



# Executive Summary

A Publication of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP) National Capital Area (NCA) Chapter

Winter 2006

Volume XII, Issue V

## Special points of interest:

- As an NCA member you have more opportunities for networking and education than anywhere else in the country!
- Access presentations from previous APMP-NCA Roundtables at [www.apmp-nca.org/apmplibrary.html](http://www.apmp-nca.org/apmplibrary.html)
- Self-update your e-mail address directly on the NCA Member and Colleague Database page on NCA's Web site

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## President's Corner

### Continuing the Test Drive— Through the Valley of Self Assessment



Michael A. Scruggs, APM.APMP

Having completed the Foundation Level of APMP's Proposal Management Accreditation Program earlier this year, I continued my accreditation "test drive" by tackling the program's second stage, the Practitioner Level. What I thought would be a short stroll through the park evolved into a full-fledged road trip.

Earning Foundation-Level accreditation involves a comprehensive self-assessment of your professional capture and proposal skills, study, and the exam.

The APM Group administers the accreditation program, which you can access at [www.apmp-exams.com/web/site/APMP/AboutPractitionerLevel.asp](http://www.apmp-exams.com/web/site/APMP/AboutPractitionerLevel.asp). Eligibility requirements for Practitioner Level

(Continued on page 7)

Completing the Practitioner Level assessment is both affirming and humbling—a good thing in terms of giving yourself the sense that you are, indeed, on the right track, while keeping yourself open to improving your skills and enhancing your knowledge.

### New APMP-NCA Web Site Promotes Membership Value and Easy Access to Benefits

Jay Schiavo

Launched in early October, our newly designed site—at [www.apmp-nca.org](http://www.apmp-nca.org)—is built around APMP National Capital Area (NCA) Chapter's Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and features improved navigation and access to the benefits and services that members value most. The site will serve as a reinforcement of value for current members, supporting retention—and a compelling value proposition for non-members, supporting our stepped-up acquisition efforts.

You don't have to go further than the home page to get a clear sense of the value of being an APMP member and affiliate of the NCA Chapter. The center column on the home page is an abbreviated version of

our USP with contextual links to benefits-access pages. The USP begins with our primary benefit statement: "APMP-NCA is your exclusive source for the information, knowledge, and connections essential to your success as a business development professional!"

It's followed by secondary benefit statements and access links to pages that cover *Meetings and Events*, *Publications*, *Job Bank*, *Body of Knowledge*, *Corporate Sponsors*, and the *Approved Proposal Professional certification program*.

You'll also find vertical and horizontal utility navigation selections that link you to benefits and services including the *Calendar of Events*, *Job Bank*, *Body of*

(Continued on page 7)



Find out why the winner won and the losers lost at APMP-NCA's November 15 Roundtable.

## Lessons You Can Apply From the Winner—and the Losers—of a \$1.5 Billion High Profile Contract

Find out what the winner did right—and the losers did wrong in the SBInet proposal—and use this intelligence to win your next proposal at...

**APMP-NCA's November 15 Roundtable**

**5:30–8:30 p.m., Fairview Park Marriott, Falls Church, VA**

Take away valuable win/lose perspectives from the Government officer known for his candid *tell it like it is* style and reputation—Gregory L. Giddens, head of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI) program.

Bring your entire proposal team and come back with answers to questions like these—and increase your chances of beating your fiercest competitors!

- What was the SBInet Program competition like?
- Did the graphics presented in the proposals affect proposal evaluations?
- What was the proposal evaluation process?
- Was there a proposal orals competition, and if so, how did that go?
- Why did the winner win and the losers lose?
- Did Congress, the Executive Branch or the Courts affect this procurement?
- From what you saw in this competition, what can you tell proposal professionals about how to do their jobs better?



Mr. Giddens, a member of the Senior Executive Service, was recently appointed as the Executive Director of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Secure Border Initiative Program Management Office. He will also serve as the managing Executive Director of the recently-established Secure Border Initiative Coordination Council.

Prior to this appointment, Mr. Giddens served as the Director of the Secure Border Initiative within the Office of Policy, Department of Homeland Security.

Register online now at [www.apmpnca.org/rtnews!](http://www.apmpnca.org/rtnews)

**Our Corporate Partner Guest Host for this event is Octant.**

**Agenda:** 5:30 p.m. Networking  
6:15 p.m. Dinner (vegetarian entree upon request)  
7:15 p.m. Announcements and Program

**Registration Fees:** Cost: \$50 (payment received in advance) or \$65 (pay at the door)

**Location:** Fairview Park Marriott, 3111 Fairview Park Dr., Falls Church, VA 22042-4550  
703.849.9400

**Register now...space is limited!** Please register and pay online by November 10, 2006 using PayPal at <http://apmpnca.org/rtnews> or RSVP via email at [rsvp@apmp-nca.org](mailto:rsvp@apmp-nca.org) and mail your check to APMP-NCA, POB 3063, McLean, VA 22103-3063.



Find out if any Governmental Branches affected SBInet.



The 2007 APMP-NCA Board of Directors election is coming soon—get out there and vote! Details will be sent to APMP-NCA members via email.



YOU are the key to APMP-NCA's success. Put yourself on the slate of candidates by sending an email to [ddoubroff@aol.com](mailto:ddoubroff@aol.com) or check our web site to volunteer for an unelected position at [www.apmp-nca.org](http://www.apmp-nca.org).

## Join the APMP-NCA Board of Directors

Jan Butorac

Elections are right around the corner for the APMP-NCA Board of Directors for 2007, and you have the opportunity to place yourself on the slate of candidates. Serving on the Board of Directors is a broadening experience, putting you in touch with the ideas and strategies that guide our chapter of APMP—the largest and most active chapter in the country. We provide leadership to other APMP chapters and members.

### Elected Positions

The top four elected positions are open only to those who have served for at least one year as a Director at Large, per our by-laws. These positions are:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

For these four positions, NCA will present a slate of candidates drawn from the current Board for selection by the membership.

As for the Director at Large positions, serving for one year puts you right in the running for one of the “top spots” in 2008 and provides you the opportunity to offer ideas and support events such as the bi-monthly Roundtables and Professional Day.

