

The Executive Summaries

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A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE APMP* NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA (NCA) CHAPTER

*Association of Proposal Management Professionals



Enough process, already! Let's talk about us!!

APMP-NCA announces a "Proposal Profession Day" on January 16, 2002

Over the past few years, APMP activities at both the national and local levels have intentionally had a *process* focus. This is all well and good, and consistent with the APMP self-definition statement (see subhead

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below). Yet, in canvassing ideas for local activities, the NCA board recognized that many similar industry organizations also have a *profession* focus. They explore such issues as career management, training, career paths, professional certification, organizational structures and organizational maturity models.

What is APMP?

We are committed to the advancement of the arts, sciences, and technology of proposal management. APMP allows you to get a jump start on your competition by learning the latest trends and issues in the world of proposal development and building skills that can lead your organization to conquer new frontiers in proposal development.

In lieu of the usual bi-monthly evening roundtable, the APMP-NCA chapter, in partnership with the Chesapeake chapter, will sponsor an all-day seminar on managing your proposal career, or those of your employees. The day will have two successive tracks, with planned presentations to cover the following subtopics:

Morning Track

Managing Your Proposal Career

- How can you be more useful to your company?
- What is a proposal career path?
- What training sources are available?
- How can you measure your capabilities?
- What is APMP's Certification Initiative?

Afternoon Track

Managing a Proposal Organization

- How are proposal organizations structured?
- What are the trends in facilities and investments?
- How can you measure your organization's capabilities?
- What is APMP's New Business Maturity Model?

The seminar will be held at TRW facilities in Fairfax, Virginia on January 16, 2002, with specific times and other logistics information to be provided soon. Look inside the newsletter for our November 14 roundtable announcement. **Clear your calendars for these two events!!**

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President's Corner by Lou Robinson

The APMP-NCA is continuing to grow and to perform its basic function of providing essential information to proposal professionals and to provide a forum for networking. It is fun, exciting and educational all in one package. We are now moving to the next level as we prepare for an all day conference in January.

It is now the goal to make the Association an essential part of all serious proposal people of the greater Washington Metro area. The high quality Roundtable programs are now reaching many proposal professionals and many new people are starting to attend because of their desire to stay abreast of the dynamic proposal world. At the September Roundtable, about a third of those in attendance had never been to an APMP function in the past.

The message is reaching the proposal community through word of mouth and through our newsletter, the Executive Summary. The paper carries quality articles and provides announcements of

upcoming events. The circulation of the new Web Based newsletter is now reaching about 700 people. There are ambitious and effective efforts to maintain our postal and e-mail address list so that we can reach new members and track the movements of existing members.

We are anxious to serve all people in the Metro Washington area who are interested in proposal and business development. All are welcome, even if they are not yet members. We want all NCA people to become APMP members and there are substantial benefits to joining.

Once again, I challenge each of you to help the association and your friends by spreading the word. Invite your proposal friends to our Roundtable meetings. Bring your proposal friends with you and let them share in our activities. Also, let them know about the all day event that will be held at TRW on January 16, 2002. Much more will be coming on this event in the near future. ■

September Roundtable Summary

The topic for the September Roundtable, held on September 20th at the Tysons Corner Holiday Inn, was an overview of the latest tools and processes used to support acquisitions. The presentation was scheduled to be given by the current Director of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) Acquisition Center of Excellence (ACE). This organization provides leading-edge tools and skilled professionals to support the generation of RFPs and evaluation of responses for the NRO and related organizations.

Because of an unforeseen assignment conflict, the planned presenter was unavailable, and his place was more than ably filled by his predecessor, Mr. Bob Watts. Bob is an APMP member, and currently the

Director of the AcqCenter at Integrated Data Systems, which provides support to ACE in Chantilly, Virginia. Bob gave an overview of the ACE mission and the processes they use to provide leading edge acquisition software, training, and consulting to government teams who are planning and conducting best value source selections.

Following Bob's presentation, Mr. Charlie Smith, the Chief of Operations at IDS' AcqCenter business division, gave a demo of Nitro, their automated source selection evaluation tool. Nitro supports the segregation, review, evaluation and scoring of competing proposals in ways that ensure compliance with the source selection rules conveyed by the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR). The overall program provided a valuable insight for proposers into the "other side" of the proposal process.

