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President's Corner

Compelling Proposals—Virtually

Beth Wingate, AM.APMP

Recently, I received a frantic email from a friend who's been interviewing for proposal manager positions. "Beth, what's your 30-second response to 'what makes a proposal compelling'?" She'd been asked that question during her interview and thought she'd "flubbed" the answer. She wanted to hear my perspective so she could prepare for her other interviews later that day and the next.

I paused for a moment to consider the question and then banged out this response on my BlackBerry: "a well-developed value proposition and (technical) solution supported by excellent pre-RFP capture development and client intimacy. A cleanly designed proposal with relevant, clear, insightful, professionally developed graphics."

It's incredible when you think of the tremendous number of labor hours, dedication, money, expertise, education, and opportunity costs that underlie that 28-word response. The lessons we've all learned over the years fill thousands of books and PowerPoint presentations designed to share our pains and successes—and causes for both—with others in our profession.

Along with Richard Caldwell and Jenny Stewart, I'm looking forward to sharing my personal lessons learned and best practices with colleagues at the 20th Annual APMP Conference during a 3.5-hour presentation on "Rapid Proposals to Meet the Challenges of ID/IQs" moderated by David Bol, APMP Fellow and APMP's CEO.

I've distilled those best practices and lessons learned into my "9 Key Factors for Winning Task Order Proposals," which I presented at last year's APMP-NCA Boot Camp, and they apply equally (if not more compellingly) to creating winning—and compelling—non-task order proposals. I'll emphasize that all 9 Key Factors for Winning can be—and have been—accomplished successfully in a virtual proposal environment, which is the theme of this *Executive Summary newsletter*.

1. Client Knowledge—Comprehensive and "Real"

To prepare a "well-developed value proposition and (technical) solution supported by excellent pre-RFP capture development and client intimacy," you need business development folks walking the clients' hallways, meeting with clients, and learning about their existing environments, desired solutions, hot buttons, available budgets, and schedules for upcoming solicitation releases.

You need a realistic pipeline of upcoming opportunities that you, the proposal manager, see constantly. I suggest weekly "quickie" meetings with individual business development/business unit managers. Schedule a regular time each week to get together for 10–20 minutes. Having these meetings and gathering this information drives a lot of the capture and proposal development process down the line, e.g., competitive analysis, SWOTs, win theme development, resume and past performance preparation, draft solution preparation, draft graphics development, and price to win (Pwin).

You'll quickly see the value of these meetings—they can also help you alert management when you think your proposal group will need additional assistance or when you think a particular business group is stretching itself too thin to win anything they bid.

2. Knowledge about Your Competitors

It's unrealistic to expect to produce a winning proposal in a vacuum. To prepare a well-developed value proposition and (technical) solution, knowing about the other potential bidders and their pricing strategies, past history, existing staff and subject matter experts, experience with a client—and what your mitigation plan is for each—is vital.

3. Proposed Solution

To prepare a well-developed value proposition and (technical) solution and to develop relevant, clear, insightful, professionally developed graphics, you need to be able to articulate—and draw—your proposed solution. Ideally, it should be complete and low-risk, demonstrate understanding of the client's environment and needs, contain demonstrated experience and results in similar environments, and provide added-value offerings.

To be able to get your "cleanly designed proposal with relevant, clear, insightful, professionally developed graphics" underpinned by a "well-developed value proposition and (technical) solution supported by excellent pre-RFP capture development and client intimacy" out the door on time and still maintain your sanity, you need all the elements contained within Win Factors 4 – 7.

4. Task Order "Factory"

You need a responsive, well-oiled proposal factory co-located with business development/operations. The proposal factory needs to be capable of providing complete proposal development services—"soup to nuts"—including boilerplate content (resumes, past performances, bare-bones management plans, subcontracting plans, standard graphics, etc.).

"You need a responsive, well-oiled proposal factory co-located with business development operations."

Your proposal factory should be intimately familiar with the proposals you've submitted previously so you can suggest pertinent content and avoid "reinventing the wheel." You should be intimately involved with your business development group so you know who's going after particular deals—and so you have visibility into a realistic pipeline and can staff proposals adequately. It won't be long until you're seen as a valuable "institutional knowledge" resource to your internal clients.

5. Easily Searchable Past Performances Repository—the 3 "Cs"

You need a past performance repository that is easily searchable and full of relevant, current, similarly sized and scoped past performances that contain demonstrated results—include metrics and examples, awards, and quotes from clients. Your repository can range from a simple set of subdirectories organized by client agency that you search using a commercially available search engine (my favorite product is dtSearch, www.dtSearch.com), to a full-blown database to a set of documents residing on a SharePoint or Privia collaborative site to one of the many commercially available proposal development products. The key is having access to comprehensive current content (my proposal 3 "Cs").

"The key is having access to comprehensive current content (my proposal 3 "Cs")."

6. Easily Searchable Resumes Repository

I've gone back and forth with folks on the value of maintaining up-to-date employee resumes for use in proposals. After 22 years, I maintain that you need complete, formatted resumes on all your current employees—at minimum for the folks that you "always" bid. We know there's a core group we depend upon time after time. Keep their resumes up-to-date and ready to go, and you'll have time to update the resumes of the other folks you decide to include in a particular proposal. (You'll have time because you've got a solid working relationship with your business development and operations folks and know what opportunities are coming up and who your business unit intends to bid on them.)