The Director at Large positions for which we encourage candidacy are:

**Chapter Ombudsman**—Fields questions and concerns from membership and brings them before the Board; also manages the NCA Job Board.

**Marketing**—Manages public relations and advertising, defining and implementing the strategy to increase APMP and NCA visibility in the Region.

**Web site**—Works with NCA's web master to ensure that the presentation and the content of the APMP-NCA web site are current, attractive, and useful to membership.

**Newsletter Editor**—Fields articles, develops design, manages the content of, and publishes the quarterly newsletter, *Executive Summary*.

**Roundtable Host Chair**—Serves as host at NCA Roundtables and manages networking, ensuring that newcomers are properly integrated into the crowd

**Programs Chair**—Defines relevant subjects and engages speakers for each of the bi-monthly Roundtable meetings.

**Corporate Partner Chair**—Manages the Corporate Partner program and is the lead in identifying and engaging new corporate partners.

**Professional Day Chair**—Manages all aspects of the annual Professional Day including speaker recruitment and selection, logistics, food, and gifts.

**Membership Committee Chair**—Manages the membership lists and works to increase membership of NCA.

Interested? Please submit your name to Dennis Doubroff, APMP-NCA Vice President at [APMPdoubroff@aol.com](mailto:APMPdoubroff@aol.com) or call him at 301.461.8303.

### Unelected Positions

APMP-NCA also needs volunteers for unelected positions. If you are interested in any of the following areas of contribution, please contact any of the Board members (contact information appears at [www.apmp-nca.org](http://www.apmp-nca.org) and on the last page of this newsletter).

Positions include:

- Roundtable Front Desk
- Roundtable Host
- Membership Committee
- Professional Day Committee
- Programs Committee



## APMP-NCA Job Bank

Read full position details at: <http://www.apmp-nca.org/redesign/jobs/applicantresults.cfm>

### Proposal Manager

MSD, Inc.  
2677 Prosperity Avenue, Suite 700  
Fairfax, VA 22031  
Attn: Renee Harrison, [rharrison@msdinc.com](mailto:rharrison@msdinc.com)  
Date Posted: 10/19/06

### Contracts Manager

EZGSA  
P.O. Box 30406  
Bethesda, MD 20824  
Attn: Evie Altman, [ealtman@ezgsa.com](mailto:ealtman@ezgsa.com)  
Date Posted: 9/12/06



Stay up-to-date with APMP-NCA events and speakers—watch APMP TV!

## APMP-NCA TV Debuts

Did you miss the last APMP-NCA roundtable? Do you want to share the speaker with your group?

Watch APMP TV sponsored by G4i Consulting at [www.apmp-nca.org/events](http://www.apmp-nca.org/events).

APMP TV is a new video-streaming resource keeping you up-to-date with APMP-NCA current events and top-notch speakers. Viewers can tune in to see selected top-notch keynote speakers and interviews with industry leaders.

See the value APMP-NCA brings to our members:

- July's Roundtable – New EVM Rules: How to Compete on OMB's Changing Playing Field
- September's Roundtable – Performance-Based Contracting: Today's Best Practices and Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Need to find out the value of being an NCA corporate sponsor? Watch [Chris Stahl speaking about Corporate Sponsorship Program for APMP Round Tables](#).

The latest and greatest benefit of the NCA corporate sponsor program is that the roundtable host receives media recognition by recording a short segment on their company. Once recorded, you can link your web site to APMP TV and direct your prospects to take a look. Great advertising for your company, plus your prospect may be interested in becoming an APMP member or an NCA corporate sponsor—a win-win situation in recognition for you and NCA chapter.

Stay tuned for updates giving you more value as an APMP-NCA member.



# Everything You Need to Win . . . and More!

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

- Capture and Proposal Development
- Strategic Government Marketing
- Program and Competition Assessment
- Process Assessment
- Opportunity Intelligence
- Contract and Requirements Management
- Subject Matter Expertise
- Comprehensive Training Curriculum

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

- Capture Planning for Strategic Wins
- Price-To-Win!
- Managing Winning Proposals
- Writing Winning Proposals
- Winning Executive Summaries
- Winning Through Oral Proposals
- Managing Red Team Reviews
- Custom Training/ e-Learning Development

## LOGISTICAL SUPPORT SERVICES

- Logistics Analysis and Planning
- Performance-Based Logistics (PBL)
- Supply Chain Management
- Inventory Management
- Life-Cycle Data Analysis
- Part Obsolescence/Diminishing Manufacturing Sources Management
- Procurement Management Services



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For many companies, the issue of whether to outsource or not—and if so how much—is not clear-cut.

## Proposal Departments— Whether to Staff Up or Use Consultants

*Russell Smith*

Every company that prepares proposals is faced with the question: do we hire permanent staff or do we use consultants to prepare our proposals? This question is especially important to Government contractors because of the large effort often required to prepare winning proposals. The question boils down to what is the best way to invest our precious bid and proposal (B&P) dollars and end the year with the most contract wins.

During the past 20 years, I have seen many companies grapple with this question. Their answers ranged from keeping proposal preparation totally in house to outsourcing the entire proposal preparation process. Most companies fall between the extremes, utilizing some mix of in-house staff and consultants.

The analysis of whether to outsource or prepare proposals in-house starts with two factors: 1) What are the business development goals; and 2) How granular are the proposals? Let's assume that the goal is to develop \$40M in new business during the next year. Let's further assume that we have historically maintained a 50% win rate, and that we typically bid for contracts either in the \$5–10M range or in the \$20–30M range. Then mathematics will tell us how many bids we will need to prepare, and our historical experience will help us estimate the quantity of skills and hours needed to get the work done.

Although business development goals help define the quantity of effort needed to get bids prepared, the granularity of bids is even more important in determining how much effort to outsource and how much to keep in-house. A company bidding a large number of smaller contracts may be able to spread the effort evenly enough that they can most economically prepare all of their proposals in house. In contrast, a company bidding a few large programs with gaps of inactivity between bids can usually get the work done more economically using consultants.

