

# The Executive Summary

VOL VIII NO. 4 SEPT./OCT. 2002

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

\*Association of Proposal Management Professionals

## How do you improve your proposal career? Let us count the ways ...

BY KATE ROSENGREEN

Can you remember the day you decided to become a proposal professional? Maybe it was not a specific event—more like an evolving process. Eric Gregory (the past National President of APMP) believes that “No-



one ever enters the proposal career path consciously” He is right, most people don’t wake up and say “I want to be a proposal professional”, they just get sucked in one way or another.

Now that you are inside the swirl of the proposals vortex, what can you do to make a true career out of this? I asked nine seasoned professionals to give me ways that they have improved their careers.

Review these suggestions as a start towards enhancing your career. Count the ways that YOU enhance your career.

### Your Association

- Write an article for the APMP newsletter “The Executive Summary”
- Read the association’s National journals/and local newsletters
- Visit the APMP Web site
- Access the on-line library of past newsletters and speaker’s presentations

- Volunteer for local chapter/National APMP committee
- Offer to become a speaker for a meeting

### Your Training

- Get formal training
- Attend training courses in proposals from a variety of outside vendors (compare/contrast processes and techniques)
- Find automated tools that make the job easier and results better
- Become even more familiar with software applications you currently use—learn advanced features
- Learn a new software package – investigate tools and possible usage
- Study Project planning
- Apply Project Planning principles to everything you do
- Attend a writing course to develop your skills to become a better writer

*Continued on page 8*

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 How do you improve your proposal career?
- 2 President’s Corner
- 3 September Roundtable
- 4 July Roundtable Report
- 6 The Proposal Industry Council

## APMP National Capital Area (NCA) Chapter

P.O. Box 3063  
McLean, VA 22103-3063  
Web site:  
<http://www.apmp-nca.org/>

### NCA Board Members—2002

**Lou Robinson**  
President  
703-533-2102  
[win-pro@prodigy.net](mailto:win-pro@prodigy.net)

**Thomas E. Porter**  
Vice President/  
Programs  
703-591-1981  
[tporter255@aol.com](mailto:tporter255@aol.com)

**Betsy Blakney**  
Secretary/Treasurer  
703-817-9700  
[b.blakney@datatrac-dc.com](mailto:b.blakney@datatrac-dc.com)

### NCA Directors at Large

**John Bender**  
Director at Large  
703-642-5153  
[jbender@acibiz.com](mailto:jbender@acibiz.com)

**Dennis A. Doubroff**  
Director at Large/  
Roundtable Coordinator  
[APMPdoubroff@aol.com](mailto:APMPdoubroff@aol.com)

**Tom Harmon**  
Director at Large  
[tharmon@autometric.com](mailto:tharmon@autometric.com)

**Kate Rosengreen**  
Director at Large/  
Newsletter  
703-876-1882  
[kmrosen@aol.com](mailto:kmrosen@aol.com)

### Committee Members

**Russell Smith**  
Membership  
[rsmith@orgcom.com](mailto:rsmith@orgcom.com)

### Freelance Graphic Design

**Ralph Scherer**  
[ralph@schererMedia.com](mailto:ralph@schererMedia.com)  
703-753-0880

## President's Corner by Lou Robinson

**A**t a recent Water Quality Conference I heard a story that made me ponder the development of the APMP-NCA over the last couple of years.

A science teacher showed her students a large jar and then put as many large rocks in the jar as she could fit. She then asked the students if the jar was full and many students thought it was. She then added as many pebbles to the jar as she could. She again asked if it was full and now fewer students thought it was full. She next added sand and finally filled the jar with water and each time repeated the question. Finally she asked the students what this experiment proved. The response was that a container is not full until all of the interior space is occupied. The teacher replied that this experiment proved that ***you must put the big rocks in first.***

The development of our association is much the same way. If you do not develop the most important pieces first, then the organization will falter. Over the last couple of years, I think we have had a great deal of success in getting the big rocks in place.