Follow resume best practices and make sure you weight your resume section towards the prime contractor versus subcontractors, include all required skills/years of experience/certifications/education, have the staff available on day one, and set up your resume template for easy evaluation

"Graphics need to be reader friendly and clarify messages."

"You have to brief management on your fast-turnaround and standard response processes, and management needs to support your process and schedule completely if they want to win."

(be sure to tailor as necessary for a particular solicitation).

7. Easily Searchable Graphics Repository

To provide relevant, clear, insightful, professionally developed graphics in your proposal, maintain a set of general company processes/procedures graphics to use as a basis for quickly tailoring to a particular opportunity. I had great success developing such graphics in MS Visio—my technical writers could "tweak" the graphics easily, and my proposal managers and I could render the final graphics quickly. This is essential for getting quality proposals out the door quickly. Additionally, there are online graphics services that provide multitudes of business and information visual solutions. Take some time to look at these and test them for use in developing graphics for upcoming proposals. I regularly use www.iStockphoto.com and www.shutterstock.com (for royalty-free photos, illustrations, video, and audio) and www.billiondollargraphics.com.

Just like Graphic Guru Mike Parkinson has taught us, graphics need to be reader friendly and clarify messages. To conceptualize graphics effectively, you need to be sure you and your writers understand the graphics' PAQs—Primary objective, Audience, Questions to be answered, and Subject matter. Graphics need to clarify and simplify topics and reinforce the proposal text.

8. Pricing

To create a well-developed value proposition and (technical) solution, within ethically acceptable practices, you need to know as much as possible about pricing your proposal. Here's where your excellent pre-RFP capture development and client intimacy come into play. What is the client's available budget? What do your expected competitors typically bid? A comment from a contracting officer during a debrief has stuck in my mind for years, "Sharpened pencils, honey, sharpened pencils!" Again, the pipeline meetings in item 1 above are ideal opportunities for getting the pricing efforts "moving along" versus waiting until the afternoon before the proposal is due.

9. Cooperative Management

To create a "well-developed value proposition and (technical) solution, supported by excellent pre-RFP capture development and client intimacy, and deliver a cleanly designed proposal with relevant, clear, insightful, professionally developed graphics," I vociferously contend that cooperative management is the most important of all my nine "keys to winning." You have to brief management on your fast-turnaround and standard response processes, and management needs to support your process and schedule completely if they want to win. Management needs to supply the equipment (high-speed reproduction equipment, fast and stable computers—preferably laptops that you can carry to meetings and use to take notes (one of my personal best practices to keep everyone on the same page is taking copious meeting notes that I distribute to my teams), stable network with plenty of storage, reliable mechanism for accessing files from outside the office (work/life balance means that sometimes I continue working on a proposal after I've done my Mommy job and then put my daughter to bed), latest stable versions of whatever software you use for your proposals, technical support immediately upon request—especially when you're on a proposal deadline (face it—if it's one second late to the client, you might as well never have started the proposal). If your company supports the concept of "virtual proposals," you need high-speed communications and supporting equipment. (Be sure to make friends with your technical support folks—one of my principal pieces of advice!) Plain and simple, management needs to be an enabler—not an obstruction.

Conclusion

Developing and maintaining these nine key factors for Creating a Winning Proposal Process that produces compelling proposals—consistently—requires discipline and commitment. Embracing all nine will help you achieve high success rates in your specific market.

Check out the articles in this spring edition of the *Executive Summary* and see how others in our profession are tackling the challenges inherent to producing winning proposals every day using virtual proposal centers (VPCs) and virtual proposal development techniques.

Beth Wingate, AM.APMP, APMP-NCA Chapter President, served as Newsletter Chair and editor/publisher of NCA's Executive Summary newsletter in 2006 and 2007. She has more than 21 years' proposal development experience. Beth is Managing Director, Proposal Development and Corporate Communications for Lohfeld Consulting Group, Inc. Contact Beth at beth@apmpnca.org.

Another Engaging, Thought-Provoking APMP-NCA March 18 Discussion!

Alexis Dimouro

What You Need to Do to Be a Winner in the Changing Federal Marketplace!

The March 18th Roundtable Event, What You Need to Do to Be a Winner in the Changing Federal Marketplace, was a huge success—continuing the trend of exciting informative Roundtables within the APMP-NCA.

This informative Roundtable was chaired by Lisa Pafe and Tim O'Connor and moderated by Roundtable Committee Chair, Timothy K. O'Connor, Senior Vice President of Business Development at AOC Key Solutions, Inc. (KSI).

The panel included Timothy J. Hannigan, Vice President for Business Development in Technical Services of Northrop Gruman, Gary E. Shumaker, Strategic Business Development Consultant, Dr. Richard S. Soll, Senior Proposal Manager in the Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) Proposal Development Center (PDC), and Karl Spinnenweber, Vice President of the Strategic Business Management organization at CSC.

This group provided four different perspectives on trends as well as some insight into their focus and direction in terms of improving their respective capture and proposal efforts. As a whole, they provided a better "big picture" of what's happening when you combine their messages.

The Roundtable Committee would like to thank all who were involved in making this event a success. We look forward to seeing you at the next Program, May 20, 2009 - Virtual Proposal Centers. We hope you are planning to attend this informative discussion!