How much homework is enough to get ready for the “real” test?

On November 14, APMP-NCA will feature a presentation by Paul Graf, Director of Business Development for TRW Space and Missile Systems Division.

Have you ever felt an award was won or lost before the RFP was even released? Yes, it happens, more often than not. No, we’re not talking about bribes, or other unethical influences; we’re talking about the competitive edge gained by hard work and common sense! As the first century Roman intellectual Seneca said, “Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.” Our next Roundtable event will focus on the pre-RFP actions that best posture your team to be most competitive. On November 14, Mr. Paul J. Graf will discuss the actions you should take before you start to write the actual proposal.

The Speaker

Mr. Graf has over thirty years’ experience at TRW in test and evaluation, program management and marketing for C3, Message Handling, and Logistics Systems to the USAF, USA, DLA, and DISA. Since 1995, Mr. Graf has served as Director of Business Development for the Space and Missile Systems Division of TRW Systems. As such, he is responsible for new business development in

the market areas of Command and Control Integration, Intercontinental Ballistic Missile and Air & Missile Defense. Mr. Graf has extensive proposal leadership experience, having served as proposal manager for many successful TRW pursuits, including the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization’s BMC3/SE&I procurement and the USAF ICBM Prime Integration procurement.

Who May Attend?

Anyone interested in the topic is invited to attend. You do not have to be an APMP member to attend an NCA roundtable. You don’t even have to be a proposal specialist. If you are interested in proposals, business development, or are looking for networking and professional development opportunities, we’d like for you to join us!

Please refer anyone else in your organization who might be interested and encourage them to attend. ■

(Note that we have again changed from our “third Wednesday” routine, in order to avoid the night before the Thanksgiving holiday.)

Location:

Tysons Corner Holiday Inn on International Drive in McLean, Virginia

Agenda:

5:30 pm—Networking

6:30 pm—Buffet Dinner

7:15 pm—Announcements, Slate of Officers for 2002

7:30 pm—Featured Presentation

Cost: \$35—Payment received in advance, \$55—Pay at the door

Please note new RSVP e-mail and check address!

IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND, PLEASE RSVP TO DENNIS DOUBROFF AT APMPdoubroff@nciinc.com, and mail your check to:

APMP-NCA

P.O. Box 3063

McLean, VA 22103-3063.

To confirm attendance contact Dennis by November 8. Tom Porter (Program Chair) can answer any questions related to technical content or other information about the event. He can be reached by phone at 703-345-7128, or by e-mail at <Thomas.e.porter@trw.com> .

Calendar of Events

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

OCT	30	NCA Roundtable	• Virtual Meeting – Telephone Conference
NOV	14	NCA Roundtable	• Speaker: Mr. Paul Graf, TRW
DEC	4	Board Meeting	• Face-to-Face Meeting
JAN	16	NCA Symposium	• Proposal Profession Day

The secret of positioning graphics

BY RICH FREEMAN

Placing a graphic in a Microsoft Word® proposal can be frustrating. Learning how to use text boxes or frames, while not exactly rocket science, approaches the complexity of a shuttle launch. You are never sure where the graphic is going to show up in an electronic document you deliver to the Government. Here is a sure-fire method to make graphics easier and more dependable.

Make the Graphic Stay Put



Set the AutoFit behavior with a fixed column width of 3.13 inches, and select this to be your default for future tables.

Position the cursor at the beginning of the paragraph where you want the graphic to appear, and insert a table with one column and two rows. The first time you do this, set the fixed column width to 3.13 and select the “Set as default for new tables” box. In the future, when you insert a table it will be your baseline table. You can easily resize the width of the table to accommodate a larger or smaller graphic.

Use 3.13 inches because it is perfect for the six and one-half inch text area (assuming an 8-1/2 inch page with two inches of margin.) This table width is also perfect for a two-column format.

If it is a small graphic, you will probably want to wrap text around it. With the cursor anywhere inside the table, select Table/Table Properties and then decide how you want to position the table on the page—left, right, or centered. Next, select whether or not you want text to wrap around the table. If the graphic is large, you can easily “grab” the right margin of the table and extend it to the margin.