For many companies, the issue of whether to outsource or not—and if so how much—is not clear-cut. Given the slippage of RFP releases, for example, it is impossible to predict when proposals will need to be prepared. Consequently, good luck in the release schedules may mean an evenly spaced workload that in-house staff can handle well. However, when too

many bids stack up at the same time due to simultaneous release dates, the only solution may be to outsource.

During the past two decades, we have been in a position to see how scores of companies manage their proposal preparation operations. Based on that experience, we offer the following thoughts on whether to outsource or use the in-house approach.

The following situations incline a company toward the in-house solution to proposal preparation:

- Bids are highly granular, and it is easy to maintain a steady-state proposal preparation operation.
- The group has valuable trade secrets that would be compromised by bringing in consultant personnel.
- Business development goals are modest, and the in-house approach used in the past is satisfactory.

The following situations make it advantageous to use outside consultants to assist in proposal preparation:

- The company typically bids a few large programs, producing a peak-and-valley workload in proposal preparation.
- The company is bidding programs in which the specialized expertise needed to win is not available.
- There is an overflow requirement for outside assistance due to simultaneous releases of several RFPs.
- The company wishes to make a large and dramatic increase in the volume of contract wins.

Nearly all Federal bidders we have seen maintain some permanent proposal staff. In the case of those firms only pursuing occasional large opportunities, the permanent staff may be just a coordinator. A more common behavior is for a firm to maintain at least the staff needed to pursue one proposal at a time. This typically includes at minimum a proposal manager, technical writer, editor, and combined coordinator/desktop publisher/graphic artist. A few robust divisions of Fortune firms still maintain large departments with 30–40 or more personnel.

During the past two decades, we have had prospects with conservative business development goals who outsourced very little proposal work. They did not want to outsource because they could achieve their goals with their in-house talent. Many of those companies could have grown faster and earned more bottom-line dollars by using outside assistance to bid more programs.

*Russell Smith is a past APMP-NCA President and President of OCI. Learn more at [www.orgcom.com](http://www.orgcom.com).*



Companies commonly maintain at least the staff needed to pursue one proposal at a time.



Having standards to measure success can be more valuable than the process used to get there.

## Do You Have A Proposal Process, Or Just Think You Do?

Carl Dickson

When we ask proposal specialists whether they have a proposal process, they will almost always answer “yes.” It would be embarrassing to do otherwise. Yet, if we examine how things actually get done, we’ll find most of them are not actually following a process.

A “process” is more than a series of milestones. For example:

- Having a kickoff meeting and a red team for every proposal doesn’t mean we have a proposal process.
- Having a bid/no-bid review or generating reports doesn’t mean we have a business development process.
- If a process isn’t implemented and being used, we don’t have a process; a document sitting on the shelf and not followed isn’t a process.
- A process not documented, and followed by only one person is called a “habit.” It might be a good habit, but it’s not a process.
- If it is documented, but you are the only one following it, or the only one who knows how to follow it, it’s not a process. What you have is your own way of doing things. While it may be effective, it’s not a process.
- If it’s not documented, it’s not a process. Even if you think it is, you can’t prove it. It should be documented—not only to demonstrate its existence, but also to generate evidence of its completion. Otherwise, how do you know it’s being followed?
- If you can execute your process without using process documentation, you don’t have a process. And even if you do, it’s not adding any value.

For a process to add value, it must do more for us than what we can do on our own. Having a process

doesn’t mean we’re doing things in the most effective way. Having standards to measure success can be more valuable than the process used to get there. Even if you do have a process, you should be able to explain why you need one—addressing those needs may be more important.

For example, we need to manage expectations, track progress, validate results, provide quality assurance, prevent issues, mitigate risks, and implement best practices. If you’re achieving these things, you’re probably working effectively, with or without process. Although process will help make it consistent and verifiable, you might be able to live without that if you are getting results. If you have a process but are not achieving these things through it, you might want to re-invent your process.

This brings us to “What should a process do?” It should:

- Guide our actions and make sure we don’t forget anything.
- Be documented in a way that enables us to prepare deliverables more quickly than we could without it.
- Be something that is useful and followed during execution so that it doesn’t grow stale sitting on a shelf.
- Enable everyone to understand their roles and what will be expected of them.
- Provide feedback mechanisms that help us avoid defects and missed deadlines before they occur.
- Embrace continuous change, because otherwise, “continuous improvement” never actually occurs.

So, having good work practices and having a process are not the same thing. Having one does not necessarily mean we have the other. If you decide to have a process, make sure it is one that is real. Above all else, make sure you can explain why you need it.

Learn more about the proposal process and related topics at [CapturePlanning.com](http://CapturePlanning.com).



If it’s not documented, it’s not a process. Even if you think it is, you can’t prove it if it’s not documented.



### Did You Know?

Presentations from APMP-NCA Roundtables and the APMP-NCA newsletters are available for downloading at [www.apmp-nca.org/](http://www.apmp-nca.org/)

[apmplibrary.html](http://apmplibrary.html). Check out this valuable source of proposal-related hints and tips!



**APMP-NCA is your exclusive source for information, knowledge, and connections essential to your success as a BD professional.**



**You get four hours online to complete the questionnaire, so be ready to roll.**

*(New APMP NCA Web Site...Continued from page 1)*

Knowledge, Association Publications, Corporate Sponsors, Welcome to APMP-NCA, and a *Contact Us* online request feature.

And to support the chapter's efforts to promote APMP membership and chapter affiliation, look for a new button tagged *Affiliate with the NCA Chapter...Free!* When you click on this page, you can make relationship choices like *Affiliate with our chapter*

*(Self Assessment.....Continued from page 1)*

accreditation include APMP membership, successful completion of the Foundation Level exam, and a minimum of three years' experience working in a proposal environment. You must also provide a professional reference who can discuss with the APM Assessor your Proposal Practitioners Assessment Questionnaire (PPAQ) responses.

A blank PPAQ is available on the site. I advise you to copy the contents of the document and save it on your computer. After you complete the questionnaire, you can cut and paste your responses into the on-line form.