From left to right: Tim Hannigan, Karl Spinnenweber, Beth Wingate, Gary Shumaker. and Richard Soll

How to Create Great Proposal Themes (Part 4): A Method for the Madness

Chris Simmons

"The best recipes for theme development all have common elements that include a few simple ingredients that come from the RFP, the capture plan, and the collective intelligence of your capture and business development teams."

In Part 3 of this series, we described the importance of providing discriminating proof for theme features and benefits to substantiate your claims and to give your customers the reasons to believe. In Part 4, we describe a proven methodology for developing winning proposal themes that are compliant, compelling, and position your company to win:

Most experts agree that you need to think about (and write down) your proposal themes BEFORE you start the proposal drafting process. Failing to follow this simple idea causes proposal teams to fall into a number of common proposal development traps:

1. Drafting proposal prose before themes are identified and vetted.
2. Placing too much emphasis on the wrong features and benefits.
3. Lacking a common vision and thematic threads throughout the proposal.
4. Playing into the hands of your competition with a "me too" response.

What can proposal teams do to avoid these common pitfalls?

The Recipe for Success

There are a number of established ways to develop proposal themes and discriminators. The best recipes for theme development all have common elements that include a few simple ingredients that come from the RFP, the capture plan, and the collective intelligence of your capture and business development teams. (Exact measurements may vary depending on the type and quality of the RFP.)

- 2 ounces of proposal evaluation criteria (Section M);
- 1 ounce of proposal instructions (Section L);
- 4 ounces of requirements (Section C, Statement of Work (SOW);
- 2 dashes of customer hot buttons; and
- A pinch of competitive intelligence .

Your proposed solutions are also key theme development ingredients. Most recipes for great proposal themes require at least 1 scoop of solutions for each of the following areas (technical, management, past performance, and business/pricing).

Use a Method…Any Method

Although the proposal theme recipe sounds simple, most proposal themes end up being…well… half baked. The problem is many proposal teams fail to invest the appropriate time and resources developing proposal solutions and themes. Many proposal teams bolt for the boilerplate and forget about themes altogether—hoping that they will miraculously emerge in the Executive Summary the night before the proposal is due.

There are scores of proposal development methodologies that include some form of theme development process. I recommend a 3-step process that starts with the RFP and leverages information that should be documented in the capture plan.

The recipe for theme development includes a few simple ingredients from the RFP and the capture plan.

Example: The technical volume of a five-volume proposal is worth 60 % of the points, and the other four volumes are of equal weight (10 % each).

Step 1: Develop high-level themes (starting with features and benefits) that are roughly proportional with how the customer will weight (and score) your proposal. Detailed evaluation sub-factors (in Section M) are an excellent place to start, and they literally tell you what the benefits should be. For this example, consider 5-8 high level technical themes and 1-2 themes for the other four volumes to represent the relative (6 to 1) ratio between the weighting of technical volume and the other volumes.

This approach obviously depends on the wording of the evaluation factors and the real weighting of the price factor. Placing too much emphasis on anything but the technical solution in this example is likely to yield a number of themes that are not as important to the customer and result in lower evaluation scores.

Step 2: Once the high-level features and benefits are developed, list the proof-points and discriminators for each theme. Define as many proof statements for each theme as you can, using quantifiable metrics. Be creative and get as many of your ideas down on paper. A good starting point is 5-6 proof statements for each theme. Use a template (PowerPoint or Word) that highlights the volume, and theme statement (feature and benefit) in a highlighted box. List the supporting proof statements (in order of importance to the customer) for each theme underneath the theme statement in a separate box. Use the capture plan as the basis for integrating customer hot buttons and competitive information into the themes and proof statements to create powerful discriminators that set you apart from the competition.

The resulting high-level proposal theme deck (approximately 10-15 slides) should be included in the proposal management plan, uploaded to your document management or backup server, and posted on the proposal room wall. The theme deck also serves as the basis for the development of the executive summary.

Step 3: Develop more detailed themes (features, benefits, and proof) to support the high-level themes at the volume, section, and requirement levels in accordance with the proposal instructions, evaluation criteria, and the requirements (SOW). Incorporate these lower level themes into the storyboard, module plan, content plan, or whatever pre-proposal planning deliverable you use. Now you are ready to write the proposal.

Even the companies that have established proposal development organizations, processes, and tools in place often fail because they either lack the discipline to follow standard theme and proposal developments procedures or they simply don't have the right people on the team. Part 5 highlights some of the most common theme development challenges and provides some practical recommendations you can use to create great proposal themes.

Chris Simmons is the founder and principal member of Rainmakerz Consulting—a business development solutions company specializing in proposal management, writing, and review. Still confused or looking for more detailed suggestions? Take time now to send feedback, comments, or questions about this or other challenging proposal issues to Chris at chris@rainmakerz.biz or 202.255.2355. Visit www.rainmakerz.biz.

Virtual Proposals Secrets: Interview with Ben Rowland

Olessia Smotrova-Taylor

"Ben has been inthe federal contracting proposal market for 12years, entering it from the graphics side of the house."

Virtual proposals are becoming a lot more frequent, and more companies are starting to embrace the concept. It is still an uncharted territory for others, however. There are various beliefs about virtual proposals that prevent people from embracing the concept. The main one is that it is impossible to generate the same level of creativity and ideas as one can in a "boiler room" or "war room" situation. There are also proposal security concerns, and doubts

"Savings shows up in not having to provide a room, a chair, a desk, and a desktop for an employee."

whether one can be as efficient in managing a large team remotely. I have been running virtual proposals for years, but for this article I wanted to bring you the perspective of a true virtual proposal expert.