The table is automatically anchored to the paragraph and will move with the text if there are additions or deletions above it. Select the table and you will see a “grab tab” in the upper left corner. Select and drag this tab to re-position the

table, until the text wrap is just the way you want it. If you have a bad page break, you can reposition the entire table with graphics and caption by selecting the “grab tab,” cutting the entire table, placing the cursor in a new location and pasting the table in that new location.

Use a single cell table to replace Text Boxes that have two very bad proposal habits: 1. Being slippery and never staying in place, 2. Hiding some of the text because the text box is not big enough.

PAGINATION TIP—Keeping things together. Select the rows of a table you want to keep together, and use Format/Paragraph/Keep with Next, or select the text and use Format/Paragraph/Keep Together.



The Table Properties controls allow you to align the table containing the graphic and the caption to the left, right, or center of the column or page margins. It also allows Text

Reminder:

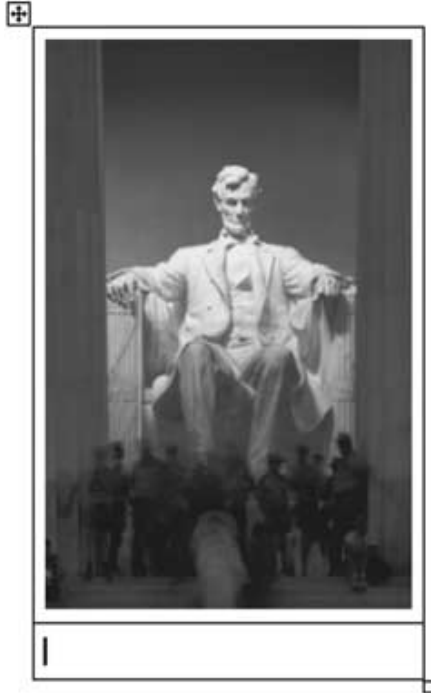
To members and associates who received rebate checks for the July meeting. As of the September board meeting many checks still had not been cashed. If you have one of these please cash it so we can balance our books. Many thanks.

Not getting your Association e-mails?

Update your e-mail address at our new

look Web site: Go to www.apmp-nca.org

wrapping, changes to borders and shading, and Row, Column, and Cell options. The table "grab tab," allows you to reposition the table just about anywhere you want. You may have to mess with it a bit near page breaks. Because the table is pinned to a paragraph, it may cause unwanted white space at the bottom of a page. Experiment—you will catch on.



Make the Process Faster



Use the Insert Table Icon and select a 2-cell table format—insert the picture in the top cell, use the bottom cell for the caption.

You can speed the process of inserting graphics by using a few handy tools and a step process. First, customize your toolbar with an Insert Table Tool. The pop-down allows you to point and drag to the type of table that best suits your graphic requirements. The one shown at the left is a single-column, two-row selection. Here is a step-process that will speed inserting your graphics:

1. Place the cursor where the table will be located.
2. Click the Insert Table Tool and insert the table.
3. Select Table/Table Properties and select the positioning and text wrapping behaviors.
4. Insert your picture.
5. Select the picture and re-size it for your page.
6. Resize the width of the table to match the correct image size.
7. Reposition the table using the grab tab.

Now you can be confident that the Government will see your proposal with graphics the way you intended them to be seen.

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Why what you learned in school about writing was wrong

If you are like me, you learned the basic 5 paragraph essay format (and about a dozen variations) in school. You remember: Introduction paragraph, three supporting paragraphs, and conclusion paragraph. Most variations follow the same concept: introduce, support, conclude. If you are writing a proposal, this is completely backwards.

Consider:

The goal of a proposal is to persuade—here is what I want you to conclude, and here's why most proposal evaluators don't want to be there—here is what I hope you'll read and here's the obligatory detail that you're not going to bother with. A winning proposal is easy to evaluate. Picture the evaluator with a checklist in hand going through your proposal—check, check, check. State conclusions that reflect the evaluation criteria, and then explain how or why.

Never save the best for last, or build to the finish. Give them what they want right up from in firm, positive statements. You still need to provide the explanation and proof for due diligence, but if there is anything about your approach that you really want them to know, anything about it that is special, you should call it out first. Tell them what the approach will do for them, what the benefit of it is, and only then tell them what the approach is.