When I registered for the Practitioner Level accreditation, I paid the registration fee in British pounds. The APM Group now has fixed the various levels of accreditation to the American dollar. The current \$550 registration fee for the Practitioner Level is effective until the end of the year.

Once registered, you will be assigned a password, which may take a couple of days to receive. The APM Group is working towards developing an automatic password that will be sent upon verification of an individual's completion of the Foundation Level accreditation. This should shorten the time to a matter of minutes.

The PPAQ is divided into six Key Competency Area (KCA) sections—Information Research and Management, Planning, Development, Management, Sales Orientation, and Behavior and Attitude—addressing separate topics. For example, in the Development KCA, there are eight subtopics (Winning Price Development, Teaming Identification, Proposal Strategy Development, Executive Summary Development, Storyboard Development, Requirements Identification Compliance Checklist Development, and Outline Development). Taken together, there are 29 separate topics within the six KCAs.

*(for APMP members), Sign up for our newsletter (for non-members), and Join, Renew, or Update your membership record.*

The right-hand column on the home page, *What's New!* has a permanent link to our calendar of events—highlighting the next event—and links to the President's Message and the most current issue of the *Executive Summary*.

Check out the new site at [www.apmp-nca.org](http://www.apmp-nca.org)

Here's where the rubber hits the road. Each of these topics requires you to score yourself against the required skill set. This is a multiple-choice selection, with the possible answers given as *not at all*, *marginally*, *partially*, *largely*, or *fully*. You then explain:

- Where and when this skill has been used;
- Dates of relevant training you attended; and
- Any additional supporting information that you would like to offer to assist in the assessment of your competency.

While answering the first two questions is matter-of-fact, the last item gives you an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the topic. Your strong editing skills are essential for providing answers that meet the word limits.

After completing the topics in each KCA, you explain how you will improve yourself in that KCA. Reviewers are looking for a demonstration to seek Continuing Professional Development courses. These responses are also word limited.

I was fortunate to find uninterrupted time in the evening to compete the self-assessment. By completing five PPAQ pages every night, I was ready for the final step within two weeks. I estimate I spent about 15 hours completing the PPAQ.

When I was ready to finish, I went to the APM web site and opened the blank PPAQ (and also opened my workstation version), cutting and pasting my answers into the online questionnaire. Beware of a couple things. First, you get four hours online to complete the questionnaire, so be ready to roll once you're online. Second, do your spell checking before you import your work to the on-line site. Pace yourself so that after completing the cutting and pasting, you'll have time for a final review to ensure proper formatting.

*(Continued on page 16)*

## Leadership Steps for Company Growth—Access Survey

Doug Allston

Why does your firm win? If you look back on your task order successes, you will likely see a pattern of “access” that developed between you and your customer. Because you had access, your customer knew who would run the project, knew you understood the requirements, and had trust and confidence that you could perform even if things got off track. It shouldn’t seem odd then that we estimate more than 80% of all Government awards go to the company with the best access.

So, how do you know if you have access and how good it is? Consider an access survey to determine who your employees know and how well they know them. Data from a few simple questions can be used to compute individual “relationship scores” for your staff and can then be used to establish “Power Score” rankings for each of your target organizations—essentially a measure of current or potential access to your customer base.

To make it really simple, each staff member’s responses are plugged into a spreadsheet, then individual power scores are “rolled up” for the measure of access to the particular organization. Initial staff involvement takes just a few minutes since the list of target organizations is limited to perhaps five or six choices. The resulting ranking suggests the targets where—all other things being equal—your firm will have the greatest likelihood of a win. In addition, by gathering information from most of your staff, you will also have a list of employees who can help you find and eventually win business in each target organization.

Sounds simple, but there is a bit more. While the spreadsheet helps identify where to “hunt” and who can help, you can’t expect your staff to respond simply because you ask. Some of our clients have tried to conduct their surveys by email, but it doesn’t work very well. An access survey works best when a supervisor sits down with his or her staff and takes a few minutes to ask the questions face-to-face. While this adds to the leadership burden, it is a perfect opportunity to emphasize the corporate focus on developing new business and the importance of involving every member of the staff in the process.

You don’t have to run the company to do this—every project and business unit manager needs to show that “business development” is important, and this is a perfect way to do it. Conduct an access survey for your piece of the world. One of our most successful large-company clients accelerated his “climb up the ladder” when, as a business unit manager, he found the funds to concentrate a business development effort in his own unit without involving the corporation as a whole. His leadership combined with effective staff training produced, in about three years, such remarkable growth that he was promoted to the number two position in the company.

Doug Allston is President of Advantage Consulting.  
Learn more at [www.acibiz.com](http://www.acibiz.com).



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Contact John Bender to review your needs:  
703-855-3163 or [jbender@acibiz.com](mailto:jbender@acibiz.com)

7611 Little River Turnpike, Suite 204 West  
Annandale, Virginia 22003  
703-642-5153 ~ [www.acibiz.com](http://www.acibiz.com)





Risks to submitting an unsolicited proposal include your proposal becoming the SOW in a competitive procurement.



On some occasions, the pitfalls of submitting an unsolicited proposal far outweigh the benefits.



Legal Corner

## Is An Unsolicited Proposal Right for You?

Shlomo Katz

What do you do when your product meets a need that the Government doesn't even know exists? Or, what if the Government is aware of the need but mistakenly believes that the solution has not yet been invented? The Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) recognizes that: "Unsolicited proposals allow unique and innovative ideas or approaches that have been developed outside the Government to be made available to Government agencies for use in accomplishment of their missions." Indeed, in some instances, unsolicited proposals lead to lucrative contracts. On other occasions, however, the pitfalls of submitting an unsolicited proposal far outweigh the benefits. What are the rules that govern the unsolicited proposal process, and what are the pitfalls that a contractor should avoid?

### When may an unsolicited proposal be submitted?

The FAR states that: "It is the policy of the Government to encourage the submission of new and innovative ideas in response to Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs), Small Business Innovation Research (SBIRs) topics, Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) program topics, program research and development (R&D) announcements, or any other Government-initiated solicitation or program. When the new and innovative ideas do not fall under topic areas publicized under those programs or techniques, the ideas may be submitted as unsolicited proposals." However, an unsolicited proposal may not be accepted, and should not be evaluated by the Government, if it is actually an "advance proposal for a known agency requirement that can be acquired by competitive methods."