This article is an interview with Ben Rowland, a Washington, DC capture and proposal consultant who also helps companies implement virtual solutions, including remote collaboration tools, processes, and procedures. Ben has been in the federal contracting proposal market for 12 years, entering it from the graphics side of the house. He has had a whole spectrum of proposal professions, from an artist and graphics director to proposal coordinator, volume lead, technical writer, proposal manager, and proposal director. He has experience setting up proposal shops and proposal departments, and has been running virtual proposals of all sizes for nearly a decade.

We spent more than two hours discussing virtual proposals with Ben, so that you can pick up a number of useful tips and insights from this interview:

O. Ben, when did you seriously delve into the world of virtual proposals?

B: I have worked on smaller virtual proposals for a long time but started running large virtual proposals six or seven years ago with managing a $500 million proposal for Unisys. I was in charge together with two other colleagues, overseeing a virtual team of 70 geographically dispersed people. Smaller groups have always had great success in virtual proposals, but this proposal really gave me my first chance to see lots of moving pieces, subject matter expertise needed, and editing cycles on a very large scale. When we started the proposal, everybody said: "oh, this will never work... not having your subject matter experts (SME) on site, not having editors available here to work around the clock, it won't work." The team decided to adopt the opposite attitude: it would work even better because of team's locations in different time zones. I had staff at my beck and call 20 hours a day. It ended up working very well, we made the deadline and came on budget. And Unisys won.

"In addition to security, another big issue is version control."

O: Do you see a lot more virtual proposals these days?

B: Oh yes, and I'll tell you why. The main driver is cost savings. Savings shows up in not having to provide a room, a chair, a desk, and a desktop for an employee. You save electricity, time and labor badging, parking, travel expenses, all the way down to less pizza to buy. There is value and efficiencies beyond just cost savings, but I really do think that the driving force behind the trend is cost savings.

O: What are the biggest challenges you have encountered in virtual proposals?

B: Well, challenge number one has been security. Quite frankly, the reliable technology to keep network documents secure has been around for more than a decade, but what hasn't been around is the mentality that this technology can be trusted. In has been harder to run proposals virtually in larger companies, whereas it has been traditionally easier in smaller companies.

O: Do you think it may be largely due to policies? In a large company, even when a capture manager or proposal manager would rather use a better virtual proposals tool, the security department has a policy not to, or it severely restricts the use. Smaller companies are more flexible, and decisions are easier to reach...

B: Yes, you've hit the nail right on the head. That's been the dance back and forth between security officers, IT departments, proposal departments, and executives for quite some time. Often many over-arching policies are antiquated. They are based off of technology several years ago and haven't really been updated because, "if it's not broke, don't fix it." So these policies have stuck around and become what I would call a "cultural barrier." Which, again, has broken down quite a bit with Centrix and Veritas and a few of the different remote desk-toping-type applications that are built specifically on a secure platform. That issue is slowly easing up with the winds of times.

O: What about other challenges?

B: In addition to security, another big issue is version control. People think of version control often as "one person controls it all."

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Ask the Graphics Guru

Mike Parkinson

Should I use graphics in page-limited proposals? If so, how?

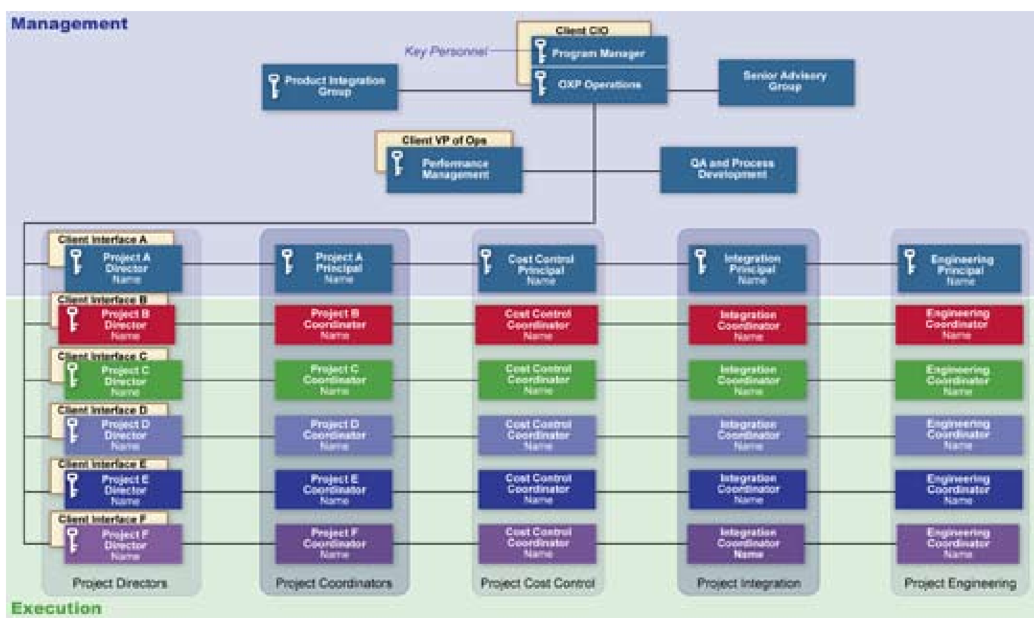
> **"Make it easy for [evaluators] to quickly understand your solution."**

RFPs often ask for the sun, moon, and stars in 10 pages. The challenge we face is when, where, and how do we add graphics to a page-limited proposal (that should be many more pages to effectively answer the RFP).

