

The Executive

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*Association of Proposal Management Professionals

THE RESUME DILEMMA

BY LOU ROBINSON

Recently there was a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) RFP that required 56 resumes. Not only did the FAA want the resumes; they also wanted a guarantee that the people presented would be the ones assigned to the proposed program. While it is not typical for such a large number of resumes to be required, many RFPs do require a substantial number.

This resume requirement places a heavy burden on companies providing responses to such RFPs, particularly if the bidding company is not the incumbent. How can a company identify a



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large number of personnel who have the required skills and who can be guaranteed to be available if the proposal results in a contract? It is safe to assume that there will be no company that has 56 people who are not assigned to a current long term project and have the requisite skills to satisfy the RFP requirements. This means that project people or contingent hires must be selected. In general, contingent hires are not rated as high by an evaluating team as proven employees. Since companies cannot totally disable current contracts, they often cannot select their best

people for the proposal. It is a balancing act and compromises are generally required.

On the other hand, this situation must be viewed from the point of view of the Government client (i.e. the FAA). An organization wants every assurance that their mission will be accomplished in the very best way. In the case of a services or facility management contract, success is highly dependent on the quality of the project people selected. So, it seems reasonable for the Government to be very specific and

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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

Betsy Blakney

President
703-817-9700
b.blakney@datatrac-dc.com

Kate Rosengreen

Vice President
703-850-6150
kmrosen@aol.com

Lou Robinson

Secretary/Treasurer
703-533-2102
win-pro@prodigy.net

NCA Directors at Large

John Bender

Director at Large
703-642-5153
jbender@acibiz.com

Dennis A. Doubroff

Director at Large/
Roundtable Coordinator
apmpdoubroff@aol.com

Russell Smith

Director at Large
rsmith@orgcom.com

Tom Harmon

Director at Large
tharmon@autometric.com

Program Chair

Tom Porter

tporter255@aol.com

Newsletter Editor

Bethann Gallagher

bgallagher@anteon.com

Freelance Graphic Design

Ralph Scherer

ralph@schererMedia.com
703-753-0880

President's Corner by Betsy Blakney

Change is inevitable. Some of us handle it better than others. For me, the changing of the guard was a great adrenaline rush, similar to what I experience when the clock is ticking and proposal deadlines are looming.

Having already served two years on the APMP-NCA Board of Directors, I was ready for change, but somewhat apprehensive about moving up the ladder. I worried that I might not have enough time to devote to the profession, let alone to my job as a proposal manager. I worried that I didn't know the organization as well as my colleagues, and therefore, did not feel comfortable about sitting in the hot seat. Then, I realized my two years of prior service had prepared me for what was to come. Once I recognized what I needed to know, understand, and respect was the knowledge that came before, I was willing to take on the role of president. I am happy to serve, and I will strive to live up to your expectations.

Those of you who follow the annual changing of the guard have already noticed the Board's ability to effectively play musical chairs. Our immediate Past President Lou Robinson and I swapped roles. It would have been a great loss to the Board and APMP-NCA had he left and we'd lost his guidance and wisdom. Thanks Lou for being the glue that holds us together.

Several of our other Board members stayed on too, providing the necessary leadership to continue the development of on-going programs and process improvement. Dennis Doubroff remains as Roundtable Coordinator; Russell Smith serves as Membership Chair; and John Bender has been re-elected as a Director-at-Large. Each is actively engaged in advancing our chapter mission. You will always find them greeting new members, seeking out first-timers to the Roundtables and networking effectively. They take full advantage of their time with colleagues at these events, as should you.

New to our Board last year, Tom Harmon has volunteered to upgrade our Web site and further enhance communications with our members and associates. Kate Rosengreen, who spent many hours behind the scenes chasing

down articles and courting advertisers for the chapter's newsletter, has rotated in the alignment, and moved into the Vice President's slot. A long time contributor, Kate currently is transitioning her newsletter coordinator's responsibilities to Bethann Gallagher. Bethann comes to us from Anteon, where she works in proposal operations. Bethann was previously the Senior Editor and newsletter editor there. Look for a fresh perspective from her.