Thus, an unsolicited proposal is most appropriate in one of two circumstances. First, it may be appropriate if your company can offer the Government a product or solution that will meet a need that the Government has not yet identified. In such a case, there is no "known agency requirement."

Second, an unsolicited proposal may be appropriate if your company can enhance the Government's mission by meeting a known requirement in a proprietary way that the Government has not even imagined. For example, if the Government is planning

to hold a competition for a contract to clean-up a hazardous waste site within 50 years, but you have a proprietary plan to close it in five years, that may be an appropriate subject of an unsolicited proposal. In such a case, although the requirement is known, the proprietary solution cannot "be acquired by competitive methods."

Although not mentioned directly in the FAR, there is a third circumstance in which an unsolicited proposal may be appropriate. This occurs when the Government announces a sole-source award to another contractor which is purportedly the "only responsible source." If you can also provide the product or service that the Government is buying, an unsolicited proposal is one way to let the Government know.

### What should the Government do with an unsolicited proposal?

If you submit an unsolicited proposal, you obviously hope the Government will evaluate it favorably and award a contract to you. However, the FAR contains a number of hoops that an unsolicited proposal must go through before becoming a contract. Among other requirements, the FAR states:

When performing a comprehensive evaluation of an unsolicited proposal, evaluators shall consider the following factors, in addition to any others appropriate for the particular proposal:

- (1) Unique, innovative and meritorious methods, approaches, or concepts demonstrated by the proposal;
- (2) Overall scientific, technical, or socioeconomic merits of the proposal;
- (3) Potential contribution of the effort to the agency's specific mission;
- (4) The offeror's capabilities, related experience, facilities, techniques, or unique combinations of these that are integral factors for achieving the proposal objectives;
- (5) The qualifications, capabilities, and experience of the proposed principal investigator, team leader, or key personnel critical to achieving the proposal objectives; and
- (6) The realism of the proposed cost.

The FAR further instructs that: "A favorable comprehensive evaluation of an unsolicited proposal

(Continued on page 10)

(Unsolicited Proposal...Continued from page 9)

does not, in itself, justify awarding a contract without providing for full and open competition.” The Government must still consider the feasibility and potential benefits of holding a competitive procurement for the very product or service that you toiled to acquaint the Government with through your unsolicited proposal. Particularly in the third circumstance described above, your unsolicited proposal is

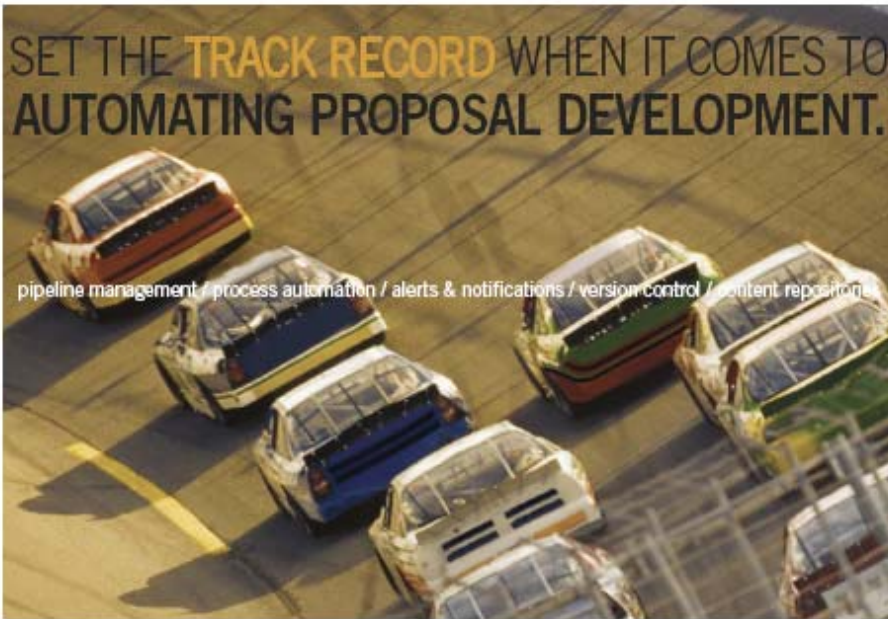
not likely to land you a contract. At most, it may get you a chance to compete.

There may be other reasons for rejecting an unsolicited proposal. For example, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), under its bid protest jurisdiction, has upheld the rejection of an unsolicited proposal where the Government lacked adequate data to establish performance standards for the offered missile part. This is particularly likely if your solution is so cutting edge that no standards have been developed by which to measure it. (There generally is no right to protest the rejection of any unsolicited proposal. One exception, as was the case in the cited decision, is where the unsolicited proposal is submitted in response to a sole-source award to another contractor.)

#### **What are the risks and how can you avoid them?**

Your greatest nightmare is that the technical write-up in your unsolicited proposal will become the statement of work (SOW) in a competitive procurement. To protect against this, it is essential that you place appropriate proprietary data legends on your unsolicited proposal. The FAR states that “Agencies shall establish procedures for controlling the receipt, evaluation, and timely disposition of unsolicited proposals consistent with the requirements of this subpart. The procedures shall include controls on the reproduction and disposition of proposal material, particularly data identified by the offeror as subject to duplication, use, or disclosure restrictions.” If you fail to mark your data appropriately, you may be found to have waived any claims to the data in your proposal.