First, let me explain why using graphics in a page-limited proposal is greatly beneficial. The reasons are numerous, but here are the top three:

1. ***Graphics are easier to understand.*** Your audience is human. You may have the best solution, but they may miss or misunderstand a critical element. Evaluators and decision makers are distracted, tired, overworked, and often take short cuts to help them decide who should win. Make it easy for them to quickly understand your solution. Include features, benefits, and discriminators. Graphics communicate up to 60,000 times faster than text alone and increase our understanding of the presented material and our recollection of the information by at least 38 % (according to independent research).

   Graphics communicate complex concepts quickly. What is easier to understand: a textual explanation of an organizational structure or an organizational chart? Can you imagine trying to textually explain the chart below?



> **"Anyone can write a proposal. Few can write a great proposal."**

2. ***Graphics* quickly *say more than words alone.*** Graphics communicate your company's commitment, quality, and the importance you place on working with your future client. Anyone can write a proposal. Few can write a great proposal. Fewer still allocate the time, thought, and money into developing a compelling visual representation of their solution. A clear, communicative, professional graphic tells evaluators and decision makers that you care, and it shows you have more resources

"Graphics and text work together to better communicate your solution in a way that is more compelling and far easier to understand and remember."

(than your competitors) at your disposal. Graphics also demonstrate that you are committed to solving their challenge. The quality of your graphics subconsciously communicates the professionalism of your company. Graphics make it easy for you to stand out from the pack. Looking at the following proposal pages, which is the better company—A or B?"

3. ***Graphics can lower the perception of risk.*** We trust that which is familiar. As Robert S. Frey, author of *Successful Proposal Strategies for Small Businesses,* says, "Our audience wants to see themselves reflected in our proposals." Based on this belief, which slide would be more appealing to the U.S. Army—A or B?

Don't get me wrong. I am NOT saying graphics are better than text. I'm saying that graphics and text work together to better communicate your solution in a way that is more compelling and far easier to understand and remember.

Let's move on to the "when, where, and how" to use graphics in page-limited proposals.

"What is the purpose of your graphic? It should never be "To win the proposal." The primary objective should be client focused."

When to Use Graphics

There are three reasons to use graphics is a page-limited proposal:

1. ***Your solution is complex.*** Often a graphic can communicate complex concepts more succinctly than text alone. Consider network diagrams, quantitative charts, dashboard graphics, Gantt charts, organizational charts, and process diagrams. All communicate complex information that is easily digested.
2. ***You want to ensure your information stands out.*** Good graphics pull our eyes to them because—simply stated—they look different from the text around them. Visuals communicate faster than text because text is decoded linearly and graphics are absorbed all at once. Graphics are instantly stored in long-term memory, whereas text must go through short-term memory before it is stored in long-term memory.
3. ***You want to communicate the professionalism and commitment to the project quickly.*** Graphics show you care and speak to the quality of the service/product your company provides.

Where to Use Graphics

Anywhere they are needed. The golden rule is a graphic per page, but I have found it unrealistic to shoehorn a graphic onto every page despite tight budgets and page limitations. Another rule is to place your graphic as closely as possible to the associated text.

How to Use Graphics

There are a few secrets to ensure your graphics are clear, compelling, concise, and as small as possible. First, let's focus on clear, compelling, and concise.

Before developing a graphic, you want to know four things (I refer to as the "P.A.Q.S."):

1. ***Know the graphic's primary objective (P).*** What is the purpose of your graphic? It should never be "To win the proposal." The primary objective should be client focused. For example, a clear primary objective could state, "To show how our solution solves our future client's problem." Alternatively, your objective may be to explain a complex concept critical to the win. If relevant, tie features to benefits and discriminators. Your primary objective may read, "To show the new system architecture and why it is better."
2. ***Know your audience (A).*** What are their challenges? What are their hot buttons? What do they care most about? Your graphics should focus on your future client's wants and needs. Include graphics that help them choose you.
3. ***Know the questions (Q) that need to be answered to achieve the primary objective.*** Refer back to the primary objective. Your primary objective is "to show how our solution solves our future client's problem." Imagine meeting your future client at an event. You say, "Boy, our solution can solve that problem of yours." How do you think they will reply? Perhaps they may ask, "How?" Your graphic should answer the burning questions related to the primary objective.
4. ***Know the subject matter (S).*** To answer your audience's questions correctly, you need a clear understanding of the presented topic. If you do not understand, how can your audience understand? You need to answer their questions quickly and with a thorough knowledge of their business, issues, and requirements.

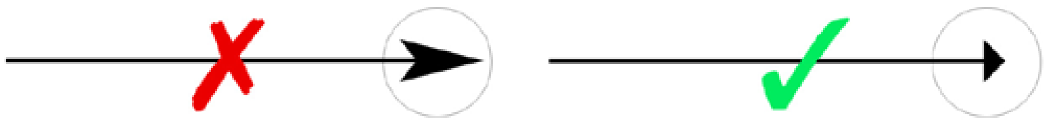
Successful graphics have a primary objective, are audience-focused, and answer your audience's questions (as they relate to the primary objective). All other graphics are confusing and detract from your proposal.