The first big rock was establishing high quality, well-attended Roundtable meetings. Our basic charter is to advance the career of our members by providing them networking opportunities and offering programs that educate them on Business Development methods, governing laws, client perspective and effective tools. Tom Porter has been highly effective in establishing the kinds of programs that are inviting to our members. This has resulted in larger and more robust roundtables. Dennis Doubroff has also contributed to the efficient handling of all registration and facility arrangements.

Another big rock is the high quality newsletter that Kate Rosengreen has developed. It is a high quality document that publishes electronically every 60 days and is distributed to about 700 proposal people. This newsletter has been a cornerstone in raising the image of the APMP-NCA.

Then there was this really big rock. It was so big we could not get it in the jar

without breaking it first. This rock is the APMP-NCA Web Site. This rock has been tossed about, but has finally made it in the jar. Carl Dickson developed the framework. Then Rich Freeman picked up the framework and developed new direction. Tom Porter provided support and finally Ralph Scherer did a great deal of work. We are still chiseling on the rock, but it is taking shape.

An important and large rock was establishing financial viability. Betsy Blakney tends our funds with care. She makes sure they are all accounted for and that none are misused. Also, Tom Porter's all day event in January was very successful in many ways including that of increasing our financial base.

At this point, I think our jar has almost all of the big rocks it can hold. We are approaching the stage where we can consider putting in some pebbles. These might consist of corporate memberships, special interest groups, brown bag lunchtime sessions and partnerships with other business development groups. I have not figured out what the sand and the water are. As we get the big things moving the small pieces will become obvious.

I want to thank all of the members of our Executive Committee (the Board of Directors and all of the Committees) for all they have done for our association. Also, there have been many contributions from our membership and they are all greatly appreciated. It is because of you that these big rocks are in our jar.

—Lou Robinson

## 2002 Roundtable Schedule UPDATE!

The previously scheduled date of September 10 has been changed to **September 18.**

Please make the change in your schedule.

# Roundtable Announcement

## How is the trip to "Performance-Based Services Acquisition" going?

On September 18, APMP/NCA will feature a presentation by **Bob Dickson** of Acquisition Solutions, Incorporated on the history and future of PBSA. Acquisition Solutions provides support to federal agencies engaged in the acquisition and management of complex resources, including information technology systems, products, services, and solutions. They helped in developing a web-based knowledge center on performance-based service acquisition. Led and funded by the Department of Commerce, volunteers from across government joined the team in a true collaboration and "brain trust" to bring the best current thinking into the virtual guide. They now provide training to government and industry on the use of this tool. Related to our concerns, they help their customers to develop answers to such strategic and tactical proposal issues as:

- Will offerors be able to prepare a sound technical proposal?
- Are specific outcomes clearly stated so that the offeror will know exactly what to do and when it is required?
- Are tasks realistic and affordable?
- Is the performance work statement sufficiently detailed to enable both the government and the offeror to estimate labor and other costs?
- How much is the agency willing to pay to achieve a level of performance beyond the performance standard?

This discussion will be based on the "Seven Steps to Performance-Based Services Acquisition," and will focus on those aspects of particular interest to APMP members (i.e. – steps 4-6 of the list below).

### SEVEN STEPS TO PERFORMANCE-BASED SERVICES ACQUISITION

1. Establish the team.
2. Describe the problem.
3. Examine private-sector & public-sector solutions.
4. Develop PWS or SOO.
5. Decide how to measure & manage performance.

6. Select the right contractor.
7. Manage performance.

### The Speaker

**Bob Dickson** is a Principal in Acquisition Solutions, now focusing on consulting support and in building acquisition management capabilities at the agency level. Bob's distinguished federal career spanned over thirty years, the last twelve as a member of the Senior Executive Service at the U.S. Department of State. He served as Executive Director for Administration and as Director of Acquisitions for many years. He was an early pioneer in bringing the concept of acquisition management to the Department of State. He also served as a program manager and contracting officer in the Department of Defense. Bob is noted for his teambuilding capabilities and taking an active role in partnering with industry. For many years he's been active in planning and conducting the Industry Advisory Council's Executive Leadership Conference.

