

The Executive Summary

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How to Work with a Shark Without Getting Bitten

By Rich Freeman

Introduction

Frequently at APMP and or local Chapter meetings, one hears Independent Contractors and the Agencies that represent them

referred to as “Sharks.” This label differentiates the “part-time” from the “full-time” proposal professionals that work in the business development or proposal departments of companies. The fact is that many times companies need to augment their proposal staffs with competent professionals in order to meet proposal requirements or deadlines.

These are suggestions for those who must work with a shark.

Suggestion #1: *Try Several Agencies*

Use two or three agencies and always use written communications that state the requirements for the person you are seeking. A simple “Request for Proposal” form for each proposal project works wonders. It contains a single page high-



level task and timeline summary and a scope of work. I don't want to be flooded with information so I ask for one or two “best value” resumes to be submitted. They are the specialists, and after reading the requirements, you should know who is best for this project. Advise the agencies of budget restrictions up-front and establish the range of costs you are willing to pay.

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President's Corner by Carl Dickson

One of the pieces of feedback I got recently was a request to announce our programs schedules far enough in advance for people to make plans around them. In the last month, we have lined up our programs all the way through the end of the year (with the exception of the September roundtable where we have multiple options under consideration). We included the full events list in the announcement for the May 17th roundtable, and have posted them on the new NCA web page (<http://www.apmp-nca.org>). We managed to get this done in spite of the fact that our Programs Chair resigned.

Now that the programs calendar is filled out, the new version of the NCA web page is finally ready for public consumption, and our newsletter is back into regular production, I'd like to

begin considering some new initiatives. Every so often I hear someone suggest having a meeting in Maryland instead of Virginia, or in Arlington instead of Tysons Corner. It's worth trying. We'd like to have more pre-roundtable events like the one that our small business SIG hosted at the last roundtable. We'd also like to see more work done to develop our Points of Contact lists and SIGs. These items and several others have been on our "to-do" list for too long.

The only thing holding us back is people-power. We're just about maxed out planning/hosting the roundtable and getting the newsletter out the door. We could use some help. If you'd like to plan a meeting in another location, coordinate a pre-roundtable event, or provide the effort needed to get a special interest group off the ground, let me know (carl.dickson@proplibrary.com) and together we'll make it happen. ■



Did you know you can view this newsletter on-line?

Go to
www.apmp-nca.org

May NCA Roundtable

What Drives Acquisition Policy?

Speaker: Les Davison, Policy Advisor for the Office of GSA Acquisition Policy

What drives an agency like GSA to consider changing acquisition policies like adopting “Best Value,” seeking off-the-shelf commercial items instead of new stovepipes, or adopting performance measurement practices? How are new policies implemented? What happens when new policies meet the real world? What sort of challenges does the industry face that are affecting procurement policy decisions today?

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APMP National Conference

This year’s APMP National Conference is almost here and it looks even more exciting than those of previous years. This 11th annual conference will be held from May 24 to 27 at the Walt Disney World Dolphin Hotel in Orlando, Florida. The conference will provide an opportunity for you to learn from selected proposal experts and enjoy many recreational experiences in the vacation capital of America.

This conference, which will be a significant event in the evolution of APMP, is expected to have in excess of 500 attendees. Even though it is happening soon, you can still attend and be involved in this intensive program. You can get all of the details from the APMP web site at www.apmp.org.

The opening address will be given by Stephen Myers, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of SM&A. This company, which was founded by Steve in 1982, is the most successful proposal consulting firm in the country (if not the world). Steve’s presentation will be controversial, entertaining and thought provoking. Other keynote speakers are General Anthony W. Bell, Jr., Commander of the Air Force Communications and Information Center, Roy D. Bridges, Director of John F Kennedy Space Center and others.

Tom Porter and Liz Skarlatos of TRW S&ITG will present a Storyboarding Demonstration. Those of you who attended the NCA roundtable held at TRW got a preview of this outstanding role-playing demonstration. It educated and entertained us then and now it is going National.

In addition to the proposal experience, those attending can enjoy all that Disney has to offer in its four theme parks. Also, conference attendees will be furnished transportation and admission to Downtown Disney Pleasure Island on Friday evening for a nominal fee. This is your chance to really mix with all of the attendees while having a wonderful time. ■

Calendar of Events

The purpose of the calendar is to apprise NCA members of upcoming events of interest to proposal professionals.

MAY	1	NCA Board Meeting	• Topic: General Business
	17	NCA Roundtable	• Topic: What Drives Acquisition Policy? Speaker: Les Davison
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JUNE	5	NCA Board Meeting	• Topic: General Business
<hr/>			
JULY	10	NCA Board Meeting	• Topic: General Business
	12	NCA Roundtable	• Topic: Building Proposal Consensus” Speaker: Charlie Hooper

The Chesapeake Chapter of the Association for Proposal Management Professionals is proud to announce its next Roundtable

June 8, 2000

Officers' & Faculty Club at The US Naval Academy

Guest Speaker: Dr. Donald P. McErlean

NAVAIR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT — ENTERING THE 21ST CENTURY

Join us for a relaxed evening of networking, education, and great food in historic downtown Annapolis, MD.