Next, how do you make graphics as small as possible without sacrificing quality (or compliance)? Step one is to know the P.A.Q.S. This process guarantees that extraneous information is purged so the graphic is to the point.

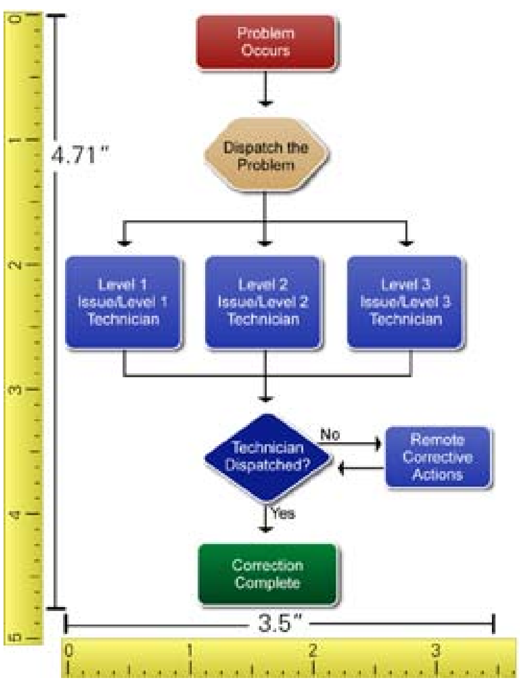
Step two is to use the following seven design and writing techniques (when possible):

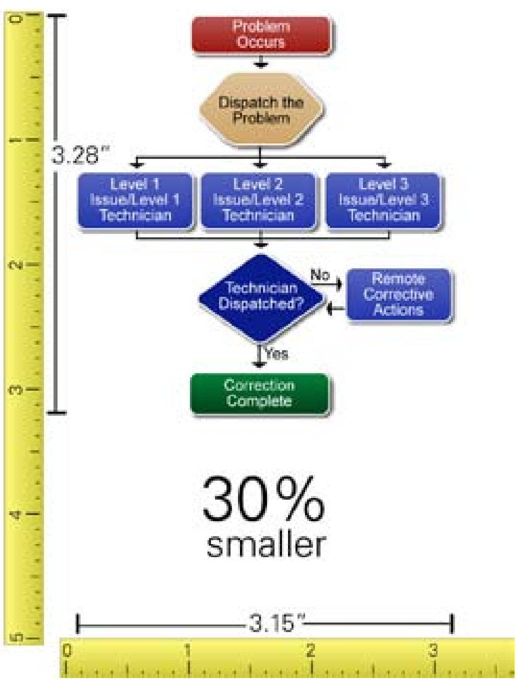
1. ***Exclude extraneous words and descriptors.*** Change "Our Systematic, Quality Evaluation Process" to "Evaluation Process."
2. ***Use known acronyms.*** For example, "quality control" becomes "QC."

3. ***Use a sans serif, narrow font like Arial Narrow.*** (If your document does not embed the font, make sure the end user has the font.) Sans serif fonts are cleaner looking and easier to read for short chunks of text and small sizes. Narrow fonts shorten the width of each character, which allows more content in the same space.
4. ***Decrease line spacing.*** For page-limited proposals, I recommend using a .85 multiple line spacing in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint and the same line spacing as font size in Adobe products (for example, 10-point line spacing for a 10-point font).
5. ***Use short arrowheads.***



6. ***Remove all unused space.***





7. ***Delete extraneous imagery.*** If an image quickly communicates information, keep it. If, however, the image merely supports the information, delete it.

You now know the four important tips you need to increase your chances of success on your next page-limited proposal—the why, when, where, and how. Practice makes perfect, so be sure to remain vigilant and use these tips until they become habit. know why they should care about you and your solution—fast.

Mike Parkinson is an internationally recognized visual communications expert, multi-published author, professional trainer, public speaker, and recent APMP Fellow. He is a partner at 24 Hour Company specializing in bid-winning proposal graphics. His Billion Dollar Graphics web site (www.BillionDollarGraphics.com) and Billion Dollar Business Graphics book share best practices and helpful tools with proposal professionals. Contact Mike at mike@24hrco.com.

Web 3.0 and the Virtual Proposal Manager

Donna L. Quesinberry

"The nature of our very art—is now virtual. Sowhy would we question the prospects of Virtual Proposal Management and oversight?"

"Statistics prove immensely satisfying in regard tothe new and improved Virtual Workforce (VW) arena."

Virtual Proposal Management and the "process lifecycle," are an evolving field of expertise, entering yet another augmentation. The newest capture planning and business development solutions profile requires the ability to remain both an active and dynamic participant, while promoting a 24x7x365 winning game plan. The virtual office offers just the right mix of opportunity and capability for proposal managers to mitigate emerging technology trends and ever-changing human-capital demands. To remain a continuously vigilant, actively engaged, respondent to the proposal shop and team processes—means embracing Web 3.0 and cloud computing along with the new transparency's inherent bells and whistles as we traverse the newest IT superhighway diadems.

If you ask any proposal management veteran about connectivity in response to a solicitation and engaging their team. they'll agree it is an arduous undertaking, that often requires long days and sometimes even longer nights. Whenever a professional is working with deadlines and coupling them with scores of individual professionals, fielding information for a single point-of-contact's throughput equates to a lot of hurry up and wait, or at the very least, last-minute end-fielding. In the past, this may have been equated to mismanagement or a lack of planning and oversight. Today's proposal manager's skills need to evolve because the environment itself has shifted in consortium with modern work styles.