To round out this talented team, we rely on Tom Porter to provide us with knowledgeable speakers and insightful programs. Tom left the Board as an officer this year, but continues in the capacity of Program Chair. Tom listens to what the membership wants, seeks out topics of interest to all of us, and delivers bigger and better Roundtables each time.

Warren Bennis, a leading authority on leadership, would be proud of this team of professionals. He would say the APMP-NCA Board of Directors is making great strides in exhibiting 21st century leadership qualities: 1) focusing on quality, service, and the customer – our APMP-NCA members and associates; 2) collaborating and unifying—gaining buy-in from individual Board members in order to make effective decisions; 3) fostering interdependence by sharing roles and responsibilities; 4) respecting, honoring, and leveraging diversity by allowing people to contribute and make a difference; and 5) continuously learning and innovating by attending APMP national conferences, APMP-NCA Roundtables, and applying what they read in *The Executive Summary* and *The Journal of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals*.

This Board believes in its mission and is having fun acting first, then learning and adapting to whatever the membership challenges us with. Most of our colleagues are not shy by nature, or they wouldn't have survived this long in the profession.

Next time an idea forms, share it with others. Let your Board know what's important to you and your professional development. Become a leader yourself. As your president, I will make sure our culture allows it to happen.

—Betsy Blakney

Roundtable Announcement

Creative Kickstarts: Turn your mind upside down and let the grey matter run the other way.

Have you ever been assigned to the proposal team from hell? That's the one where half the participants remind you of Peter Sellers in "Being There", and the other half are feverishly working to produce a proposal with no life, no message, no innovation? It's also the one where every day you screamed, "There has to be a better way to do this!" Well, there is. On March 19th, APMP/NCA will feature a presentation by Joanna Hannigan of Anteon Corporation on tips and techniques for instilling spirit and creativity into a proposal team.

Learn how to stimulate 5 key creative qualities and apply what you've learned to kick start your cranial contents. Understand how engaging body, mind and soul will help you produce moving, winning proposals and presentations. Discover how tapping into your playful side can help you solve serious business problems and energize your team. Learn about some simple 'thinker toys' you can employ to give your team an edge.

The Speaker

Joanna Hannigan is a Proposal Director at Anteon Corporation. She has 25 years of proposal and business management experience, working for Fortune 100 companies and as a consultant to local metro area firms. She has a Master's degree in management, complemented by numerous courses in philosophy, psychology, logic and creative writing. Joanna uses creativity to stimulate and energize her proposal and business development projects—to achieve break-through results, and shares her insights with us. She also applies creative tech-

niques to her avocation—writing novels and poetry chapbooks. Joanna is a scheduled presenter at this year's APMP conference in New Orleans in May.

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:

Tysons 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 apmp-doubroff@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, March 14.

The articles presented in this newsletter are for information purposes only.

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.

MARCH	4	APMP-NCA Board Meeting	• Teleconference
	19	APMP Roundtable	• Joanna Hannigan, Anteon Corp.
APRIL	1	APMP-NCA Board Meeting	• Advantage Consulting

PROPOSALS AS CORPORATE STRESS TESTS

(OR, A PRESCRIPTION FOR PROPOSAL SANITY)

BY TIM WHALEN

In the world of contract work, probably no single item is as stressful to employees as being assigned to writing a proposal. Unfortunately, there are firms whose management style with proposals is particularly crude and usually unproductive—the companies employing the so-called Proposal Stress Tests.

Such 'stress test' proposal work usually equates to the types of industrial Destructive Testing that a manufacturer will perform by running a device like, an engine, full throttle, until it pours smoke, self-demolishes and explodes. By studying the debris and test reports—so the theory goes—the maker learns what went wrong. If people are like valves and pistons, so the argument goes, then it follows if you burn them up, you can substitute better ones next time. This Destructive Testing (DT) is clearly unlike Non-Destructive Testing (NDT), where we can forecast performance by timely inspections of the written product, not by wholesale negation. Well managed, timely proposals are skillfully administered, and apprehend and remedy flaws before they 'go critical' and fail.

