

“Step Away from the Pen”

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Your Presenter

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- ▶ **Participants: No Attendees!**

Myths vs. Realities

1. Proposals are "written". **Proposals are created.**
2. Proposals are read. **Proposals are scored.**
3. Best writers are English, Journalism graduates. **Not necessarily.**
4. Best writers are Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). **Not necessarily.**
5. "Don't worry, it's just a draft." **Avoid "draft", and use "version" instead.**
6. "All our management plans are the same." **Management Plans must respond to L, M, and C.**
7. "Ignore the solicitation. This organization makes more sense."
Organize by L, then M, then C.

Myths vs. Realities

1. Our SMEs are well known by the customer, so **We must win "between the covers" of the submission.**
2. Our editors will ensure a quality document. **Build consistency in, don't edit it in.**
3. Show what we WILL do, after award. **Feature what we have ALREADY done, in advance of award.**
4. Show the features of our solution. Show the BENEFITS of our solution.
5. Let's use that great graphic of our process. **Use visuals, including both a "Horse Title" and an Action Caption.**



Myths vs. **Realities**

1. Let's use that great company organization chart. **Focus our charts on this customer's problems and the solicitation instructions.**
2. Let's use that great company organization chart. **Use as many as three separate charts to answer the customer's implicit questions about our organization.**

Proposals Are Not “Written”, They’re “Created”

- ▶ Q: Why do I say that?
- ▶ A: Because: Proposals are not **read**, they are **scored**.
- ▶ Q: Who scores them?
- ▶ A: Evaluators, just like you. They almost always have a “day job”, just as most of the proposal “writers” do!
- ▶ Q: What is the grist for the creation mill?
- ▶ A: Good news: Previously-submitted materials; Bad news: Previously-submitted materials (boilerplate!)
- ▶ Q: What is the fondest desire of the evaluators?
- ▶ A: (To be supplied by the participants.)

Maxims on Proposal Creation

1. "The Butler Did It!"
2. Don't have a better idea, have HIS idea – by the numbers!
3. Don't drink you own bathwater.
4. Talk about FEATURES, on the way to talking about BENEFITS.
5. State your case, and prove it.
6. When all else fails, address RISK.

Maxims on Proposal Creation (cont)

1. No one does anything right, the first time.
2. Proposal quality is improved by a structured, disciplined review process.
3. In a well-run proposal creation process, the first casualty is everyone's ego.
4. Don't EVER say, "My work is so good, it doesn't need review by anyone else."

Checklists and Aids

1. The SINGLE Most Powerful Word in Proposals is "already".
2. Fact Sheet (See Slide #9).
3. "Hot Buttons" (see Slide #10).
4. No-No Words, and Red Flag Phrases (see Slide #13).



Fact Sheet

1. Prime has 17,400 employees, countrywide
2. Prime was founded in 1962.
3. Our Program Manager-Designate has 17 years of experience leading programs with at least 50 employees

“Hot Buttons”

- These should come from the Capture Plan, and be customer-specific, and competition-specific.**
- Other sources:**
 - The customer website, especially “Vision”, “Mission”, and the like.**
 - Known weaknesses of the incumbent.**

“Step Away From The Pen and Away from the Computer”

1. Outline first
2. Review next
3. Re-do outline
4. Get final approval for outline
5. Now: create

Do Not Allow Any of Your Authors to “Write”

- ▶ Creating text (“writing”) contributes nearly nothing to the final product.
- ▶ Creating text gives the false impression of progress, when in fact there is none.
- ▶ Almost nothing “written” in the first 10 days of the proposal creation process will survive reviews, and appear in the delivered product.
- ▶ “Writing” avoids the difficult work of developing a winning, consistent strategy from the top down.
- ▶ “Writing” is something that can be accomplished by Cubicle Commanders, almost always unrelated to strategy and tactics of the proposal as a whole.
- ▶ “Writing” is an example of “Ready – Fire – Aim!”
- ▶ “Let’s get something written. We can always change it later. It’s just a first draft.”

“No-No” Words and Red Flag Phrases

will dedicated committed hopefully
any form of the word “proposal” utilize
overall basis in order to if try
intended purpose

The Passive Voice

- ▶ Use of the passive voice is a killer. This creates uncertainty in the mind of the scorers.
- ▶ Q: What is an a example of the passive voice?
- ▶ A: (By the Participants.)



K. I. S. S.

1. Standard word order: subject, verb
2. Tune the customer to everyone's favorite radio station: WII-FM
3. Make it easy for the scorers to find your case, and make it easy to give you a good score -- BLUE!
4. Organize by "L"; mindful of "M", and consistent with "C"



Visuals

1. Visuals help to create value, in the only place where it matters....
2. Visuals assist in making your case, within the given page limitation
3. Visuals re-enforce the story being told by the text, and vice versa
4. Visuals **MUST** have both a "Horse Title", and an Action Caption

Visuals (cont)

1. The eye reads from upper left to lower right – therefore, put anything really important in the upper left.
2. Visuals must pass the “So What?” test.
3. (Action Captions should help here.)
4. Visuals must pass the “10-second test”.
5. Remember readability rules.



Excellent References

- ▶ “Looking Good in Print”, Sixth Edition, Roger C. Parker, 2006.
- ▶ “The Elements of Style”, Fourth Edition, Struck and White, 2000.
- ▶ “Do-It-Yourself Billion Dollar Business Graphics”, Mike Parkinson, 2007.
- ▶ “The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Getting Government Contracts”, John C. Lauderdale III, 2009.