Indigenous to the contract professional is an ideal of movement in this era. We are constantly in motion, and our playing field is global, more so than at any other time in our history. Throughout the work week, we reach out to develop solutions, field subject matter expertise, or secure reviews and feedback from teammates who are often away from, or located at, their home base. Traveling to and from field offices, conferences, informative meetings, test and certification venues, and research facilities, while culling prospects for new business development efforts equals virtualization. The nature of our very art—is now virtual. So why would we question the prospects of Virtual Proposal Management and oversight?

War rooms, storyboards, and tasking "on site" with a team of support personnel while working arduously under an iron thumb, micro, or even macro management sounds arcane in today's marketplace. Certainly, there are still times when face-to-face meetings in a setting where all parties must report and be identified, are required. The majority of the time, there is just not enough space and/or reason to house an entire proposal team in the confines of an office structure in order to respond to requests for proposals (RFPs). The contract environment itself involves jump sticks, shared portals, version control software, BlackBerry's, mobile devices and personnel who work in tandem while moving and shaking all corners of the globe.

Statistics prove immensely satisfying in regard to the new and improved Virtual Workforce (VW) arena. In Europe, for example, virtualization, telework, and telecommuting have taken place with much higher rates of performance during the previous 15-to-20 year period than contemporary western society has engaged in. The European VW statistics have remained extremely proactive. The Euro market tends to proffer a myriad of telecommuting centers for the world traveler to conduct business where resources such as facsimiles, photocopiers, binding equipment, conference rooms, etc. remain consistently ready in order to facilitate site meetings and professional development requirements when face-to-face contact is imperative. The predominate quotient of workers who use VWs in the Euro market are male, over 35 years of age, and above median wage earners.

Essential VW environment data reach back covers an expanse well beyond the 15-to-20 year mark. This is a much longer time frame than Western Civilization (namely American Society) may recognize when baselining and garnering nuggets of VW quantitative analytics. It is suggested the VW saves both time and money for all procurement participants. The standard office requirements to dress up; purchase business attire; drive to offices; be housed in offices, cubes, or suites; find parking; pay pay for parking; pay for gasoline; expand the environment; invoke ever-increasing forms of alternate transportation; heating; cooling; and revenue shares for office overhead are no longer issues within a VW environment.

Again, meeting planning, an active component of the proposal management experience already encompasses the virtual scenario. Remote workers, even if a proposal shop is an on-site, are everywhere. When a proposal manager is on-site, typically three-fourths of their team is traveling.

So just what is the Virtual Proposal Management office? Comprised of home offices, remote offices, loosely associated workspaces (that may include home, office, remote offices, and hotel rooms) and cloud computing—the virtual office is anywhere and everywhere simultaneously. With technology advances what they are, the VW Proposal Manager can respond to team issues continuously. This equates to savings because the VW Proposal Manager achieves end results faster, better, and more often than not, cheaper than their on-site alternative.

Will the VW Proposal Manager and their team produce without the oversight of Senior Executives pressuring them to work harder and longer? Statistics say that VW Proposal Managers actually produce more than on-site personnel. Generally, more aligned to the newest technological trends, VW Proposal Managers are tech-savvy experts with the latest and greatest gadgets and trend recognition of cloud computing and Web Semantics. These are often the whiz kids of the environment—no matter their physical age. Another proactive factor—the bias of age and human resources is removed. Over 20% of VW Proposal Managers are more productive. Scheduling for VW Proposal Managers is fluid and involves peak performance times rather than corporate or traditional performance times. Each human being is different, and while Jim may be most productive at 3 p.m., Sarah may be most productive at 2 a.m.

What about teaming, proposal documentation, and face-to-face meetings? The neat ideal of the emergence of the 3.0 Connectivism is that personal meetings can still take place. Kick-off meetings and reviews can still be negotiated in on-site settings; webcams and webinars allow us to view and respond actively to one another in real-time. Documentation is easily managed with version-control software databases. This enhances oversight by providing time-stamped automation of documentation, all easily reviewed remotely. The newest review processes can span a 24-hour time frame with document check-out and feedback conducted as available and without adversely affecting other ongoing work. The VW Proposal Manager is productive, proficient, and knows his/her bottom-line equates to their responsiveness and performance. There's no one forcing them to work—they have to answer to themselves. Conversely if someone drops the ball, there's no alternatives to who, what, when, where, and why. The answers are transparent.

Virtual capture planning, business development, and proposal solution oversight mean enhanced teaming requirements. Trust and ethics are the pabulum in the virtual arena. How do we know teammates don't share our data—aside from secure shared portals and intranet protocols? We know because we secure the appropriate documentation, reliability, respect, research, and planning required to ensure standards and accountability. Safeguarding initiatives becomes our proposal team or shop motto. We become a greater workforce through greater self-reliance and the re-incorporation of social and professional mores.

The virtual and cloud computing Connectivism partnering, involves scores of individuals with new and improved mindsets in the conduct of professionalism. As stated earlier, some severely secure scenarios may require War Rooms with high-end security protocols, but the average solicitation and response doesn't invoke the need for clandestine team associations. The ideal of securing future work in the virtual environment necessitates propriety because it results in awards and funding sources to continue work as a professional among Web 3.0 experts and "is essential to their survival."