On the Destructive Testing side, one of the goals of such a proposal is to 'max-out' the people in the organization, and make it reach the limits where the staff shows signs of breakdown and systemic failure. This is called "Seeing where the boat leaks." The shortfall here, and reason to select NDT over the DT method for your firm's next proposal, is that much of the stress carries over organizationally after the proposal is complete, and that fractures heal slowly. Personnel departing contractor organizations frequently state that a series of stressful proposals was one of their reasons for moving on.



Here are some indications that a firm is purposefully or inadvertently practicing Proposal Stress Tests/Destructive Testing:

—The proposal organization announces leaving the "peace-time" mode, suddenly remarks that they are now into "war-time" mode. (It's OK now to burn out the engine, if it gets us over the finish line.)

—Burn-out as central metaphor on the proposal team, the managers start saying that which burns twice as bright burns only half as long.

—Sequential linked psychotic episodes—the 30 days of turmoil often extended to 45 or 60 days via Amendments with extended deadlines, and staff members get unpredictably ill with migraine headaches, physical woes like stomach problems, and nervous disorders. People "spark" at each other, are abrasive.

—Sleep deprivation sets in. Firms asking the staff to work on "green time" (after hours working into evening hours, weekends, holidays, etc. note people are there but not productive. The schedule that was artificially set will not yield results.

—Targets set unrealistically high by Sales or by Sales and Management; problematic for the Small Business community especially, when unobtainable, unachievable targets accrue to a series of proposal ordeals.

Bravado, Braggadocio and Snake-Bitten

It has been said that every army in the world considers itself the best, Numero Uno, at least on its own turf. Many of the Stress Test variant of proposal teams think of themselves that way. Many are microcosm of their industries, small and temporal empires. They proceed doggedly on a path only few of them understand, towards a D-Day, as though they were invincible. Unfortunately, many proposals written in the DT environment do not even make the technical cut. While espousing victory and doing a lot of chest thumping early on, the DT proposal team which is defeated usually resorts to rationales such as 'the low bidder beats the best guys,' the classic 'we were robbed,' and of course, 'the contracting officer plays favorites.' The people who have been loudest in championing the proposal may be the worst affected, snake-bitten by defeat, products of a stress laden destructive

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methodology. If you see these signs in your firm, it's time for a positive change from the DT to the NDT philosophy of proposal management.

If you are not sure what method your firm uses, here are some stressful factors to look for:

The Fatty Foods, Sugars, Tobacco, Alcohol and Adrenalin Syndrome—lots of empty-calorie foods; note how many proposal teams have rooms with all the candy dishes filled, and the coffee pots boiling 24 hours a day; people binge on food & drink when they can. There is a cocktail party and cigarette fest every night after work.

Bad Communication Environment—as stress increases, communication falters; tempers flare; communication becomes a burden when every decision is at issue, or not sufficiently explained.

Schedule Abuse, Last-Minuteitis—there are managers who like “to see the fur fly” and wait until late in the cycle to make management changes in the proposal.

Masochistic behavior—As the proposal gets mired down, cheerful man-

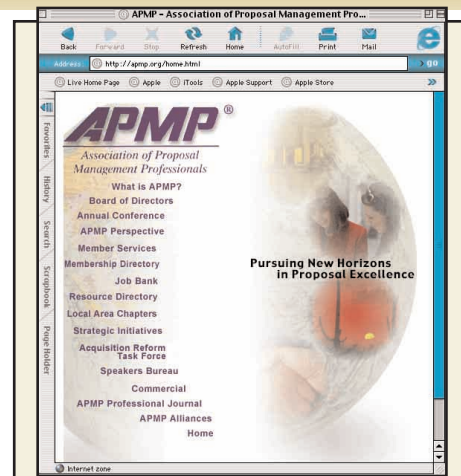
agers and the smiles disappear, and the real authority freaks start to show up; fear starts to drive the process. Management gets obedience instead of effective, creative work.

SUMMARY

Good proposal management follows the essential guidelines of Non-Destructive Testing, that is, it respects the staff individually and together, in a timely, well managed inspection of the written product, on a responsive and realistic time frame. The goal is to coach, improve, and enhance the staff—not to burn them out. ■

Tim Whalen is the author of four books on proposal management and one book on oral presentations, plus numerous articles on proposal related topics in Contract Management, IEEE PCS, and other journals. Mr. Whalen holds the M.A. and B.A. Degrees from the University of Tulsa. He is a Member of IEEE and Contract Management Association, and can be reached at nashhorn44@aol.com.