### 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 that might be interested and encourage them to attend.

### Location:

Tyson's Corner Holiday Inn on International Drive in McLean, Virginia

**Agenda:** 5:30pm Networking

6:30pm Buffet Dinner

7:15pm Announcements, Featured Presentation

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

### IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND...

Please RSVP to **Dennis Doubroff** via email at [apmpdoubroff@aol.com](mailto:apmpdoubroff@aol.com) and mail your check to: APMP-NCA, PO Box 3063, McLean, VA 22103-3063. To confirm attendance, checks must be postmarked by Friday, September 13.

# Calendar of Events

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

For information on board activities or to become involved call Lou Robinson at 703-533-2102.

SEPT.	3	APMP-NCA Board Meeting	• Teleconference
	18	APMP Roundtable	• Bob Dickson, Acquisition Solutions Inc.
OCT.	1	APMP-NCA Board Meeting	• TBD

# July APMP Roundtable Report

On July 17, the APMP-NCA Roundtable meeting was held at the Tyson's Holiday Inn. Sixty people attended this highly successful

event with about 30 percent of these being first time people.

The speaker for the evening was Steve Leonard who is the Vice President of Marketing and Sales at Decision Coaches, Inc. His topic was "Taking Charge of Capture Planning".

The process of developing complex proposals consumes a large amount of a

company's resources including the time of key personnel and B&P budget. It is essential that companies have a methodology to measure the probability of winning on each considered proposal and to know when to "Bid" and when to "No Bid".

Steve presented a process and supporting software that allows effective



evaluation of a proposal opportunity. The process is rigorous and considers many aspects of the opportunity from several points of view. The process requires a facilitator from Decision Coaches and the dedicated time of about eight key company personnel for two days for each considered opportunity. The process forces these key per-

sonnel to evaluate the opportunity and to provide numerical ratings that represent the normalized weight of each evaluated characteristic.

Finally, the software manipulates these ratings and produces outputs that allow effective measurement of the desirability of pursuing the opportunity. These outputs consist of diagrams

and bar charts that summarize the ratings of the team. Finally everything gets boiled down to a single factor called Pwin which is the probability of a win.

The briefing slides for this highly informative briefing can be found at our Web site library ([www.apmp-nca.org](http://www.apmp-nca.org)).



The Association of  
Proposal Management  
Professionals  
National Capital Area Chapter



# The Proposal Industry Council

BY JOE NOCERINO

What if a group of competitive companies could come together periodically, put aside their day-to-day competitive nature and activities for a few hours, and work cooperatively for both improvements in their industry and their performance as business owners? In other words, can competitive companies in the proposal industry, work cooperatively, make a contribution and benefit?

In the fall of 2000, five (there are now seven) of the major local Metropolitan Washington DC area companies providing proposal support services had their first meeting. Over the course of the next few months, they established a base of mutual trust and discovered that in fact there were potential benefits to be derived and contributions to be made by working together. Thus, The Proposal Industry Council was born.

Today the Council meets once a month in Vienna, VA to discuss and review a wide assortment of topics, business ideas, issues and challenges associated with our industry and our individual ability as owners to manage our businesses successfully. We work cooperatively while continuing to be strong competitors!

Areas discussed at Council meetings include:

- Challenging customer/employee situations
- Professional services vendors such as accountants, lawyers and payroll services
- Approaches to establishing fair agreements and their enforcement
- Business perceptions, projections and perspectives
- Business ethics and professionalism
- Cash flow tools and techniques
- Policies and procedures
- Lessons learned experiences.

In essence, members of the council serve each other as a CEO support group with the purpose of providing mutual



support, encouragement and collective information to solve problems of mutual concern. We also work as a group or in subgroups to collaborate on customer projects, explore best operating practices or share resources.

As part of our outreach, The Council presents information about proposal development through local community business and educational organizations. We make ourselves available as speakers to increase knowledge and understanding of the proposal life cycle and promote the use of the newest and most effective development techniques and tools.

As the originator of the Council concept and facilitator of our meetings, and as a long term industry participant and leader, many things continue to amaze me. One of the joys and challenges of being in this industry is that, no matter how much you think you know, new levels of your ignorance continue to be revealed and new rewarding experiences are born.