Our guest for the evening is Dr. Donald McErlean, Executive Director, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, Patuxent River, Maryland and Deputy Assistant Commander for Test and Evaluation, Naval Air Systems Command (AIR-5.0A). Dr. McErlean will discuss the significant changes in NAVAIR's procurement process, and how these changes will impact our industry's development plans and solutions.

In 1994, Dr. McErlean was jointly selected by both the Naval Air Systems Command and Air Force Aeronautical Systems Division to be Head of Technology for the Joint Advanced Strike Technology (JAST) program. In 1996 he joined the engineering management of NAVAIRHQ as the Deputy Department Head of Air Vehicle Engineering Dept. In 1997, he became the Director for Air Vehicle Engineering for Naval Air Systems Command under the new Competency aligned Organization. And in 1999, he was selected to assume the duties as the Head, Test and Evaluation Group, and the Executive Director, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division. He is also assigned as the Naval Air Systems Command Deputy Commander for Test and Evaluation (AIR-5.0A).

Dr. McErlean has been the recipient of several Senior Executive Service awards for Exceptional performance. In 1987 he received the Exceptional

Civilian Performance Medal from the Air Force. In 1993 he was awarded the rank of Meritorious Executive.

Please join us on Thursday, June 8, 2000 at the Officers' & Faculty Club at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. We encourage you to invite others who will benefit from Dr. McErlean's presentation.

AGENDA

5:30 p.m. Meeting & Greeting with
Dr. McErlean

6:30 p.m. Dinner and Presentation

RESERVATIONS

Reservations must be received by Monday, June 5. Reserve your place by contacting Bev Utterback at 410.765.4360 or e-mail at beverly_m_utterback@mail.northgrum.com

DIRECTIONS

Directions to the Officers' & Faculty Club at the US Naval Academy may be found on our Web site at http://www.apmp.org/ccmd/next_eve.htm.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Still unsure if you should attend? For a direct link the Chesapeake Chapter's site click on http://www.apmp.org/ccmd/jun_2000.htm You'll be impressed with the speaker, the atmosphere of the Officer's Club, as well as the menu! Also, visit the APMP's Web site at <http://www.apmp.org> for an overview of the Association, or go to <http://www.apmp.org/fao.html>. ■

May Roundtable...

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What changes might we face in the future?

Mr. Davison's presentation will reflect a career that spans 24 years, and includes supporting procurements for the Army, Navy, USDA, and GSA. His recent work assignments have included GSA Reinvention, Commercial Items Acquisitions, Suspension and Debarment Policy Issues, GSA Multiple Award Schedule Policy, Performance Measurement, and a Procurement Improvement Project for the Washington DC Metropolitan Police Force. He serves as GSA's representative to the Procurement Executives Council, an interagency council consisting of procurement executives in the Executive Branch established to provide a senior level forum for monitoring and improving the Federal Acquisition System. ■

Interested in your association?

Have you considered
**attending an NCA
Board Meeting?**

**Your input and ideas
are important to your
committee!**

For further information,
**please contact NCA
President Carl Dickson at
703-883-9112.**

Sites I stumbled across when I didn't feel like working

Several new “electronic government” sites have been announced recently. This inspired me to put together a list of procurement-related web-sites I find interesting. In the

future I might put together a list of other associations that might be of interest to NCA members. Rather than simply compile a huge list of all the procurement sites in existence, here are some I found particularly interesting for one reason or another,

broken down by topics and with a description of what you'll find there. If you've got a site that you think is interesting, send me a review at carl.dickson@proplibrary.com and if I agree maybe I'll include it in a list like this in a future newsletter.

egov

ezgov

<http://www.ezgov.com/>

A business that helps state and local governments establish electronic service-to-the-citizen access.

GovHost

<http://www.govhost.com/>

Another electronic service-to-the-citizen business that targets city governments

govWorks

<http://www.govworks.com/>

Another business providing electronic service-to-the-citizen for governments

IBM's Institute for Electronic Government

<http://www.ieg.ibm.com/>

Resource for the strategy, policy, and development of online services in government, education, and healthcare.



Government Shopping Malls

<http://www.fedcenter.com>
Bills themselves as “the largest electronic marketplace worldwide designed exclusively for government buyers”

DoD EMALL

<https://www.emallmom01.dla.mil/scripts/default.asp>

DLA run mall for DoD buyers

Business Development

BidRadar

<http://www.bidradar.com/>

Finds, sorts, and delivers business opportunities to you by email every weekday — for FREE!