Many bid protests have been filed in which contractors allege that an agency made improper use of proprietary material contained in an unsolicited proposal. In such protests, the burden is on the protester to demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that its proprietary rights were violated. To prevail on a violation of proprietary rights claim, the protester must show that 1) its material was marked proprietary or confidential or that it was disclosed to the Government in confidence, and 2) the material involved significant time and expense in



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(Continued on page 17)

# Professional Day 2006—A Resounding Success!



## Conference Highlights

Professional Day 2006 was our largest to date with 269 professionals registered and representing more than 125 large, mid-tier, and small companies and such diverse disciplines as proposal management, graphic design, capture management, pricing, and training. The program was organized into seven panels with a total of 20 speakers. Six speakers were Federal Government officials from the U.S. Army, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), General Services Administration (GSA), and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Our speakers provided candid responses based on their lessons learned. Mark Weinstein, a DHS Contracting Officer from the panel, *How Government Executives Run and Manage Performance Based Procurements*, told us one of his lessons learned was to “monitor results not compliance.”

**APMP-NCA Professional Day 2006 attendees learned many winning proposal practices.**

## Attendees Meet Colleagues/Vendors

Professional Day proved to be the ideal place to meet new colleagues, share ideas, and interact with our many speakers. Attendees were also encouraged to meet with our 14 vendors who provide a wide range of proposal industry resources including proposal process management, business development, capture management, graphic design, and training. Our attendees were even able to speak with a law firm supporting the proposal industry.

Video clips of the panels and a slide show of photographs will be available on the APMP-NCA web site ([www.apmp-nca.org](http://www.apmp-nca.org)) in mid-November.



**Attendees interacted with 14 vendors who could support their proposals.**



**Panel Members: Jüris Kelley, John Bergin, and Ashley Thomas.**

## Key Points from Our Speakers

### Panel: Current Trends in Proposal Development

- Federal Agencies expect contractors to lead the implementation of Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) processes.
- Several well-known Government Wide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs) like the Department of Commerce’s COMMITS NexGen may be consolidated under GSA management.
- Alaskan Native Corporations might lose some of the competitive advantages they now enjoy depending on the November 2006 election.

## Professional Day 2006—A Resounding Success!



**Professional Day Chairman, Bob Lohfeld; Moderator, Bob Guerra; Panel Members Tiffany Hixson, Joanne Underwood, and Lisa Akers; and APMP-NCA President, Michael Scruggs.**

### **Panel: Government's Perspective on Proposal Evaluations**

- Perform substantial due diligence—don't be afraid to ask questions during the Q&A period.
- Weave risk management throughout your proposal.
- Make sure your subcontractors form an active part of your team—even consider bringing them to orals.
- Incumbents need transition plans to address contract and technology changes anticipated during the next contract cycle.
- Explain how your value-adds benefit the customer.
- Ensure your past performance summaries emphasize similarities in contract size and scope.

### **Panel: IDIQ Proposal Response Management**

- Form a dedicated group to focus on growing the vehicle— develop marketing materials, build relationships, and create effective win strategies.
- **Do** synopsise the requirements, reiterate the schedule and tight timeline, and set expectations for the response.
- **Don't** reinvent the wheel, consistently bend the rules, and believe no one can create a quality proposal in the time allowed.



**Panel Members: Brett Jarvis and Kathleen Yoshida with Speaker's Committee Chairman, John Amazigo.**



**Panel Members: Mark Weinstein, Brenda Gallion, and Rick Arbuthnot.**

### **Panel: Government's Perspective on Proposal Evaluations**

- The Government can not assume that offerors will understand the performance intent just by including requirements documents.
- We are creating and managing partnerships and business processes, rather than managing contracts.
- The Government must maximize interactions with potential offerors. Use pre-release draft documents and hold industry days, one-on-one meetings, etc. prior to final solicitation release to disseminate as much information and obtain as much feedback as possible.

## Some Thoughts On Proposal Schedules

Carl Dickson

Let's start with a high-level outline of a schedule for a proposal:

- Prepare for and hold kickoff meeting;
- Storyboarding, outlining, and section planning;
- Proposal plan review;
- Draft production;
- Review preparation;
- Review;
- Recovery and production of final draft;
- Final production; and
- Submission.

Now, here are some thoughts in each phase to help you with scheduling.

You want to hold the kick-off meeting as quickly as possible, but you also want to take the time to prepare. I like to go into a kick-off meeting not only having read the RFP, but with at least a high-level outline and a schedule, and I like to come out with assignments having been given. This typically takes me 2–4 days.

When giving assignments, it is better to make them short and quick. For example, turn around a draft in two days rather than a completed section in a week. If you don't do this, you are likely to have them come back with something incomplete or wrong and a week gone from the schedule.

I am a firm advocate of planning a section before writing it. It is your best bet for ensuring a complete, compliant, and effective proposal early. Without planning before writing, all you can do is review after the fact. It also gives you a benchmark for the review—did they include everything that was planned as opposed to “is it a good proposal.” It is far more important to have some kind of planning methodology in place than whether you choose

storyboard, annotated outlines, or some other planning methodology.

I almost always schedule reviews over a weekend. If the proposal team is going to have to work long hours and sacrifice weekends, it's only fair that others should share their misery. It also preserves the week days for proposal development, and gives the authors a weekend break before the final stretch.

A formal review of the draft proposal is an important asset, if you make the most of it. This requires preparation. First, don't take volunteers or hand-me-downs—pick your reviewers. Second, give the reviewers specific assignments, guidance, and the tools to do the job. If possible, have certain reviewers look for specific things (technical merit, RFP compliance, themes, storyboard/plan compliance, value, risk, etc.). Give them forms with instructions and scoring sheets. If all you do is give them the proposal and ask them for comments, you get what you deserve...

Don't forget to allow time for recovery from the review. You want to have time to incorporate the comments that can improve the proposal.

As you prepare for and enter into final production, it is time to pace yourself. The clock is ticking, and any change has to be considered against the amount of schedule risk it represents. If you are the proposal manager, one thing to get clear before you start any proposal is whether you have the authority to refuse changes in final production. If you don't, you are not a manager, but a facilitator. And while it may be a decision “above your paygrade,” the company you work for needs to be clear on which it wants.

Finally, allow time for submission disasters. Either send two copies by different routes, or allow time to re-send if it is not received.

Learn more about proposal planning at [CapturePlanning.com](http://CapturePlanning.com).



Don't forget to allow time for recovery after proposal reviews.



Pace yourself during final production—the clock is ticking—and consider any change against the schedule risk it represents.