For example, despite the fact that it is an everyday phenomenon for corporations to bid on procurement opportunities, one time as teammates and the next time as fiercely competitive opponents, it is still with awe that I see the competitive entrepreneurs that comprise our Council work together. Many of us have migrated from having an ini-

tial perspective of working collaboratively that can be summarized by “this is weird/strange and a bit uncomfortable,” to “this could work,” to “this is great.” It is truly fun to see and be a participant in making what are otherwise basic win-lose relationships in the competitive marketplace, also become, win-win.

Proposal industry competitors who once knew each other only by name (and sometimes only through prospects/customers) or reputation, have become professional and supportive colleagues. Council members very often call one another to “just chat” or share a moment or two about business.

In perspective, The Proposal Industry Council, although still in an embryonic stage of development, is similar to many other industry groups, foundations or not-for-profit organizations. These other organizations have existed for hundreds of years to raise the quality of products and services in their industry, and maintain a standard of excellence, ethics and other performance standards in their profession to a level they can be proud of.

Members of the Council look to these other industry groups, composed of competitive enterprises that work cooperatively, as guideposts. We work for the nourishment and improvement of our industry, proposal development support.

Our charge and challenge is to satisfy increasingly higher levels of customer expectations, and provide the leadership necessary to continuously move to the next level of practice, performance and results.

As I see the Council, we are on a journey of possibilities and experimentation on which we can build a foundation of trust and experiences together (which further builds trust). With each meeting or business collaboration, our trust grows. While we are careful to maintain "company secret intelligence," with each meeting we learn that there is really very little we already don't know about each other that is supposedly, "company secret intelligence," and it does not matter a bit to our competitive agility and success. Our customers all know us, and many are glad to exchange tid-bits of information about us, without violating confidentiality agreements.

Will we experience bumps in the road ahead? I expect and hope so! With the Council we have created a forum for discussion and exchange. We will use this forum to smooth out future differences, relying on our mutual trust and each other's good judgment. In doing so I

expect that we will find new solutions and thereby create more opportunities for getting to know one another better. By being more egoless, we will be able to further extend ourselves into new avenues of opportunity for cooperation.

The Council is open for the addition of new members who are proposal support business owners. In fact, we encourage all companies in the area to apply. If you think you have an interest, and would like to take the first step by getting more information, please call me at 703.790.0140, or email me at [JTN@centuryplanning.com](mailto:JTN@centuryplanning.com).

Similarly, should this article be read by proposal industry business owners in other parts of the country, we will be happy to explore with you how the Council model can be replicated in your region and how we can help in its implementation.

We are also happy to answer any questions about the Council and want to hear your opinion. We hold no rights or



restrictions on sharing with others what we have done and are doing. Using our DC model for your "council" would be the greatest form of, not only flattery, it would also help in the execution of our mission and move us closer to our industry vision. We solicit your expression of interest.

*Joe Nocerino is CEO and owner of Century Planning Associates, Inc., a company that provides a variety of business services including support for the development and production of proposals.*

## PROPOSAL HELP from RANSONE ASSOCIATES

# Proposals Organized to Win 2000™

**We can shred out your RFPs with POW2000 and Running Start™!**

- ★ RunningStart is an author-friendly MS Word file that provides a smooth continuum of RFP requirements, strategies, Storyboards, proposal draft
- ★ RunningStart formats are easily customized to your specific needs
- ★ RunningStart eliminates the "blank sheet, start and stop" frustrations of Storyboards, is easily distributed, written, reviewed, and approved online

**From our office — No travel expenses — Fixed price**



Ransone Associates, Inc.  
P. O. Box 425  
Wicomico Church VA 22579

Call: (804) 580-5929  
E-mail: [Ransone@aol.com](mailto:Ransone@aol.com)  
Website: [www.ransone.com](http://www.ransone.com)

Background photographs courtesy of NASA and STScI website: <http://oposite.stsci.edu/pubinfo/pictures.html>

# Improve Your Proposal Career ▼

... Continued from page 1

- Review the “Dummy” books for MS Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Project
- Go to a variety of related training programs e.g., sales, position to win, graphics, effective presentations (what about orals preparation?)