Bid Engine

<http://www.bidengine.com/>

A for-pay bid opportunity discovery service that scours thousands of procurement pages containing opportunities to sell products and services.



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How To Work With A Shark Without Getting Bitten...

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Allow 36 to 48 hours for response. Evaluate and select immediately. You may want to retain “interesting” resumes for future reference, but in this case I suggest that you advise the agency that you may want to work with the individual on a future opportunity.

Before an Interview

Always conduct an interview. Ask the candidates to summarize their resume after you have made a full review. Ask for a list of all the proposals on which they have worked. As a test of writing skills, you can ask them to provide you with a written summary of several proposals. Ask for samples of writing or examples of work they have performed - a Graphic Artist should have a portfolio, etc.

During the Interview

Review the written Scope of Work for the Proposal and ask for examples of prior work performed on similar proposals. Review the List of Tasks, give an example of a potential problem and ask the candidate to respond with corresponding examples of experience. Review the

Proposal Project Timeline and ask for any potential conflicts. If there are specific skill requirements in the task, be sure to ask someone within your organization who is skilled at that task to evaluate the candidate for the specific task.

- Provide lists of key players, maps, organization charts
- Introduce other proposal team members
- Provide all work tools and introduce them to the company supply sergeant
- Provide specific task list
- Execute a Nondisclosure agreement
- Execute a Specific Performance Contract

If appropriate provide:

1. Writer’s Kit
2. RFP, RFQ, RFB, RFI
3. Strategic Summary
4. Background documents
5. Response storyboard
6. Response Expanded Outline
7. Company information (include other team members)
 - capabilities
 - personnel
 - structure
 - summary of relevant past performance

8. Contact List (phone numbers, fax, e-mail)
9. Meeting and production timeline
10. Acronym list
11. Response electronic template
12. Basic instructions and reminders list
 - Template instructions
 - FAQ sheet

Evaluate Performance Early

Collect and use established performance metrics

- Quantitative (objective)—pages per hour edited, etc.
- Qualitative (objective)—mistakes observed
- Qualitative (subjective)—how “good” is the work?

Always use written evaluation forms but review one-on-one and be sure to get an evaluation agreement from other team members. If it isn’t working out. Release the individual as quickly as possible.

Terminate Contract As Soon As Possible

Terminate contract on capability

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How To Work With A Shark Without Getting Bitten...

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issues immediately (e.g., they said they could perform the task, but it is evident that they simply cannot.) Terminate the contract on inadequate performance after one warning. Never demote - Always remove.

Keep the Good Sharks in Your Pool

The first time a contractor works for you, part of your overhead costs goes to training them. It makes sense then, that if the individuals performs well, to bring them back on future projects. Establish good relations with the individuals and, if they like you and your company, they will turn down opportunities in favor of

one that is coming up for you—as long as you don't leave them hanging too long. To keep good sharks in your pool consider having them come in to provide cross training to other members of your permanent staff, or perform other proposal related duties. Many will prefer to do this, even on a reduced hours basis, rather than face the uncertainty of the new assignment with a total stranger. Or, you may want to consider a long-term contract with a negotiated lower price for “slack times.”



Working with Agencies

Agencies come in all shapes and sizes. If you do a lot of outsourcing, work with at least two on a regular basis to keep the talent pool fresh and the agencies on their toes. Recruit agencies as you recruit individuals, with a written “Request for Proposal” and a written scope of work. Obtain and check references, and perform regular evaluations.

Closing Remarks

Despite all the labels that we use to differentiate people, when you are working late into the night to meet a proposal deadline, a good shark is a very good thing to have around. ■

Sites I Stumbled Across When I Didn't Feel Like Working...

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Electronic Posting System

<http://eps.gov>

Government owned and operated system used by many agencies to post solicitation documents

Interagency Contract Resource

<http://ec.msfc.nasa.gov/hq/ci/adp-mass.html>

NASA-sponsored list of Mass-Buy contract vehicles

Pro-Net

<http://pro-net.sba.gov/>

SBA's procurement marketing and access network

Other Interesting Sites

Defense Contract Management Agency

<http://www.dcmc.hq.dla.mil/>

Provides a variety of contract support services to a variety of DoD units. Includes a group responsible for efforts to implement “paperless contracting.”

Procurement Desktop

<http://pd2.amsinc.com/>

Information on the software that the Government uses to manage its procurements.

Acquisition Reform Network

<http://www.arnet.gov/>

Great site to find out about OFPP sponsored Acquisition Reform initiatives. Great collection of procurement links, too! ■

If you've got a site that you think is interesting, send me a review at carl.dickson@proplibrary.com and if I agree maybe I'll include it in a list like this in a future newsletter.



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receive the latest NCA
information.