoring; force industry examples
Proposal team fully trusts AI output	Lack of critical review leads to errors	7	Time pressure / perceived authority of AI	2	4	56	Add disclaimer + training: AI supports, not replaces judgment
AI generates off-tone or overly formal content	Loss of Accenture brand tone or client disconnect	4	Mismatch between client tone and default AI output	3	3	36	Offer tone-switching options + calibrate based on past proposal tone
Client data is handled improperly	Legal/compliance risk	8	Lack of clarity about data sources or use	2	2	32	Ensure anonymization, limit access, document all training sources
Slide mapping is incomplete or inaccurate	Gaps in proposal alignment remain unnoticed	5	AI fails to connect all slides to client asks	3	4	60	Require manual validation of mappings in review step

Table 5: FMEA for the chosen concept

Deliver

"Strategy without execution is a hallucination." — Thomas Edison
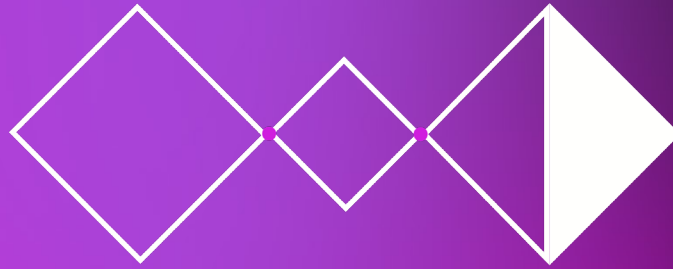
This final phase moves from concept to concrete implementation. It presents the developed solution not as a standalone idea, but as a tested and strategically aligned outcome with clear potential for integration into the RFP workflow.

The chapter outlines how the solution fits within the daily practices of the D&DP team, the roles involved in its use, and the organisational conditions needed for adoption. It is examined through three lenses—product, process, and strategy—to clarify what it does, how it works, and why it matters

It also reflects on what was learned, what remains to be explored, and how GenAI can responsibly enhance, not disrupt, collaborative consulting work

Technical University of Delft

5.1 Final Design of the Tool

This solution was shaped through close collaboration with members of the D&DP team and reflects both practical day-to-day needs and broader strategic goals. The chapter is structured around three layers shown in figure 18: the product layer introduces the tool itself, its core features and the technology behind it ; the process integration layer outlines how how the Proposal Intelligence Assistant is embedded into team routines, entry points within the early proposal process, and risk-aware adoption strategies — ensuring that the tool complements rather than disrupts existing ways of working; and the strategic layer highlights how this work contributes to Accenture Song's evolving approach to GenAI in client-facing work.

The chapter concludes with stakeholder validation of the tool and a review of how the final concept aligns with the guiding design principles defined on page 54

Strategic layer

Accenture Song's GenAI and Experience Strategy

Process Integration Layer

Embedding into the Proposal Workflow

Product layer

Proposal Intelligence Assistant
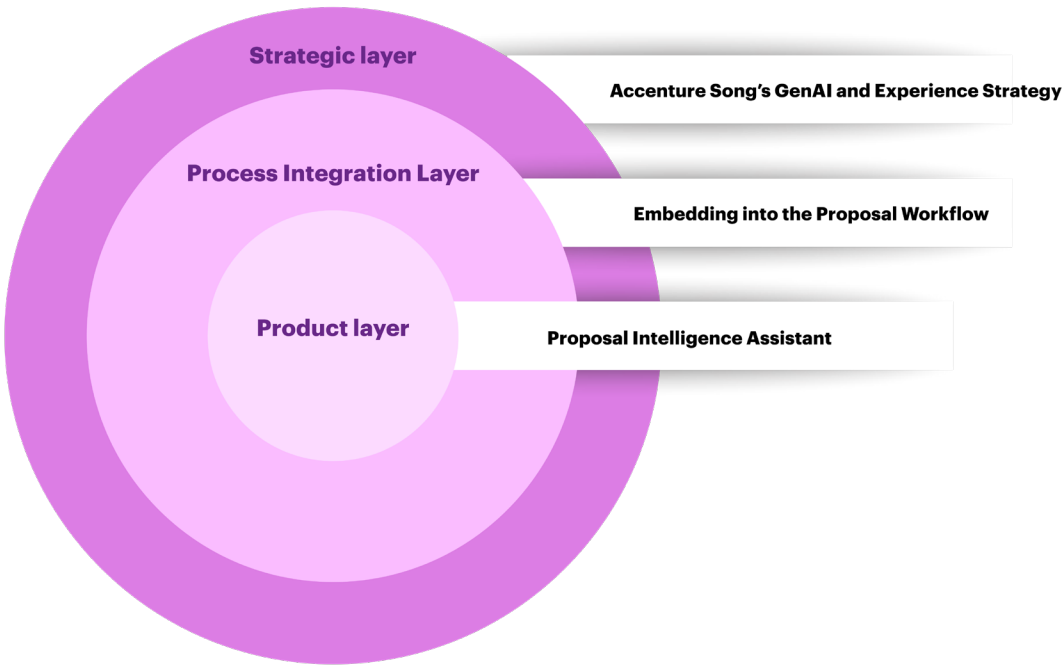
Figure 18: Three layer approach
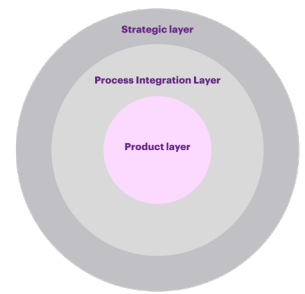
5.2 Product Layer

The Proposal Intelligence Assistant (PIA)

PIA is the final design outcome of this thesis: a GenAI-enabled concept developed in direct response to the recurring frictions identified within the RFP workflow. Rather than aiming to automate the entire proposal process, PIA is designed to act as a smart, embedded support tool that empowers consultants during the early phases of proposal development. It focuses on reducing cognitive load, improving alignment, and helping teams move faster without compromising quality.

Enlarged versions of all tool screenshots can be found in Appendix I

5.2.1 User flow (1-4)

Step 1: Context input & RFP upload

The first step in using the Proposal Intelligence Assistant is focused on establishing a clear understanding of the opportunity. This ensures that the AI-generated outputs are relevant, well-framed, and tailored to the specific proposal at hand.

Rather than positioning the tool as fully autonomous, this stage encourages active input from the team. It creates a collaborative setup where users provide key information that will guide the assistant's suggestions later in the process.

Interface Overview
Client context
Users begin by entering high-level information about the client and the opportunity. This includes the client's name, the industry, the nature of the relationship, and optionally, tags that describe the proposal's focus. Tags may reflect factors like a quick turnaround, cost-driven strategy, or whether the bid is global in scope.

These inputs help shape the tone and strategic angle of the assistant's future output. For example, a bid marked as "Regulatory Compliance" might prioritize structured, risk-sensitive messaging, while a "Strategic Partnership" tag might lead to a more visionary narrative direction.

Document upload

The next step involves uploading the RFP document, which can be in PDF, DOC, or TXT format. Once submitted, the system automatically processes the content, identifying recurring themes, client priorities, and language patterns. This forms the foundation for the assistant's later suggestions, such as slide outlines or narrative drafts.
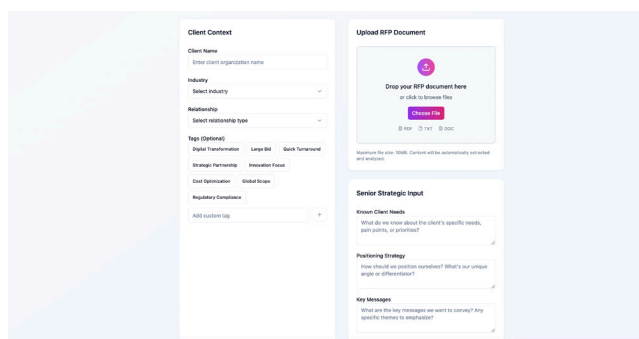
Figure 19: Screenshot home page (PIA)

This feature was introduced in response to common frustrations observed during interviews and mapping sessions, where users explained that essential information is often buried deep in RFPs or missed entirely due to time pressure.

Strategic input (optional)
For teams that have already discussed strategic direction, there is an optional section to capture high-level insights. This includes fields such as:

- What are the client's known pain points or expectations?
- How should Accenture position itself in this pursuit?
- What key messages should be reinforced throughout the proposal?

These inputs allow senior team members to embed direction into the process early on. It also addresses a key insight from the research: many teams lose valuable time aligning on messaging after drafting has already begun.

Rationale and Design Considerations
This step balances simplicity with flexibility. It was intentionally designed to avoid overwhelming users, while still allowing for richer strategic input when available.