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- Project Managers and Technical Staff
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PHOTOS FROM JANUARY ROUNDTABLE



TOP LEFT: Bruce Propert (PPIRS Program Manager, Department of Defense) Kate Rosengreen (Vice President 2003 and Newsletter Editor); **TOP RIGHT:** Dennis Green (Managing Editor for APMP National Journal); **ABOVE:** Peter Ognibene (Independent Proposal Manager) Dalls Follmer (Northrop Grumman) Donna Lenco (Anteon); Lou Robinson (Past president/incoming Secretary treasurer); **RIGHT:** John Bender (Board Member) Betsy Blakney (President 2003).



TOP LEFT: Speakers - Bruce Probert (PIRS Program Manager, Department of Defense) Michael Canales, Procurement Analyst, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Acquisition, Technology and Logistics/Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy - OUSD (AT&L)/DPAP Larry Lee, Col. US Air Force, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Acquisition, Technology and Logistics/Defense Procurement; **TOP RIGHT:** Betsy Blakney (President 2003) Lou Robinson (Past president/incoming Secretary treasurer) Kate Rosengreen Vice President 2003 and Newsletter Editor); **ABOVE:** Back -Lynne Powell (User Technology Associates UTA) Emese Bessko (Kelly Brown & Root) Linda Mitchell (Sprint) Courtney Gorham (User Technology Associates UTA) Cathy Petrick (Kelly Brown & Root) Emily Elks (Kelly Brown & Root) Doris Carter (Kelly Brown & Root) Bharati Jaim (Kelly Brown & Root); **LEFT:** Richard Patterson (RJP Consultants, LTD) Stephen Harris (NG) J.P. Richard (Advantage Consulting) L.Denise Jackson (LDJ Solutions)

The Resume Dilemma ▼

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demanding in their requirements for personnel.

In these situations, incumbent contractors have a tremendous advantage. They already have the correct team at work. These people are already working for the government client performing the very job required by the RFP. Such an incumbent contractor must only deal with changes between the original contract and the proposed one as well as finding substitute personnel for those project people who may not be performing at a satisfactory level on the current contract.

In some situations, workers on the current contract will accept contingent employment offers from non-incumbent bidders. They must sign offer letters that say they will accept employment providing the bidder wins the contract. In these cases the worker is more dedicated to the program they are working on than to their current employer. This logic is often prevalent when the

work site is remote to the incumbent company. In these cases the worker will likely be laid off if the incumbent company loses.

The final point of view is that of the proposal writers. It is essential that all resumes follow the same template and be fully responsive to the requirements of the RFP. This means that a template must be developed that is sufficiently universal to handle all requirements for all of the types of people required by the RFP. It must allow all relevant information for each person presented to be easily and quickly identified by the Government evaluators. It also means that the proposal writers must rewrite every resume that will be presented. This generally means contacting each person and getting updates in their experience that must be presented in their resume. These rewrites generally take between four and eight hours each. This represents a substantial investment in the proposal preparation process.

There are some resume software tools that can reduce the burden of proposal preparation somewhat. They can help you identify potential candidates for

each RFP requirement and offer some support in the resume preparation. Some of these tools library the resumes by resume elements and offer support in the combining the elements so as to allow a variety of resume formats.

There are really no shortcuts through this difficult process either for the personnel selection process or the resume development process. I believe the Government is going to continue to be demanding in their resume requirements for certain types of contracts. I also believe these demands are justified. I feel that resumes are an important part of proposals and should not be taken lightly. Companies should keep resumes current on all of their people. Some companies even provide financial incentives to those employees that update their resumes quarterly. Companies should also explore those tools that can reduce the effort in preparing resumes as well as the other parts of their proposals. ■

Lou Robinson is based in Falls Church, Virginia. He is Executive Vice President of Winning Proposals, Inc. He can be contacted via e-mail at win-pro@prodigy.net or via telephone at 703-533-2102.

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