### APMP and NCA Missions

APMP's Mission is to advance the arts, sciences, and technology of new business acquisition and to promote the professionalism of those engaged in those pursuits.

Our Chapter's Mission is to provide our members with information and opportunities to improve their professional performance and advance their careers in Proposal and Acquisition Management.



The cost of crossing the finish line as a winner varies widely based on the type of proposal and number of required past performances and resumes.



Companies that are good at BD do so much work before RFP release that they may win 90% of the contracts they bid.

## How Much Does It/ Should It Cost To Prepare A Proposal?

*Russell Smith*

Our customers frequently ask the question, “How much does it cost to prepare a proposal?” or a variant on the same question, “How much should it cost to prepare a proposal?” The answer to this question is complex and is affected by many variables. It is a little like the question, how much does it cost to build a house? The answer is affected by the size, materials, skill of the craftsmen, cost of the lot, and other things.

Usually, the people asking this question want a cut-and-dried answer. They want to be told, “a proposal should cost you X percent of the contract value”, or “Y dollars per page”, or something like that. A meaningful answer is more complicated. Following below, I attempt to examine some of the variables affecting proposal cost and then provide some measuring yardsticks on what a proposal should cost. An even better question than “What does a proposal cost?” is the question asking, “What does a winning proposal cost?” The key factor in answering this question depends on what type of Business Development (BD) philosophy an organization is pursuing. At the two extremes, there are companies who are extremely good at BD and other companies who are not. The companies who are good at (invest a lot in) BD do so much work on the program during the two years before it is even released as a Request for Proposals (RFP), that they may win 90% of the contracts where they submit a bid.

Other companies have more of a shotgun philosophy. They may not invest much in BD. And sometimes, they may not even be aware of a program they will bid until they see the Sources Sought announcement or even see the final RFP being released. It comes as no surprise that the shotgun approach to proposal selection/writing may produce a result such as 10% winning proposals or less. Of course the proposal cost for the companies using the shotgun approach is on the order of 10 times higher per won contract than the firms using a classical BD model.

Probably the most important overall variable affecting proposal cost is the type of proposal being prepared. Is it a simple quotation or is it a complex proposal? Is

it services or products? Is it an old-fashioned page-unlimited proposal, or is it a current simple style services proposal limited to past performance and resumes? Does it require simply a paper proposal, or does the bidder also have to prepare an oral proposal; provide a product demonstration, prepare a product design, manufacture a model product, or go through other arcane rituals?

If, on the one hand, the vendor can sell service by simply providing a price quotation, then it may be the case that the level of effort required to produce a \$5 million proposal is limited to three or four hours. If, on the other hand, the vendor is selling something that requires him or her to prepare a complex proposal, then the level of effort needed to prepare a highly competitive \$5 million proposal might even be a few person months.

Anyone can see the large difference in cost to prepare a traditional proposal including the kitchen sink and a current style proposal limited to a few examples of past performance and key personnel resumes. An old style complex proposal for a \$10 million contract could easily cost \$100,000 of effort. In contrast, a smart bidder might prepare a proposal for the same \$10 million contract for even as little as \$5,000–10,000 of effort, if the RFP only requires a few resumes and past performance.

If the bidder also has to present an oral proposal, then the complexity and effort increases significantly. In order to plan, practice, perfect, and execute an oral proposal, the cost in consultant and in-house personnel time can easily exceed \$40,000 for a contract valued in the tens of millions of dollars.

Then there are the questions, does the bidder have to complete a complex product design, mount a costly product demonstration, or even manufacture a sample product? It can be seen that, these factors can increase the cost to prepare a proposal by tens of thousands or even millions of dollars.

As explained above, the type of proposal is probably the most important factor in determining cost to prepare a proposal. However, the cost to respond to the same RFP can vary widely depending on the efficiency of the bidder organization. Below we will address the question about how bid costs can vary with the efficiency and approaches prevalent in the vendor community.

*(Continued on page 15)*



**Presenting an oral proposal significantly increases the proposal's complexity and effort.**

*(How Much Do Proposals Cost...Continued from page 14)*

In the never ending quest to win more business cheaper, companies use approaches to proposal preparation that vary widely. In the present piece, we will limit the discussion to variance in process, tools, staffing/organization, and workflow. The processes used by firms to prepare proposal range from non-existent to marvels of efficiency. We have seen \$100-million companies that essentially do not have a proposal process, and we have seen \$3-million firms that have a process highly adapted to their situation and needs. It goes without saying that, the firms lacking in process may expend 50% more than is necessary on proposal preparation, because the organization of the effort is not efficient. Processes vary as widely as the style of clothes, and the better-organized firms often have a proposal process that reduces the cost of proposal preparation by efficiently organizing their collective efforts in preparing their proposals. This process includes such factors as collecting information from Capture; making a bid-no-bid decision; developing a proposal preparation plan; developing a technical solution; developing a management plan; developing a price strategy/proposal; having the decisions/documents review as appropriate by various levels of management; and publishing the proposal document.

The tools we have seen companies use in preparing proposals vary from MS Word to elaborate automated systems. For the companies that do not use tools well, the proposal preparation effort is typically expensive, because the archive of proposal documentation is bad or non-existent; there is no standard method for formatting a proposal; there is no standard way to make decisions and review the proposal; and thus each effort rests on the personnel making a heroic effort. At the other end of the spectrum are firms that have a well-organized and searchable archive of proposal pieces as well as other automated tools that will at least help in writing some proposal sections. There is no magic answer, and the tools that are right and affordable differ from firm to firm. The companies that use automated methods appropriately reduce their proposal preparation costs.

Within many companies, the workflow helps determine the staffing approach and establishes an environment that greatly affects the cost of proposal preparation. At the one extreme are organizations with a highly granular flow of contract opportunities,

and at the other extreme are those firms that have typical peaks and valleys in workload due to bidding large programs. For the group with a workflow that is highly granular and even, it is possible to staff the operation with an in-house staff that works predictable hours. For the groups that experience great peaks and valleys, there is the never-ending expenditure of funds to hire consultants as well as lost staff time due to having personnel on the bench in times of low activity.