From a design perspective, this phase addresses three core goals:

- Increase clarity and shared understanding at the outset
- Anchor AI output in real client language and needs
- Empower the team to shape the proposal direction, rather than react to it

It reflects insights from both internal feedback and human-AI collaboration research, which emphasize the importance of early human guidance, especially when using generative models in complex decision-making processes. (Yang, Q. 2020; Amershi, S 2019)

User flow (2-4)

Step 2: Client Intent Analysis & Theme Detection

Once the RFP is uploaded, the assistant processes the document to extract key client insights. This step helps teams move from raw input to structured understanding—highlighting priorities, gaps, and unspoken expectations.

Interface Overview
The system presents a client intent dashboard that organizes extracted information into sections:

- Main objectives and strategic goals that reflect what the client wants to achieve
- Pain points and functional requirements describing operational challenges or needed capabilities
- Implicit expectations, identified gaps, and ambiguous statements that may not be obvious, but often lead to rework later in the process

A top themes analysis follows, ranking strategic priorities based on importance and clarity. This builds a shared foundation across the team about what the client is asking for and where uncertainties lie.

Each insight group can be expanded to show examples pulled directly from the RFP, grounding the output in traceable content. This fosters trust and reinforces the assistant as a tool for clarity, not assumption.
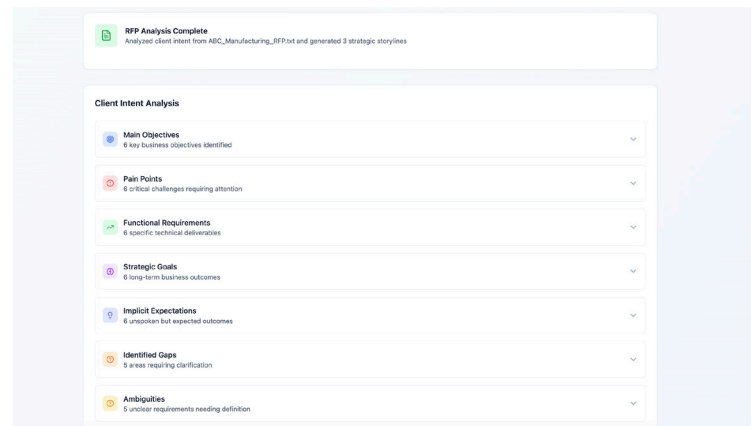
Figure 20: Screenshot client intent page (PIA)
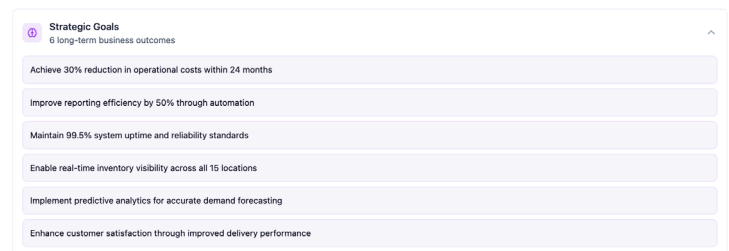
Figure 21: Screenshot client intent page zoomed in on strategic goals (PIA)
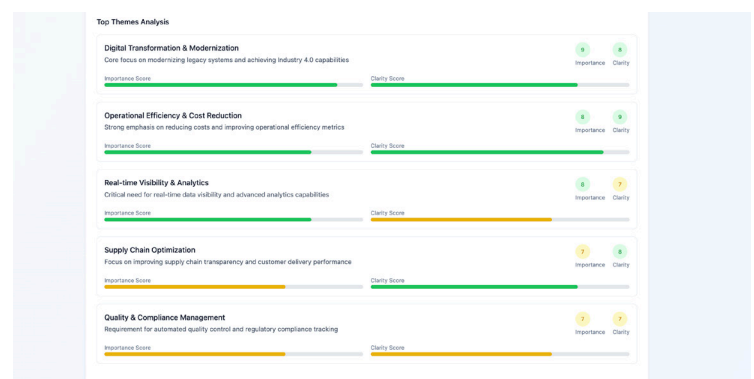
Figure 22: Screenshot Top Themes Analysis (PIA)

User flow (3-4)

Step 3: Strategic Storyline Suggestions

The assistant moves into proposal co-creation. This step offers the team three strategic storylines, each grounded in the client's priorities, Accenture's positioning logic and the input of the employee.

Interface Overview
Each storyline is presented as a clear, client-facing narrative that includes:

- A headline strategic message (e.g. "Intelligent Operations Platform")
- Three key supporting points or differentiators
- A suggested slide structure tailored to the client's context
- A breakdown of AI-identified facts, assumptions, and hypotheses

The tone of each storyline can be marked as more client-driven, Accenture-led, or neutral—allowing teams to choose a style that matches their relationship and positioning.
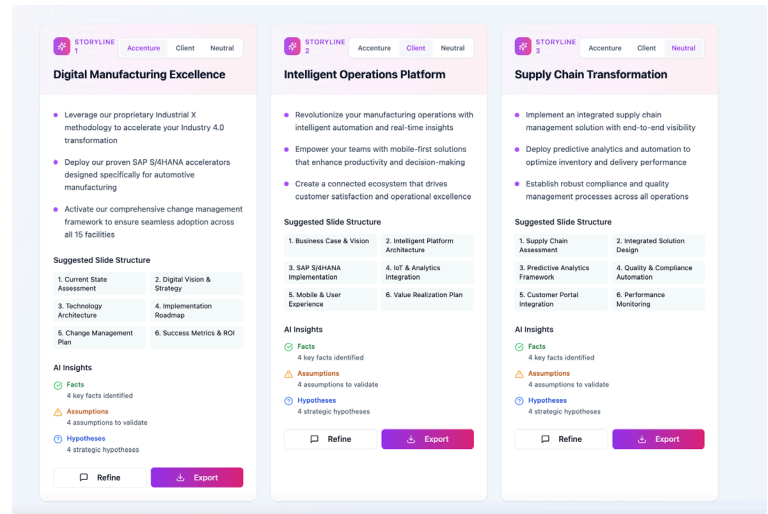
Figure 23: Screenshot three narratives created (PIA)

User flow (4-4)

Step 4: Narrative Refinement with the Chat Assistant

After selecting a storyline, the assistant offers a chat-based interface for refinement. This is where team members can improve language, tailor the tone, or challenge the assumptions behind the suggested content.

Interface Overview

The interface opens with a list of possible ways to improve the narrative. These include:

- Simplifying the language
- Challenning key assumptions
- Reframing arguments to better align with the client's point of view
- Adjusting tone (e.g. more formal or more client-specific)
- Adding differentiators or concrete examples

Below these options, a free-form input box allows users to give instructions in natural language.

Users can:
- Click quick commands like "Make this more conversational" or "Strengthen our differentiation"
- Ask questions such as, "What might the client push back on?"
- Review and accept or adjust the assistant's responses
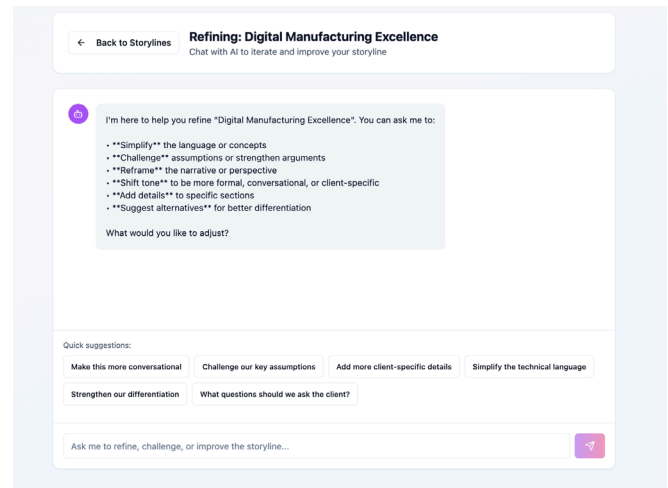
Figure 24: Screenshot chat function (PIA)

This refinement step is grounded in two key findings from your research.

First, that narrative ownership is important for consultant satisfaction. As one user noted, "we don't want generic, AI should help us sharpen, not speak for us."

Second, that creativity often happens during **iteration**, not **generation**. (Yang, Q 2020)

This step brings those two ideas together. The chat interface keeps users in control, while offering support that feels responsive and relevant. It also mirrors how teams currently co-develop content—through dialogue, not just delivery.

5.2.2 Technical Functioning

While the The Proposal Intellegence Assistant is designed as a user-facing tool to support consultants in shaping client-specific proposals, its underlying system architecture relies on a series of generative and retrieval-based AI processes. These processes operate in tandem to surface relevant insights, generate tailored content, and support iterative refinement. The visualised technical foundation is found in figure 25 on page 84. The technical foundation consists of the following components:

1. Data Ingestion and Preprocessing
The tool begins by ingesting structured and unstructured input data, such as:
• Client RFP documents (PDF, Word, or plain text)
• Internal interview notes or strategic guidance
• Input of the employee that is using the tool

These documents are parsed and cleaned using standard natural language processing (NLP) techniques. Optical character recognition (OCR) may be used for scanned files, while metadata (e.g., client name, industry tags) is automatically extracted or entered manually via the UI.

2. Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)
To ensure factual grounding, the tool implements a Retrieval-Augmented Generation approach:
• A vector store is created using semantic embedding models (e.g., OpenAI or Cohere embeddings)
• When prompted, the system retrieves the most relevant chunks of data from the vector store based on semantic similarity
• These results are passed as context to a LLM, improving factual precision and alignment with client context

This ensures that generated narratives are rooted in verifiable information, rather than relying solely on probabilistic LLM outputs.

3. Client Intent Extraction
Using transformer-based NLP models, the tool identifies and classifies key elements in the RFP:
• Business objectives
• Strategic goals
• Functional requirements
• Pain points and implied expectations
• Ambiguities or areas needing clarification

Each item is stored in a structured format (e.g., JSON schema) and surfaced in the interface for consultant review. Clustering algorithms (e.g., k-means or UMAP) are used to detect thematic groupings or repeated language patterns across documents.

4. Narrative Generation and Structuring
Based on the extracted intent and strategic tags (e.g., "digital transformation," "cost optimization"), the tool generates multiple draft storylines using LLM prompting templates. Each storyline includes:
• A positioning statement
• Key differentiators grounded in Accenture's capabilities
• Suggested proof points and slide structures
• Tone-of-voice adaptation aligned to client profile

A style guide layer can be optionally applied to match the writing style with brand tone or formality level.

5. Interactive Refinement Layer

Once the initial outputs are generated, users can interact with the tool via a conversational interface. Prompts allow users to:
- Reframe the angle ("Make this more bold/ visionary")
- Add emphasis ("Include more on predictive analytics")
- Adjust tone or structure ("Align to FMCG tone")

These interactions are powered by prompt chaining and state tracking to ensure coherence across iterations.

6. Output Formatting and Export

Final narratives can be exported to PowerPoint slide templates using pre-defined placeholders. Alternatively, structured JSON or markdown can be used to feed into existing slide libraries or internal content management systems.

Technical University of Delft
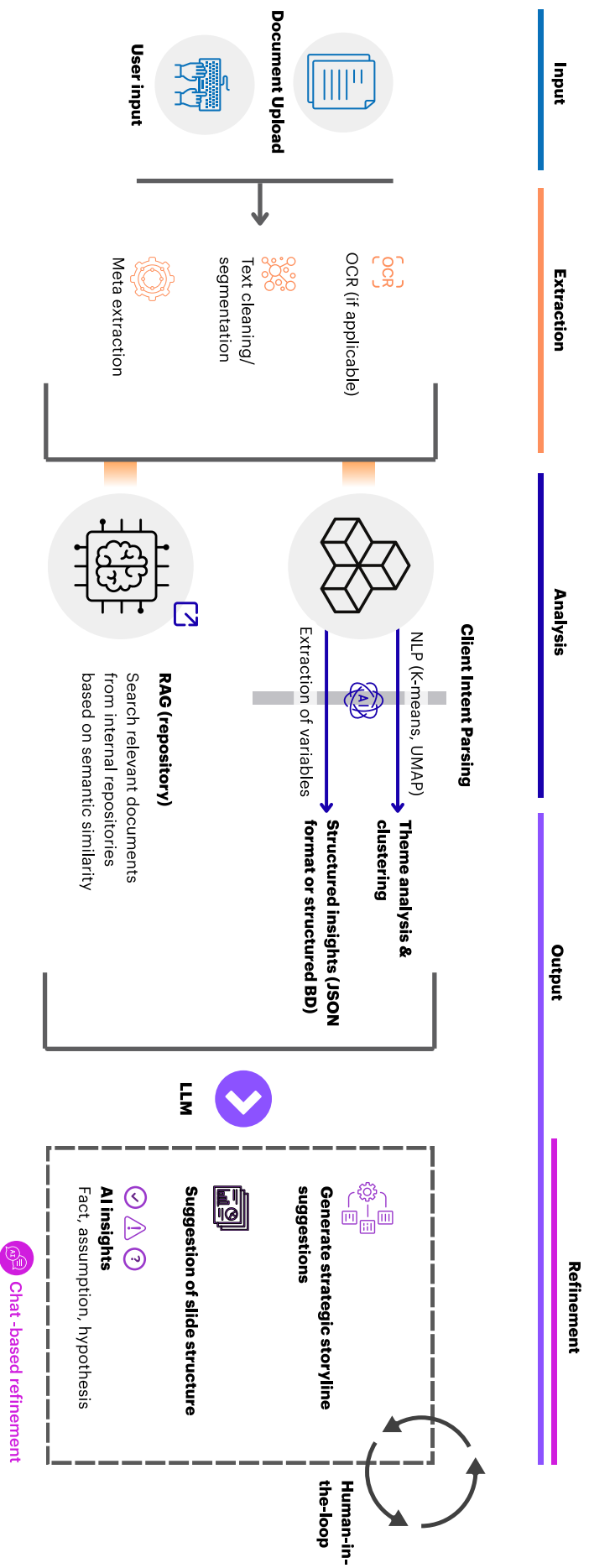
Figure 25: Technological foundation flow

Input

Extraction

Analysis

Output

Refinement

Document Upload

User input

OCR (if applicable)

Text cleaning/ segmentation

Meta extraction

Client Intent Parsing

NLP (K-means, UMAP)

Theme analysis & clustering

Extraction of variables

Structured insights (JSON format or structured BD)

RAG (repository)

Search relevant documents from internal repositories based on semantic similarity

LLM

Generate strategic storyline suggestions

Suggestion of slide structure

AI insights

Fact, assumption, hypothesis

Chat - based refinement

Human-in-the-loop

5.3 Process Integration layer

The value of any tool depends not only on its capabilities, but also on how well it fits into the day-to-day routines of those who use it. Throughout the research process, Accenture Song's D&DP proposal teams emphasized the importance of low-friction adoption. As one employee noted, "It fits even better if it could be used over multiple channels." This aligns with broader literature on human-AI collaboration, which stresses that successful adoption requires trust, transparency, and perceived usefulness (Yang et al., 2020; McKinsey, 2025). To ensure the Proposal Intelligence Assistant supports—not disrupts—the way consultants work, this section outlines how the tool integrates into the existing RFP process, who is responsible for using it, and how its use can be introduced in a sustainable, value-driven way.

5.3.1 Where the Tool Fits in the Workflow

The Proposal Intelligence Assistant is designed to be used at the start of the proposal development phase, specifically within the first 1–3 days after the RFP is qualified and the core team is assigned. It supports two activities:

1. Clarifying client intent using uploaded RFPs, notes, or transcripts to create structured summaries and heatmaps of client priorities.

2. Shaping a first narrative direction by offering suggested storylines or slide frameworks aligned with the client's ask and Accenture's value positioning.

This integration point ensures teams begin aligned, with clearer direction and reduced ambiguity, without changing the existing tooling or decision flow.

Shown in figure 26 is the workflow with touchpoint of tool usages
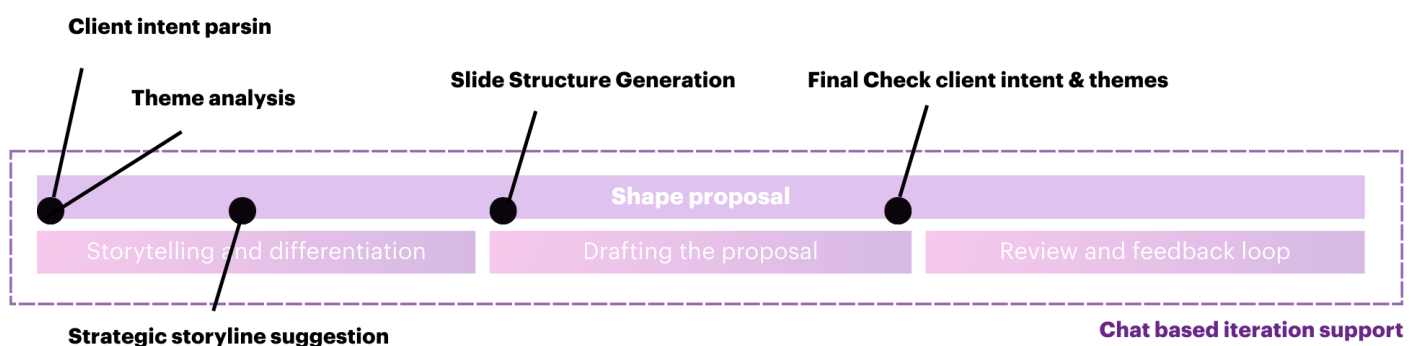
Figure 26: Tool touchpoints in workflow

5.3.2 Risk and mitigation

The Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA) outlined earlier (see page 74) focused on targeted, functional risks within the Proposal Intelligence Assistant — such as potential misalignment with client intent or the overuse of generic outputs. That analysis was deliberately specific, aimed at refining the tool's internal logic and ensuring each feature could perform reliably in day-to-day use.