The goal is not to deprive them of necessary detail, but to give them what they want, in the order they want it. You've got to give them a reason to bother reading the detail. Think about while they are reading they are evaluating what you

are proposing in order to do two things: get through the formal evaluation process (completion of scoring forms) and to make a selection. Unfortunately the former is often the primary reason.

In any event, what they are looking for is how to score you and why to select you. If they find those, then they'll examine what you are proposing to make sure you can deliver. It is always a good idea, in any type of writing, to imagine what it's like to be the reader.



How to give the proposal evaluators what they want

To give the proposal evaluators what they want, first you have to know what that is. Sounds easy doesn't it? First you have to recognize that a customer's organization may have more than one point of view, more than one preference, more than one agenda. The ones that matter most are the ones actually participating in the proposal evaluation, if you can determine who they are.

People in your organization bringing you information will interpret the client

differently—project managers, business developers, executives, and others all come with a different bias.

The RFP is supposed to tell you what the customer wants, but it often is not written by the evaluators, leading to circumstances where what the customer asks for is not what the evaluators actually want. Assuming the RFP is accurate it may still be incomplete. I have seen RFPs with extremely detailed specifications for computer equipment that gave no clue whether the client was trying to centralize IT management at headquarters or empower its field offices. And you might get a different answer depending on whether you talked to some at headquarters or a field office. But opinions that count are the evaluators. Getting the wrong opinion can lead to bidding the wrong solution.

One major reason why you should be talking to the customer before RFP release is that the client may not talk to you at all once the RFP hits the street, and if they do answer your questions

you can be sure it won't be on a level that provides real insight. To effectively give the evaluators what they want you have to have a real understanding about the client's environment, goals, and agendas.

Of the vast majority of proposals I have worked on, the proposal team desperately wanted to give the evaluators what they wanted. Giving them what you want them to have is a recipe for losing, and most teams understand that. The problem is knowing what they want requires insight above and beyond what is in the RFP. The only way to do that is to understand your client—what are their goals, what problems do they face, do they have an internal consensus or competing factions, do they have preferences or bias, do they have constraints they have to work within, standards to comply with, or anything else that may affect their decision and may or may not be in the RFP?

If the RFP just came out and you've never worked with the customer before you can forget about getting this kind of insight into your submission. Get to know potential customers before RFP release. Build a list of questions such as those above and seek out the answers. When the RFP is released, you can look for ways to demonstrate your insight and stand out from the pack.

How to create graphics for those who can't draw

The hardest part about enhancing your proposal with graphics is identifying them. Once identified, the actual illustration is straightforward. Which software to use doesn't matter. Yes, graphic artists have their preferences, but when the choice is between no graphics or graphics in the only software you have and know how to use, it really no longer matters. Not only that, but once you've got the graphic identified you can hand it off more easily.

Identifying graphics for proposals requires no creativity whatsoever. Instead of looking at a section and trying to picture it, try simply looking for bullets. Anything that can be written as bullets is a potential graphic. The reason is that most proposal graphics illustrate a relationship or a process. Bullets often contain a series of steps, a list of ingredients, or a list of examples. These can be illustrated.

Once you've found a potential graphic, it's time to describe it. Start by taking the words from your bullets and positioning them. If it's a process, lay them out in order. If it's a relationship, arrange them logically.

To actually render the graphics, draw boxes around them. If it's steps in a process, don't worry about using official flow charting symbols. If you know how (and the proposal evaluators will understand them), great. If you don't know how to use flow chart symbols, be satisfied knowing that you've already



improved the communication by illustrating it with simple boxes.

Next, connect the boxes with lines. For some graphics, you are already done. If you are really ambitious, you can now look for clip art and illustrate each box. If you decide to use clip art, remember that the goal is to enhance the communication. The goal is never pretty pictures. The reason to use clip art is to enable people to visual what is happening at that step or what is being related, without reading the label. If the clip art doesn't achieve that goal it may be more of a distraction than an enhancement.

If you are truly graphically challenged, you may have trouble remembering the more than 300 words in this article at the moment of need. Instead simply remember, look for bullets. This alone will greatly improve your ability to identify graphics for your proposals.

These articles were written by Carl Dickson and are reprinted with permission from <http://www.captureplanning.com>, a Web site with business/proposal development information and news.

Interested in your association?

Have you considered attending an NCA Board Meeting?

Your input and ideas are important to your committee!

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