With all of these variables stated, it is still possible to predict the cost of preparing proposals under different circumstances. For a services company preparing typical services proposals, the cost of preparing a proposal can often be less than one half of one percent of contract value. These costs should not exceed 6–8 tenths of 1%, unless the field conditions are very challenging. And it is sometimes possible for a services group that has a very similar bid in the library to “recap the tire” and prepare a quality bid for as little as 1–2 tenths of 1% of contract value.

The cost to prepare a complex proposal requiring a significant system/product design to be submitted for a program valued in the tens of millions of dollars or more, is frequently in the range of 1–2% of contract value. When field conditions are challenging, these costs can rise to 3% or more. For example, several years ago, TRW (now Northrop Grumman) was bidding a multi-hundred-million dollar contract to provide a large automated system to the Air Force. The Air Force kept withdrawing and re-releasing the RFP over a 4-year period. TRW ended up winning the contract, but the cost of the proposal was 10% of contract value. In this case, TRW suffered from an Act of God (otherwise known as Government inefficiency).

*Russell Smith is a past APMP-NCA President and President of OCI. Learn more at [www.orgcom.com](http://www.orgcom.com).*



**Proposal groups with a highly granular and even workflow can staff the operation with an in-house team that works predictable hours.**

## **How Do I Become An NCA Member?**

It's easy and free to join the NCA chapter. Newly joining APMP members should note on the APMP application that you wish to be affiliated with the NCA Chapter. Current APMP members should send an e-mail requesting NCA affiliation to Barry Fields at [apmpmemberserv@msn.com](mailto:apmpmemberserv@msn.com) or call Barry at 406.788.9840.



Pace yourself so you'll have time for a final review of your submission.

(Self Assessment...Continued from page 7)

The APM Group notified me shortly after submission that they received my material. Four weeks later, I received my Practitioner Level certificate in the mail. About a month later, the person who served as my reference shared with me that he had a 30-minute discussion with the APM assessor assigned to my review. The assessor discussed the PPAQ responses and my experience in the proposal field.

I cannot tell you the approach or methods used in the evaluation of the PPAQ. I also do not know if you can fail the assessment. These are worthy discussions that APMP should explain to its membership in the future.

In a previous newsletter, I wrote that I was sitting on the fence regarding the value of the Foundation Level program I completed earlier. The Practitioner Level was different. In the everyday rush of developing and finishing proposals, you don't often take time to look at the big picture of where you are in terms of knowledge and skills. Completing the Practitioner Level requirements made me do this. The task is both affirming and humbling, which is a good thing in terms of giving yourself the sense that you are, indeed, on the right track, while keeping yourself open to improving your skills and enhancing your knowledge.



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Link to NCA's *Calendar of Events, Job Bank, Body of Knowledge, Association Publications, Corporate Sponsors, Welcome to APMP-NCA, and Contact Us*. Look for a new button tagged *Affiliate with the NCA Chapter...Free!* Sign up for our newsletter, and *Join, Renew, or Update* your membership record. Find out *What's New!* on our calendar of events, and link to the *President's Message* and the most current issue of the *Executive Summary*. It's all here at [www.apmp-nca.org](http://www.apmp-nca.org)!

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**Protect your confidential information, or your unsolicited proposal may quickly turn from boon to bane.**

*(Unsolicited Proposals...Continued from page 10)*

preparation and contained material or concepts that could not be independently obtained from publicly available literature or common knowledge. Commercial products, for instance, are not considered proprietary, nor are ideas or concepts that are obvious and not innovative or unique. Moreover, the mere reformulation of a concept that is common knowledge cannot be proprietary unless the restatement represents a valuable contribution arising from the independent efforts of the claimant. And, the value of proprietary information lies in its unique possession by the owner; once such information becomes public knowledge, its value and status as proprietary information is lost. Finally, advertising materials submitted to an agency in lieu of a proposal are unlikely to be considered confidential.

**Conclusion**

Submitting an unsolicited proposal may win you a contract award. Or, you may merely whet a potential customer's appetite to hold a competition. On the one hand, that may not be bad, since you may still have the advantage of being the standard against which your competitors are measured. However, if you don't

protect your confidential information, your unsolicited proposal will quickly turn from boon to bane.

- <sup>1</sup>FAR §15.603(a).
- <sup>2</sup>FAR §15.602.
- <sup>3</sup>FAR §15.603(c)(5); FAR §15.606-1(a)(1).
- <sup>4</sup>FAR §15.606-2.
- <sup>5</sup>FAR 15.607(a).
- <sup>6</sup>*Masbe Corporation Limited*, B-260253.2, 95-1 CPD ¶253.
- <sup>7</sup>FAR §15.606(a).
- <sup>8</sup>*Digital Healthcare, Inc.*, B-296489, 2005 CPD ¶166.
- <sup>9</sup>*NEFF Instrument Corp.*, B-216236, 84-2 CPD ¶649.
- <sup>10</sup>*Chromalloy Div.-Oklahoma of Chromalloy Amer. Corp.*, B-187051, 77-1 CPD ¶262.
- <sup>11</sup>*Andrulic Research Corp.*, B-190571, 78-1 CPD ¶321.
- <sup>12</sup>*Porta Power Pak, Inc.*, B-196218, 80-1 CPD ¶305.
- <sup>13</sup>*Metric Systems Corporation*, B-271578, 96-2 CPD ¶18.

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# Executive Summary

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**APMP-NCA Board of  
Directors Meetings  
Open to Members**

The Board of Directors for APMP-NCA meets the first Tuesday of every month. Every other meeting is a virtual meeting-telephone conference. These meetings are open, and APMP members may attend.

Anyone interested in the topic is invited to attend our meetings. You do not have to be an APMP member or even a proposal specialist to attend an NCA Roundtable. If you are interested in proposals, business development, and professional development, we'd like for you to join us!

## Mark Your Calendar for 2006 APMP-NCA Events

- November 15** Roundtable (NCA Membership Meeting)  
**December 2006** APMP-NCA Board of Directors Election Begins  
**January 2007** APMP-NCA Election Results Published

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