This section takes a broader, system-level perspective. Even if a GenAI tool works as intended, meaningful impact depends on how it fits within people's workflows and behaviours. These are organisational and adoption-related risks: will teams use the tool consistently, trust its outputs, and perceive its value? Without that alignment, even a well-functioning product risks being underused or misapplied.

Table 6 summarises the key process-level risks identified during this project. Each is paired with a practical mitigation strategy to support smoother adoption and reduce friction during rollout.

These risks set the stage for the next sections, which focus on roles and responsibilities, adoption enablers, and supporting materials. Together, they form a roadmap for embedding the Proposal Intelligence Assistant not only into the RFP process—but into the working rhythms and culture of the D&DP team.

Risk	Description	Mitigation Strategy
Change fatigue	Teams may be experiencing tool overload, reducing openness to adopting something new.	Integrate GenAI into existing moments in the workflow (e.g. kick-offs or reviews). Keep pilots lightweight and focused on visible time-saving tasks.
Perceived threat to expertise	Consultants may feel GenAI undermines their creative or strategic contributions.	Frame the tool as a support, not a replacement. Emphasise its role in offloading repetitive work and enabling deeper creative focus.
Inconsistent onboarding	Uneven training across teams can result in fragmented usage patterns.	Create brief onboarding materials tailored to different roles. Use peer champions and embedded tooltips to encourage consistent adoption.
Pilot stall / lack of follow-through	Early enthusiasm may fade without a structured plan for broader rollout.	Establish phased rollout with feedback loops. Document early outcomes and connect findings to broader tech adoption or team development strategies.
Lack of shared feedback culture	Teams may not have habits of reflecting on tool use, limiting learning and iteration.	Embed lightweight feedback prompts (e.g. quick ratings or suggestions fields). Use responses to inform improvements and show responsiveness to team needs.

Table 6 : Process level risks

5.3.3 Roles and Responsibilities (RACI Model)

To support effective use of the GenAI tool, responsibilities should be clearly distributed within the existing RFP workflow. The table below outlines who is involved at each step, based on existing roles within Accenture Song's proposal teams.

The Proposal Owner and Proposal Manager are responsible for steering strategic direction and ensuring that the storyline aligns with client priorities. Proposal Team Members are typically involved in refining the draft and tailoring content. A supporting role is assigned to D&DP AI operations, which may currently be held by one dedicated person or shared across team members. This role focuses on maintaining tool guidance, monitoring usage, and collecting feedback during initial rollout. At this stage, the operational role does not require full-time ownership but should be clearly assigned to someone with visibility across proposals. As usage increases, this role may evolve into a more formalized support function.

This distribution helps ensure that the assistant is embedded in the team's workflow, rather than layered on top. It encourages ownership, preserves existing responsibilities, and supports adoption with minimal disruption.

See Table 7 for the full RACI overview

Activity	Proposal Owner/ BD manager	Proposal Manager	Proposal Team Member	D&DP AI operations
Upload RFP and relevant inputs	R	A	C	I
Review AI-generated insights	A	C	R	I
Validate storyline direction	A	R	A/R	I
Tailor final output	R	A/R	A	I
Maintain tool awareness & best practices	I	I	I	A/R

R Responsible A Acountable C Consulted I Informed

Table 7 : RACI Matrix

5.3.4 Support and Enablement Materials

Successful adoption of the Proposal Intelligence Assistant depends not only on functionality, but also on how intuitively teams can begin using it. Given the time-sensitive and high-stakes nature of proposal work, enablement should be minimal, embedded in the existing workflow as shown previously, and designed around consultants' daily tools and habits. In parallel, the ADKAR framework (Hiatt & Creasey, 2012) provides a step-by-step lens for personal adoption—moving consultants from initial awareness to sustained reinforcement. The following support materials are recommended:

Quick-Start Guide (1-pager):
A visually structured handout introducing the tool's purpose, when to use it in the workflow (e.g. post-RFP kickoff), and how to upload content and interpret AI outputs. Ideally formatted for PDF and included in Teams and/ or onboarding packs.

Interactive Walkthrough (clickable prototype or short video):
A 2–3 minute demo video or interactive Figma showing the core experience: uploading an RFP, reviewing client intent highlights, and generating an initial storyline structure. This lowers the barrier to first-time use.

Kickoff Workshop Format (15–30 minutes):
A light facilitation guide for proposal owners to run during team formation, using the tool together to align on client priorities and assign ownership. This encourages early usage and embeds the tool in the start of the proposal process.

Channel-based Support (on Teams):
A dedicated internal channel where users can ask quick questions, flag improvement ideas, or report issues. Maintained by D&DP operations or the project owner during rollout phases.

Embedded Examples in the Tool:
Include a few preloaded sample RFPs, client asks, and storyline suggestions (drawn from anonymized past work) to show what "good" output looks like and build confidence in how to interact with the tool.

Champion System:
Nominate 1–2 early users or team leads to act as "AI tool champions" providing peer-level support and collecting informal feedback along the way.

5.3.5 Adoption strategy

To support adoption, a trial period is recommended within D&DP. This could follow a 30-60-90 day structure, beginning with low-risk, low-effort use cases: ambiguity, without changing the existing tooling or decision flow.

Key KPIs for validation include:

- Perceived clarity of the RFP interpretation
- Reduction in time spent aligning on narrative direction
- Satisfaction and confidence of the proposal team
- Number of rework cycles reduced

However, a successful 90-day pilot does not guarantee long-term impact. Without structured follow-through, even promising tools risk adoption drop-off—a challenge previously identified in the Risk and Mitigation section. To maintain momentum, the transition from pilot to embedded use must be deliberately managed.

Drawing from Kotter's (2012) eight-step model, Accenture Song should focus on:

- Creating urgency around inefficiencies in current proposal work
- Forming a coalition of AI champions across seniority levels, as mentioned in the previous section
- Generating short-term wins, such as reducing revision cycles or time-to-draft

ROADMAP

short-term

long-term

Day 0–30
Foundation & Prototype Setup

Create a working clickable prototype based on dummy RFPs and team-tested logic.

- Define user flow (input, insights, storyline suggestion, slide traceability)
- Collect 3–5 sample RFPs or anonymized transcripts
- Design and test low-fidelity flows (text-first or Figma)
- Run 1–2 feedback sessions with Proposal Owners and Analysts
- Create a clear use case: "Support the team in first 48h of the proposal cycle"

Day 31–60
MVP & Early Validation

Build and test a simplified working MVP (manual AI-in-the-loop OK)

- Connect working UI to real content inputs (manual upload of RFPs, etc.)
- Implement AI support (tone toggling, narrative suggestions)
- Run live pilot with 1–2 proposal teams during actual RFP work
- Gather qualitative feedback: usefulness, trust, fit
- Create feedback loop: How do teams adapt or override suggestions?

Day 61-90
Integration & Strategy Framing

Test integration options, frame scaling strategy, identify ownership

- Explore basic integrations: slide templates, comment systems, knowledge assets
- Plan tone/style calibration (based on brand voice)
- Develop support materials (how-to guide, pilot case story)
- Engage broader stakeholders: Experience Leads, BD, SMEs
- Assess governance: content curation, model training inputs, SME involvement

2026
Launch & Scale

Launch within team and prepare for broader rollout.

Future vision

Accenture Song D&DP aims to move from **efficiency-focused AI** to a **creativity-enabling,** decision-support AI that enhances proposal teams' thinking without replacing it.

Values

Accenture Song

- Demonstrates leadership in GenAI exploration
- Strengthens internal innovation culture
- Builds momentum toward smarter proposal tools

- Enhances consistency and quality in early-stage proposals
- Increases reuse of knowledge in a scalable way

- Aligns proposal excellence with strategic GenAI vision
- Creates a replicable framework for scaling across teams
- Positions GenAI as a trusted augmentation tool

Employees

- Low-risk exploration of AI support
- Gains creative input without pressure to deliver results
- Opportunity to co-create and test new ways of working

- Builds confidence through clear starting points
- Gets actionable support in time-sensitive moments
- Reduces friction in team collaboration

- Feels supported, not replaced, by technology
- Gains a tool that adapts to their way of working
- Reduces cognitive overload during high-pressure phases