## Your Organization

- Get involved in business development processes
- Ask experts in the field
- Interview successful company leaders know for being a consistent contract winner
- Get involved with top priority projects with the best leadership in your organization
- When you finish your assignment help on other teams
- Volunteer to write a “lessons learned” report after a proposal is completed
- Attend “lessons learned” meetings for all company proposals, not only those you are personally involved in.
- Participate in “Red Teams” between proposals
- Suggest/coordinate company-wide process/ “tricks of the trade”
- Volunteer to collect public information on your competition (awards, web-sites, stock info, proposals from “Freedom of Information Act” etc).

## Your Networking

- Join proposal user groups
- Identify and establish mentor/protege relationships for feedback on professional growth
- Attend APMP Roundtable meetings
- Attend Association seminars
- Go to the APMP National conference
- Volunteer to give a paper at the National Conference
- Interview experts in the field including government agencies for a perspective from the “other side”
- Ask questions of people who have been in the proposal field for the past 20-30 years
- Build list of independent consultants for contacts/networking



## Your Résumé

- Keep your résumé up-to-date
- Add experience on important projects
- Register with agencies that specialize in providing proposal professionals – ask for feedback
- Read industry newsletters published by Proposal staffing agencies

## Your Attitude

- Stay curious and customer-focused
- Listen 80 percent
- Listen to audiotapes in place of “junk radio”
- Listen to motivational tapes re: winning, leadership, management
- Think of yourself as a Management Consultant (Note: this is particularly important if you are a Management Consultant)
- Always examine your success as rigorously as you do your failures
- Subscribe to sales oriented magazines, publications and pamphlets on a regular basis

So how did YOU get to be where you are professionally? Was it a formal career selection or do you just happen to have an affinity for pizza, coffee and unpredictable workloads. Is it just “the

buzz” that keeps you there on the edge, feeding on the adrenaline rush of an impending deadline. Which of the many ways to improve your career are you going to follow?

*Kate Rosengreen is a freelance proposal writer with particular emphasis in the not-for profit sector. Kate publishes the chapter newsletter “The Executive Summary” and has been the NCA Newsletter editor for four years. She also is on the Editorial review panel for the National Journal of Proposal Management.*

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2002 Roundtable Schedule

– **September 18** –  
– **November 20** –

These dates have been selected for the Roundtable events for 2002 calendar year. While we make every effort to keep our schedule predictable, unforeseen circumstances do sometimes arise which necessitate us to reschedule. Check the NCA Web site [www.apmp-nca.org](http://www.apmp-nca.org) and our newsletter for updates on changes for these upcoming events.





## Proposals: On Target, On Time

The one-day class that will help boost your proposal hit rate *immediately*.



### What you'll learn:

- How evaluators *really* make decisions
- Who the four types of readers are on every proposal and how write to them
- How to stress the benefits to the client, not just the nifty features of your approach
- How to convert technical writing into "proposalese"
- *How to write proposals that are on target with your clients' needs and that will result in a higher hit ratio*

### When, Where & How Much:

- October 15, 2002
- Herndon Marriott Courtyard  
533 Herndon Parkway, Herndon, VA
- \$495.00 per/person (\$450.00 before 9/30/02; call us for group rates)

### Who should attend:

- Proposal Managers and Coordinators
- Marketing /Business Development Professionals
- Project Managers and Technical Staff
- *Anyone who has anything to do with planning, writing and reviewing proposals*

### Contact Us:

- To register: (800) 871-6772
- To call Dan Safford direct and talk about the class: (206) 463-6827
- Email us: [propclass@psassociates.com](mailto:propclass@psassociates.com)
- Visit our site: [www.psassociates.com](http://www.psassociates.com)



## Proposal Production

24 Hour Company provides around the clock support with responsive, flexible and dependable production teams. Let us help you **create winning proposals** through enhanced visual communications and timely drafting to aid your proposal process.



visit [www.24hrco.com](http://www.24hrco.com) or call (703) 533-7209 for more information



**24 Hour Company**  
your Visual Communications Solutions Provider