Figure 27: Roadmap adoption

Strategic layer
Process Integration Layer
Product layer
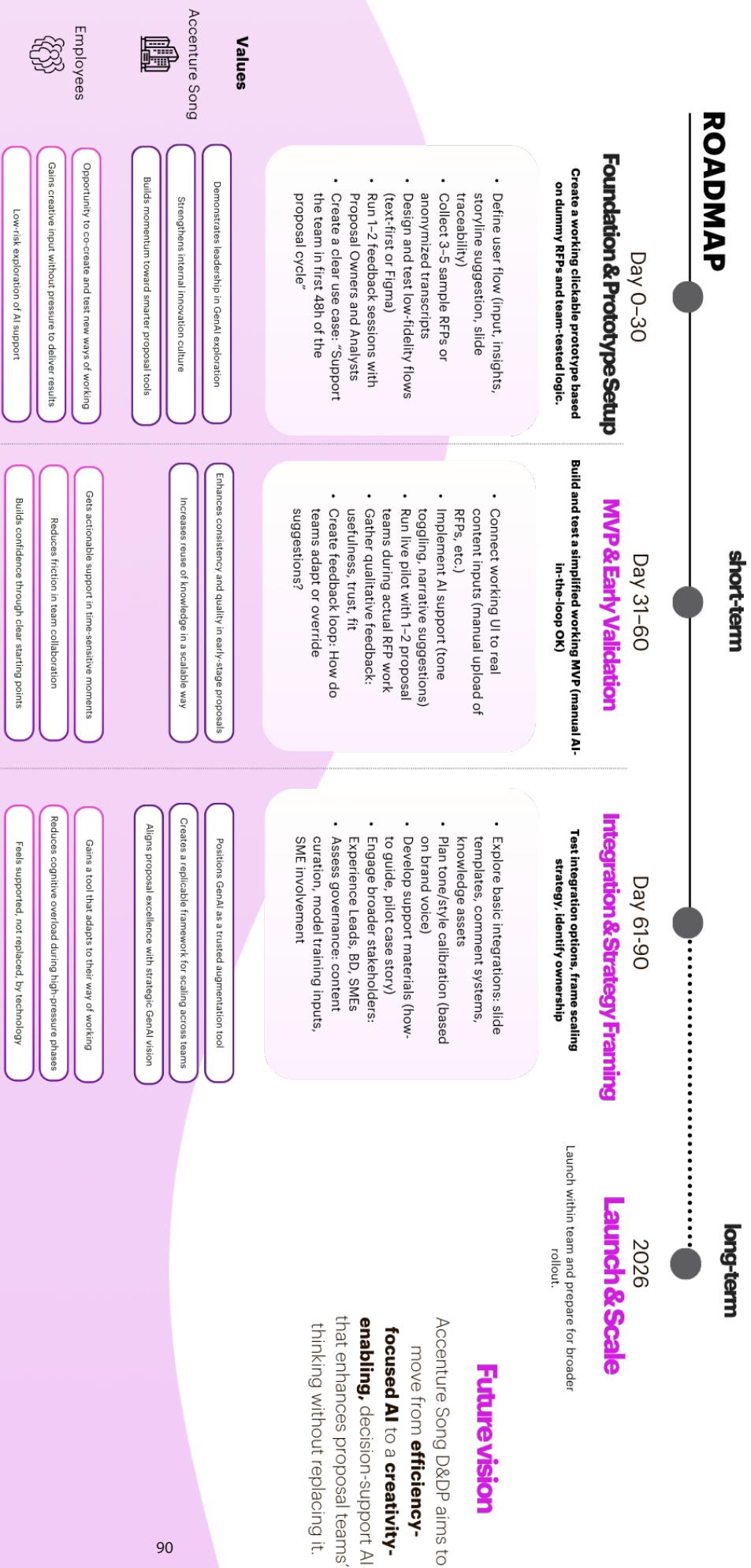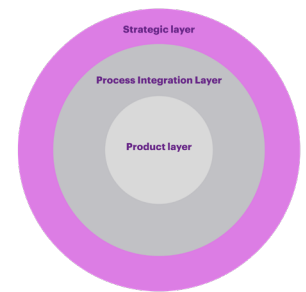
5.4 Strategic Layer

This final layer of the Deliver phase reflects on the broader strategic relevance of the Proposal Intelligence Assistant for Accenture Song and, more specifically, the D&DP team. While the product and process layers focus on usability and integration, the strategic layer examines how this concept supports long-term goals in the areas of AI maturity, operational efficiency, talent retention, and responsible innovation.

Integrating GenAI into the proposal development process is not just a functional upgrade, it represents a shift toward scalable, intelligent tooling that complements human expertise and reinforces Accenture's position as a creative technology leader.

Questions to keep in mind reading this:
"Why does this concept matter beyond this one use case?"

"How does it support D&DP and Accenture Song's long-term AI, design, and delivery ambitions?"

6 areas:

1. Supporting Scalable Pursuit Growth
Enables sustainable pursuit volume growth without increasing team pressure.

Across internal research, a recurring challenge emerged: consultants are increasingly expected to produce more proposals in less time, often under pressure and with limited resources. By enabling teams to align more quickly on client needs and structure

storylines more effectively, the tool directly contributes to the team's ability to handle a greater volume of high-quality proposals.

At a strategic level, this supports Accenture Song's continued growth by helping teams pursue more opportunities without compromising depth or creativity. The assistant reduces operational drag while preserving the nuance needed for competitive differentiation.

2. Future-Proofing Creative Workflows Supporting Scalable Pursuit Growth
Prepares D&DP for an AI-augmented future where design, writing, and decision support are integrated.

The D&DP team is already exploring ways to integrate GenAI into design and delivery practices. This concept aligns with those ambitions by introducing a responsible, narrowly scoped GenAI integration that complements the existing RFP workflow without replacing them. It serves as a tangible proof point for what an "AI-powered but human-led" workflow can look like.

Rather than replacing strategic thinking or creative judgment, the assistant strengthens those elements by removing repetitive or alignment-heavy tasks. This sets a foundation for future tooling, where GenAI is embedded throughout early-stage project work, storytelling, and client co-creation processes.

3. Enhancing Talent Experience and Satisfaction.
Positions GenAI as a lever for employee

satisfaction, retention, and performance.

Throughout this thesis, employee satisfaction has been a core focus. Feedback from interviews and workshops highlighted recurring pain points related to inefficiency, unclear client expectations, and excessive rework. By helping teams gain clarity earlier and produce structured, editable content faster, the assistant reduces cognitive load and supports more confident, collaborative work.

While the initial scope focused on reducing friction and improving satisfaction in proposal work, research shows that these short-term improvements also correlate with longer-term outcomes such as motivation, performance, and retention, particularly in cognitively demanding, team-based work (Dow et al., 2009)

4. Enabling Consistency Without Limiting Creativity
Balances scalable delivery with client-specific nuance and storytelling craft.

While consistency and efficiency are necessary for scaling proposal output, they often come at the cost of originality. The assistant addresses this tension by offering structured support without constraining creative decisions. Its recommendations are always editable and grounded in real client inputs, allowing teams to personalize while benefiting from reusable logic and narrative scaffolding.

This supports Accenture Song's goal of delivering tailored experiences at scale—a balance of standardization and customization that enhances both quality and brand integrity.

5. Demonstrating Responsible AI Integration
Demonstrates that AI can be creative, helpful, and ethical, without replacing human thinking.

As GenAI becomes more embedded in business workflows, responsible adoption becomes a strategic differentiator. This concept was intentionally designed to keep humans in control. It prompts rather than predicts, suggests rather than decides, and explains rather than obscures.

This approach reflects current best practices in human–AI collaboration (Yang et al., 2020; Amershi et al., 2019) and aligns with Accenture's commitment to ethical and transparent use of AI in both client-facing and internal contexts.

6. Strengthening Accenture Song's Positioning
Turns GenAI from a narrative into a proof point, something clients can see, not just hear.

Finally, the Proposal Intelligence Assistant reflects Accenture Song's core identity: a creative group powered by technology. Internally, the tool shows how design, AI, and content development can converge into more effective ways of working. Externally, it strengthens the firm's credibility when advising clients on similar transformations.

In a competitive landscape where many talk about GenAI, delivering a working, user-validated concept sets Accenture Song apart, not only as a service provider but as a design-led innovator (Accenture, 2024).

6 Validation

To assess the strength and relevance of the final concept, a multidimensional validation approach was used. The Proposal Intellegence Assistant was evaluated across four lenses: **Desirability, Feasibility, Viability,** and **Integrity**. This framework ensures that the concept is not only usable and useful, but also practical, scalable, and responsible in the context of Accenture Song's consulting practice.
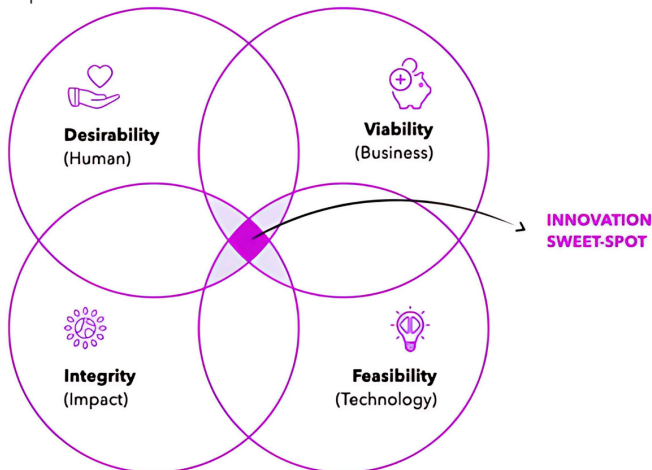

Figure 28: Four lenses intersect innovation sweetspot

Desirability

Throughout the research process, it became clear that proposal stakeholders are deeply motivated by clarity, creativity, and efficiency in their work. However, the "Drafting Proposal" phase (where storylines are formed, revised, and aligned) was consistently identified as a major friction point. Of the 80 pain points mapped across the proposal workflow, 36% occurred within this phase alone.

The final concept directly addresses this space. It combines client intent parsing, strategic storyline generation, slide structure suggestions, and chat-based iteration support — all within a single tool. Importantly, 48% of the mapped pain points in this phase are directly addressed by the concept, including challenges related to unclear asks, weak narrative direction, and iterative misalignment.

User feedback from the validation sessions reflected this alignment. Participants described the tool as "the kind of assistant that makes us better, not just faster," underscoring the value of cognitive support over automation. The tool was especially appreciated for reducing "blank slide stress" and offering a structured starting point for high-quality proposals.

Feasibility

From a technical standpoint, the concept is considered feasible in the near term. Its core functions are composed of modular components that build on existing capabilities already explored in internal GenAI prototypes:

- Parsing RFP documents using Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)
- Extracting client objectives, pain points, and strategic themes
- Generating multiple storyline options with slide outlines
- Enabling refinement through a chat interface

By grounding each capability in accessible GenAI tasks and focusing on augmentation rather than full automation, the concept avoids many of the bottlenecks typical of more speculative AI tools.

Viability

Strategically, the concept supports Accenture Song's ambition to enhance proposal quality, team efficiency, and employee satisfaction through targeted AI integration. Rather than attempting to automate entire proposals, the tool intervenes in the most cognitively demanding phase, where misalignment is costly and creativity is essential.

It is designed to enhance speed, but also improve clarity and differentiation, key drivers of proposal quality. By enabling better early collaboration, the concept also contributes to broader efficiency across the process.

The hybrid concept was chosen through a structured prioritization exercise with stakeholders, who preferred it for its practical value and cultural fit. It builds on existing workflows without demanding a complete redo, making it a viable candidate for short-term piloting and long-term scaling.

Integrity

Finally, the tool was developed with responsible AI principles in mind. It does not replace human judgment but enhances it. Critical tasks such as validation of tone, message, and final storyline remain in the hands of consultants.

In the validation process, several guardrails were built into the design:

- Outputs are editable, not final
- Users can challenge assumptions and revise content through a chat interface
- RFP and client data are handled through secure upload and contextual prompts
- Ownership of final narratives remains with the team, not the system

6.1 Validation Checklist

Principle	Validation Question	Assessment
1. Enhance but do not replace human ownership	Does the tool support the team in structuring and refining the narrative without taking away ownership or final say?	Yes – human users refine AI-generated slides and can iterate through the chat interface.
2. Reduce cognitive load and friction	Does the tool simplify complex tasks, reduce information overload, and prevent unnecessary rework?	Yes – parses client input, reduces redundant feedback loops, and streamlines slide structuring.
3. Align with the existing workflow	Can the tool be embedded into familiar environments like PowerPoint or Teams without requiring a new platform?	Partially – while the tool is designed as a standalone solution, feedback from the validation session confirmed it fits well within existing workflows, as teams are already experimenting with AI-driven support during the proposal process
4. Create early alignment and clarity	Does the tool help teams align on client intent and structure at the beginning of the RFP process?	Yes – features include client ask parsing, theme analysis, and strategic storyline generation.
5. Strengthen differentiation and consistency	Does it guide teams in expressing unique value while ensuring coherence across the deck?	Yes – uses reference credentials, language prompts, and consistency checks across content.
6. Encourage responsible and transparent AI use	Are outputs editable, explainable, and traceable to support trust and accountability?	Yes – outputs are editable and reviewed by humans; however, traceability of AI decisions could be further improved in later development phases.

Table 8: Validation checklist of the Desgn Principles

The evaluation highlights that principles 1, 2, and 5 contribute directly to a better human experience and improved proposal quality, focusing on maintaining human ownership, reducing cognitive load, and strengthening clarity and consistency.

Principles 3 and 4 support smoother adoption and strategic use, ensuring the tool complements existing workflows and helps teams align on client needs early in the RFP process.

Finally, principle 6, promoting responsible and transparent AI use, is met, as all outputs remain editable and explainable.

Technical University of Delft

7 Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore the following research question:

How might GenAI support greater efficiency and employee satisfaction within the D&DP RFP workflow at Accenture Song?

Through qualitative research, including interviews, shadowing, and a mapping workshop, the study uncovered recurring tensions in the proposal development phase — from unclear differentiation and cognitive overload to fragmented collaboration and misalignment with client intent. These issues not only hamper efficiency but also contribute to frustration among team members, particularly under tight deadlines and high expectations.

The resulting design intervention, the Proposal Intelligence Assistant, combines two conceptual directions: a Client Intent Lens that helps interpret client expectations at the outset, and a Differentiation Designer that aids teams in crafting a compelling and relevant proposal narrative. Together, they aim to streamline early-stage proposal shaping by aligning internal and external perspectives and by reducing low-value manual effort.

Validation sessions with Accenture stakeholders indicated that the concept resonates strongly with the actual needs of proposal teams. It was seen as both feasible and desirable, offering support without replacing human judgment. The tool aligns with Accenture's broader ambition to embed GenAI not as a substitute for expertise, but as a collaborator that empowers consultants to focus on strategic thinking, storytelling, and client value.

The concept addresses 14 out of 29 documented pain points in the proposal development phase and demonstrates meaningful progress toward both goals outlined in the research question. In terms of efficiency, it can reduce time spent on narrative framing, alignment, and redundant revisions. For employee satisfaction, it is said to lower cognitive load and give teams more headroom to deliver quality work.

Ultimately, this thesis does not present a finished product, but a well-founded direction—one that integrates user insight, organisational context, and technological possibility. It shows that meaningful GenAI adoption in consulting is not only about capability, but also about timing, trust, and thoughtful integration. The Proposal Intelligence Assistant represents a step toward that future.

8 Discussion

The findings of this project point to several broader insights that go beyond the specifics of the concept.

First, introducing AI in knowledge work is not just a matter of technology. It is also about timing, trust, and the ability to integrate with how people already work. Employees showed enthusiasm for the concept, but were clear that it should not add new complexity or force a redesign of existing habits. This highlights the importance of designing AI tools that are additive and not disruptive.

Second, employee satisfaction depends not only on how efficient a tool is, but also on how it supports ownership, confidence, and focus. The ability to start from a clear structure, receive early narrative support, and avoid repetitive work was seen as a major benefit of the proposed concept. These insights align with existing literature on human-AI collaboration, where successful adoption often hinges on preserving human control while enhancing decision-making.

Third, the project revealed a gap between the current maturity of GenAI tools and the aspirations of teams that want to use them. Employees wanted deeper contextual understanding, real-time collaboration, and multi-source integration. This suggests that future development should move toward more intelligent, embedded systems that are capable of working across channels and documents, rather than remaining isolated solutions.

Finally, the project contributes to Accenture Song's broader ambition to use AI not just for automation, but for enhancing creativity and value delivery. The concept reflects this ambition by offering a tool that strengthens strategic thinking, improves message clarity, and helps teams collaborate more effectively.

As AI continues to evolve, the most successful tools will be those that help organizations work smarter, while also making the work itself more engaging and meaningful.

9 Limitations

While the results of this thesis are promising, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within the specific context of Accenture Song's Design and Digital Products team in the Netherlands. Although many of the findings likely apply more broadly, they are grounded in one part of the organization and reflect that team's particular ways of working.

Second, the concept has not been implemented or tested in live proposal environments. Validation took place through interviews, mockups, and scenario-based feedback. While this provided valuable insight into perceived usefulness and feasibility, actual use in ongoing proposals may reveal additional challenges related to data access, timing, or team habits.

Third, the project focused solely on the proposal development phase. Earlier qualification steps and later phases, such as post-submission review or legal contracting, were excluded. This narrow focus was necessary to keep the scope manageable, but it means the concept has not been tested in interaction with the full end-to-end workflow.

Fourth, as both the designer and analyst, the researcher's background in strategic product design, and personal interest in the potential of AI, may have shaped how problem areas were framed and how design opportunities were prioritised.

Although user feedback, expert interviews, and triangulation techniques helped mitigate

this, the interpretive nature of qualitative research means the findings are not entirely neutral. Future studies might benefit from involving multiple researchers or facilitating more participatory co-analysis with team members to broaden perspectives and reduce subjective influence.

Finally, the research was conducted at a time when both GenAI and internal AI governance were evolving rapidly. Some design choices were made based on assumptions about data availability, system integration, or adoption readiness that may need to be revisited in future implementations.

10 Recommendations

This thesis explored how GenAI could improve efficiency and employee satisfaction within the proposal development workflow at Accenture Song. While the developed concept was tested in a specific context, many insights are relevant to both practitioners and researchers working on the intersection of AI and professional services. The following recommendations are grouped by target audience.

For Accenture Song

1. Start with a pilot focused on proposal development
Roll out the combined concept within a selected team or client case to observe its effects in real conditions. Choose a team with a strong interest in innovation and enough stability in their workflow to reflect meaningful changes.

2. Integrate early in the proposal timeline
The tool adds most value when used in the early phases, such as translating the client ask, aligning internally, and structuring the storyline. Begin integration efforts at those touchpoints to build confidence before expanding functionality.

3. Assign clear ownership for AI-enabled tools
Ensure accountability by assigning a team or role to maintain the tool, improve prompts and training data, and monitor responsible use. This includes both technical governance and experience design.

4. Focus on adoption through alignment with habits
Ensure the solution works within familiar tools like Teams, PowerPoint, and internal repositories. Frictionless integration is key to sustained use.

5. Measure success beyond time savings
Track indicators such as reduction in rework, clarity of storylines, team alignment, and satisfaction. These metrics align more closely with the tool's long-term value than time spent alone.

For Other Practitioners and Design Teams

1. Consider GenAI as a collaborative design partner
Use GenAI not just for automation, but to support processes that require framing, synthesis, or creativity. The technology can help teams clarify intent, reduce misalignment, and generate first drafts more confidently.

2. Design for augmentation, not replacement
Employees remain central to proposal work. Design interventions that help people make better decisions, not ones that try to replace judgment entirely. GenAI tools should be transparent, editable, and easy to question.

3. Involve users early and iteratively
Introduce ideas through prototypes, workshops, or walkthroughs to gather feedback. Many of the most valuable concept refinements in this thesis emerged from co-creation and discussion.

4. Recognize friction as design opportunity
Rather than only smoothing steps in a workflow, look at where people feel lost, misaligned, or burdened. These are often where the greatest design value can be added.

For Researchers in Design, AI, and Workflows
1. Study AI in the messy middle of work
Research should go beyond well-defined tasks. The value of GenAI is often clearest in moments of ambiguity, collaboration, and iteration. This area remains under-explored.

2. Explore hybrid evaluation metrics
Success in GenAI design tools should not be evaluated by speed or output volume alone. More nuanced measures—such as alignment quality, clarity of message, or team engagement—are needed.

3. Expand research into knowledge-intensive work
Consulting is one of many fields where GenAI may play a growing role. Studying how AI supports creative, strategic, or communicative work could reveal transferable insights for other industries.

4. Investigate responsible AI adoption at team level
Trust, interpretation, and adaptation all happen within teams, not just individuals. Future research could focus on how collective dynamics shape the use and perception of GenAI tools.

11 Reflection

This thesis has been a complex but rewarding journey. It began with an interest in how GenAI could contribute to consulting work, but quickly became a much deeper exploration of how people collaborate, where friction emerges, and how technology can support rather than overwhelm. I learned that designing with AI is not just about adding smart tools. It is about asking what truly helps people work better, especially in environments shaped by pressure, ambition, and constant change.

One of the most difficult parts of the project was scoping. Early on, I struggled with the tension between wanting to understand the full RFP process and realizing that this would not be feasible within the time and resources I had. Eventually, I made the decision to focus on the proposal development phase. This helped me stay grounded in what I could actually influence, and it gave the research more depth and focus. Still, letting go of other interesting areas was not always easy.

I also noticed how much I value working with others. Although I had many helpful conversations and feedback moments, much of the research and decision-making was done alone. There were moments when I felt isolated in the process. In hindsight, I would have involved stakeholders and supervisors earlier and more consistently. Once I began to see the thesis as a collaboration rather than a solo task, the project became more manageable and more enjoyable.

Designing with GenAI brought its own set of challenges. It was tempting to explore very advanced or futuristic concepts, but the real value came when I focused on what teams actually need during proposal development. People told me they needed clarity, structure, and help with shaping their story. That made me realize that the most powerful concepts are not necessarily the most complex. They are the ones that feel like a natural part of the work. This is where I saw the most potential for GenAI to add value.

Throughout the process, I also became more aware of the difference between efficiency and satisfaction. Teams do not only want to work faster. They want to work with confidence, have better alignment with colleagues, and spend less time on repetitive or unclear tasks. This became a guiding principle in the concept I developed. It helped me shift my thinking from tools that replace effort to tools that support meaningful work.

Finally, I learned how important it is to keep questioning what we are designing and why. There were moments when I doubted whether the concept was realistic or relevant. But those doubts often led to better decisions. They helped me test assumptions, ask for feedback, and stay closer to what people actually need. In that sense, this project taught me not only how to design a solution, but how to stay open, curious, and critical throughout the process.

I am grateful for everyone who supported me, challenged me, and shared their time. This project is not just a concept or a report. It is also a reflection of what I learned about design, technology, and the people we build for.

12 Reference List

(2020). Language models are few-shot learners. arXiv preprint arXiv:2005.14165.

1up.ai. (2025). The RFP process in the AI era: What you need to know. https://1up.ai/blog/rfp-process-in-generative-ai-era/

Accenture Song: Growth through Relevance. (n.d.). https://www.accenture.com/us-en/about/accenture-song-index

Accenture. (2023). Accenture invests $3 billion in data and AI. https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/accenture-invests-3-billion-in-data-and-ai-to-help-clients-accelerate-innovation.htm

Accenture. (2024a). Reinventing enterprise operations with Gen AI. https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/2024/new-accenture-research-finds-that-companies-with-ai-led-processes-outperform-peers

Accenture. (2024b). Work, workforce, workers: Reinvented in the age of generative AI. https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/2024/accenture-report-finds-perception-gap-between-workers-and-c-suite-around-work-and-generative-ai

AlphaSense. (2023). Generative AI in Consulting: Benefits, Risks, and Use Cases. https://www.alpha-sense.com/blog/trends/generative-ai-consulting/

AlphaSense. (2024). Generative AI in consulting: Benefits, risks, and use cases. https://www.alpha-sense.com/blog/trends/generative-ai-consulting/

Amershi, S., et al. (2019). (3rd ed., pp. 339-380). "Guidelines for Human-AI Interaction."

Analytics Vidhya. (2023). Understanding tokenization in NLP. https://www.analyticsvidhya.com/blog/2023/01/understanding-tokenization-in-nlp/

Bender, E. M., Gebru, T., McMillan-Major, A., & Shmitchell, S. (2021). On the dangers of stochastic parrots: Can language models be too big? Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency, 610–623. https://doi.org/10.1145/3442188.3445922

Bender, E. M., Gebru, T., McMillan-Major, A., & Shmitchell, S. (2021). On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big? https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3442188.3445922

Bilal, M., & Åström, F. (2024). Retrieval-augmented generation for RFP response automation. Journal of Information Science. https://kth.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1884900&dswid=7475

Bloomberg. (2025, June 10). Accenture trains 500,000 staffers for boom in AI consulting work. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-06-10/accenture-trains-500-000-staffers-for-boom-in-ai-consulting-work

Brown, T. B., Mann, B., Ryder, N., Subbiah, M., Kaplan, J., Dhariwal, P., … & Amodei, D. (2020). Language models are few-shot learners. arXiv preprint arXiv:2005.14165. https://arxiv.org/abs/2005.14165

Brynjolfsson, E., McAfee, A., & Spence, M. (2018). New world order: Labor, capital, and ideas in the power law economy. Harvard Business Review. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24483556

CBS. (2025, March 27). Labour productivity in the Netherlands down again in 2024. Statistics Netherlands. https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2025/13/labour-productivity-in-the-netherlands-down-again-in-2024

Chui, M., Hazan, E., Roberts, R., Singla, A., Smaje, K., Sukharevsky, A., Yee, L., & Zemmel, R. (2023, June 14). The economic potential of generative AI: The next productivity frontier. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/the-economic-potential-of-generative-ai-the-next-productivity-frontier

Consource.io. (2023). Crafting a future-forward consulting RFP. https://consource.io/crafting-a-future-forward-consulting-rfp/

Consulting reimagined, powered by AI. (n.d.). IBM. https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/en-us/report/consulting-ai

CPOstrategy. (2024). Generative AI is transforming the RFP process. https://cpostrategy.media/blog/2024/04/01/generative-ai-is-transforming-the-rfp-process/

Dow, S. P., Heddleston, K., & Klemmer, S. R. (2009). The efficacy of prototyping under time constraints. In Proceedings of the seventh ACM conference on Creativity and cognition (pp. 165–174). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/1640233.1640260

Evalueserve. (2022). Improving RFP process efficiencies for consulting firm with AI. https://www.evalueserve.com/case-study/improving-rfp-process-efficiencies/

EY. (2023). The future of consulting in the age of generative AI. https://www.ey.com/en_in/insights/consulting/the-future-of-consulting-in-the-age-of-generative-ai

Forbes. (2024). Gen AI revolution is reshaping the future of traditional consulting. Forbes Gen AI Consulting

Ghosh et al., 2023. A new era of generative AI for everyone [Book]. In A new era of generative AI for everyone. https://www.accenture.com/content/dam/accenture/final/accenture-com/document/Accenture-A-New-Era-of-Generative-AI-for-Everyone.pdf

Guida, M., Caniato, F., Moretto, A., & Ronchi, S. (2023). The role of artificial intelligence in the procurement process: State of the art and research agenda. Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management, 29(3), 100-120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pursup.2023.100120

Hamid R. Motahari-Nezhad. (2016). RFPCog: Linguistic-Based Identification and Mapping of Service Requirements in Request for Proposals (RFPs) to IT Service Solutions. IEEE Conference Publication | IEEE Xplore. https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2016.213

Technical University of Delft

Hancock, B., & Puri, A. (2023). The organization of the future: Enabled by gen AI. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/the-organization-of-the-future-enabled-by-gen-ai-driven-by-people

Hiatt, J., & Creasey, T. (2012). Change management: The people side of change. Prosci Learning Center Publications. ADKAR Model

Huang, H., Yang, J., Liu, Z., & Zhang, Y. (2023). Understanding and mitigating hallucination in large language models: A survey. arXiv preprint arXiv:2311.17968. https://arxiv.org/abs/2311.17968

Humble, J. (2023, 23 June). What is the Double Diamond Design Process? The Fountain

IBISWorld. (2024, March 28). Management consultants in the Netherlands. Copyright © 1999-2025 IBISWorld, Inc. https://www.ibisworld.com/netherlands/industry/management-consultants/200286/

IBM. (2024). What is AI Ethics?. https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/ai-ethics
IBM. (2025). The state of AI in 2025: Generative AI's breakout year. https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/en-us/report/state-of-ai

ING. (2025). AI biedt Nederland meer potentie om arbeidsmarkt productiever te maken dan buurlanden. https://www.ing.nl/zakelijk/economie/nederland/ai-biedt-nederland-meer-potentie-om-arbeidsmarkt-productiever-te-maken-dan-buurlanden
Institute. https://www.thefountaininstitute. com/blog/what-is-the-double-diamond-design-

Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (1996). The balanced scorecard: Translating strategy into action. Harvard Business Press.

Kotter, J. P. (2012). Leading change. Harvard Business Review Press. Kotter's 8-Step Model

Liedtka, J., Ogilvie, T., & Brozenske, R. (2014). The Designing for Growth Field Book. In Columbia University Press eBooks. https://doi.org/10.7312/lied16467

Lim, C., Kim, K.-H., & Maglio, P. P. (2023). Generative artificial intelligence: Definition, types, and applications. Electronic Markets, 33(1) https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12525-023-00680-1

Lipmanowicz, K. M. H. (2013.). Liberating Structures - Introduction. https://www.liberatingstructures.com/

Maedche, A., Morana, S., Spohrer, J., & Jung, D. (2019). Designing user-adaptive systems: Key principles and challenges. Business & Information Systems Engineering, 61(1), 65–78. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12599-018-0552-3

Making the leap with generative AI in procurement. (2024, March 20). McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/operations/our-insights/operations-blog/making-the-leap-with-generative-ai-in-procurement

Marr, B. (2024). Accenture's $3 billion bet on generative AI: What you need to know. https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2024/03/25/accentures-3-billion-bet-on-generative-ai-what-you-need-to-know/

Mayer, H., Yee, L., Chui, M., & Roberts, R. (2025, January 28). Superagency in the workplace: Empowering people to unlock AI's full potential. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/superagency-in-the-workplace-empowering-people-to-unlock-ais-full-potential-at-work#/

McKinsey & Company. (2023). The economic potential of generative AI: The next productivity frontier. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/the-economic-potential-of-generative-ai-the-next-productivity-frontier

McKinsey & Company. (2024). The state of AI in 2024: Generative AI's breakout year. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai-in-2024-generative-ais-breakout-year

McKinsey & Company. (2024). The state of AI in 2024: Generative AI's breakout year. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai-in-2024

McKinsey & Company. (2025). The state of AI: How organizations are rewiring to capture value. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai

McKinsey. (2023). The economic potential of generative AI: The next productivity frontier. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/the-economic-potential-of-generative-ai-the-next-productivity-frontier

MDPI. (2024). Ethical Challenges and Solutions of Generative AI: An Interdisciplinary Perspective. https://www.mdpi.com/2227-9709/11/3/58

Minevich, M. (2024, April 26). Gen AI revolution is reshaping the future of traditional consulting. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/markminevich/2024/04/26/gen-ai-revolution-is-reshaping-the-future-of-traditional-consulting/

Moore, L. (2024, February 15). Improving RFP Process Efficiencies for Consulting Firm with AI - Evalueserve. Evalueserve. https://www.evalueserve.com/case-study/improving-rfp-process-efficiencies/

Nah, F. F.-H., Zheng, R., Cai, J., Siau, K., & Chen, L. (2023). Generative AI and ChatGPT: Applications, challenges, and AI-human collaboration. Journal of Information Technology Case and Application Research, 25(3), 277–304. https://doi.org/10.1080/15228053.2023.2233814

Patton, M.Q. (2002). Qualitative interviewing. In: Qualitative research & evaluation methods process

Quotenet. (2025). Pieter Schoen steekt miljoenen in aanbestedingsprocedureversimpelaar. https://www.quotenet.nl/zakelijk/a64307996/pieter-schoen-steekt-miljoenen-brainial/

Rajbhoj, A. S., Ganesan, G., Kulkarni, V., & Nistala, P. V. (2020). Method and system for request for proposal (RFP) response generation (U.S. Patent No. 10,810,643). https://uspto.report/patent/grant/10,810,643

Ramachandran, Anand. (2025). Advancing Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) Innovations, Challenges, and the Future of AI Reasoning. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388722115_Advancing_Retrieval-Augmented_Generation_RAG_Innovations_Challenges_and_the_Future_of_AI_Reasoning

Regnell, B., & Damian, D. (2012). Answering a request for proposal – Challenges and proposed solutions. In Requirements Engineering: Foundation for Software Quality (pp. 9-24). Springer. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262390498_Answering_a_Request_for_Proposal_-_Challenges_and_Proposed_Solutions

Technical University of Delft

Responsive. (2019). Responsive responder survey: RFP software 2019. https://www.responsive.io/blog/rfp-software-2019-rfpio-responder-survey/

Responsive. (2024). Common RFP response inefficiencies: Identifying and eliminating barriers. https://www.responsive.io/blog/common-rfp-response-inefficiencies

Rogers, R. (2024, June 14). Reduce AI hallucinations with this neat software trick. WIRED. https://www.wired.com/story/reduce-ai-hallucinations-with-rag/

Seeber, I., Bittner, E., Briggs, R. O., de Vreede, T., de Vreede, G. J., Elkins, A., ... & Söllner, M. (2019). Machines as teammates: A research agenda on AI in team collaboration. Information & Management, 57(2), 103174. AI Team Collaboration

Shankar, G. (2017). RFP response management dashboards. https://www.responsive.io/blog/rfp-response-management-dashboards

Sternfels, B., & Atsmon, Y. (2025, July 9). The learning organization: How to accelerate AI adoption. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/the-learning-organization-how-to-accelerate-ai-adoption

Symms, R. (2025, February 28). 11 interesting RFP statistics and what they mean for you. Responsive. https://www.responsive.io/blog/rfp-statistics

TechTarget. (2025). Generative AI Ethics: 11 Biggest Concerns and Risks. https://www.techtarget.com/searchenterpriseai/tip/Generative-AI-ethics-8-biggest-concerns
Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, CHI 2019

Umesh, U. (2025, January 6). Fullestop blogs. Fullestop Blogs. https://www.fullestop.com/blog/understanding-the-future-of-generative-ai-consulting

Webb, M. (2020). The impact of artificial intelligence on the labor market. Oxford Review of Economic Policy. https://www.michaelwebb.co/webb_ai.pdf

Wilson, H. J., & Daugherty, P. R. (2018). Human + Machine: Reimagining work in the age of AI. Harvard Business Review Press. https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=2601277

Worxwide. (2024). Generative AI, boon or bane in RFP responses?. https://worxwide.com/generative-ai-boon-or-bane-in-rfp-responses/

Yang, Q., Steinfeld, A., & Zimmerman, J. (2020). Unremarkable AI: Fitting intelligent decision making into human life in a human-centric way. ACM Transactions on Interactive Intelligent Systems (TiiS), 10(2), 1-31. https://doi.org/10.1145/3380740

This page is intentionally left blank