The Virtual Workspace Proposal Manager is the Nex-Gen professional every company will want to be a part of their team. Increasingly, the on-site and dedicated proposal shop will become less and less productive or cost-effective. New efforts will continue to evolve into short-burst presentations, where capture planning and business development are more aligned to best practices for winning. It won't involve the most intelligence, rather the best proposals based on limited information, capabilities to perform requirements, and the embracing of opportunistic bidding. As the competitive landscape morphs from office-centric to cloud connectivity, the Virtual Proposal Manager becomes the staple of every prospective contract awardee. With the cloud environment housing the future's goal posts, the end game is survival of the fittest and in the future means a virtuoso of Web 3.0 and the new Connectivism—not the "one-desk" office environment with a traditional hierarchical reporting authority.

Interview with Ben Rowland
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With the advent of modern tools, it has changed a lot. Automated version control with some oversight from the proposal manager or coordinator makes much more sense. As SharePoint and other tools have moved along in capability over the years, automated version control has certainly become easier, making the old way of doing it antiquated and inefficient.

The third challenge has always been the actual responsibility of the remote worker. This is where I've had some hiccups along the way. As an example, when I was remotely coordinating the writers and the editors on a large proposal, about half of them were contractors who worked in the remote environment before, were comfortable with it, and would always give you what you ask for when you ask for it.

The other half of them were actually company employees who were given time off to participate in the proposal, and oh golly they were able to do it from home! They were having a tough time hitting their deadlines and calling in. Typically, I found that "in-the-chair" employees forget about getting on a conference call when they're sitting at home. They also don't think "oh gosh, here comes four o'clock, I wonder if I've done my work for today." Over the years as I've worked with lots of virtual proposal workers in small and large companies, I have developed a basic belief: some people are really good at it, and some people just aren't. Now I ask people how accustomed are they to working from home before they become part of my team.

O: Well, I think there should be a distinction made between working from home and working remotely. Some people can't work from home because they are too tempted to do non-work things. For those types of people, it is better when they work in a virtual situation from an office.

B: You are right, they were true office workers, and if they were back at their desk working, I think we would have seen a higher level of productivity. The advantage of being able to work from home was that people didn't have resistance to working around the clock when they could do it from home, whereas a few people who were working from the office had a bit more resistance to working the odd hours. But I do agree with you, you better serve a full-time employee in a virtual proposal environment asking them work from the office if that's where they're accustomed to working from.

If this is the first time they've worked from home, I let people know that "this is a test, this is not a guarantee it will continue like this." As we bring different people on, like subject matter experts or teaming members, we tell them that most of our proposals are run virtually, but if it looks like it's not working, we will bring people into the

"The advantage of being able to work from home was that people didn't have resistance to working around the clock when they could do it from home..."

"When we ramped up, we managed virtual proposals with 25 internal people and more than a dozen team members."

office. We're not going to let the desire to keep our proposals virtual be the driving factor. For the most part it's worked well.

O: You help companies build their virtual teams. What exactly do you do?

B: Well, I've set up a number of proposal departments. For one client, I came in and set up their proposal department, which had a virtual component to it. They were actually split between offices in Texas and Virginia. While the production staff and writers were in Texas, the program managers who doubled as proposal managers were in Virginia. I developed a process, a schedule, and a set of best practices for managing proposals in a virtual setting. As the success of this set-up grew, proposal people got their choice whether to work from the office or from home. We had great success with that. In fact, it was kind of funny: about 50% of the time people chose to come into the office than working virtually, and the other 50% of the time they worked from home. They took the work from home more as a nice benefit or a luxury, and for the most part they were diligent workers and didn't want to look like they were abusing this privilege. In that case, it required a lot of technology upgrades, because they at that time had split servers. We had to mirror servers so we could have identical information. I implemented SharePoint with them, and when we ramped up, we managed virtual proposals with 25 internal people and more than a dozen team members.

O: Tell me, please, about the tools you use that are best-of- breed for virtual proposal management.

B: Well, SharePoint is the standard. It's got it all with the exception of price point. On the other side of the scale is Central Desktop. It is inexpensive, robust, and it's built on a secure platform. I know you're an advocate of Central Desktop as well.

O: Oh yes. I've been an avid user of Central Desktop for almost three years, and I swear by it.

B: Central Desktop potentially does away with many IT department jobs that are there to maintain the bulky application like SharePoint. I find

"The reason why I like Central Desktop so much is that you can jump in and 20 minutes later you can be putting proposal material out there."

it similar to people preferring to use Illustrator, rather than PowerPoint in developing proposal graphics. I can tell you, having grown up in the visual arts industry, using Illustrator is all about job security. A real artist, especially with the new 2007 PowerPoint, can do anything that's done in Illustrator, in one third the time with maximum reusability, so that anyone can change the text or graphic for future proposals without bringing the artist back. You can rapid-develop graphics in PowerPoint so much faster than you can in Illustrator.

O: We've talked about SharePoint and Central Desktop. Have you looked at Privia?

B: Privia requires a tremendous amount of set up, which costs money, and it doesn't have the flexibility nor the accessibility for users to change screens or customize it as easily as Central Desktop. Even SharePoint has gotten easier these days.

Again, the reason why I like Central Desktop so much is that you can jump in, and 20 minutes later you can be putting proposal material out there. I've done business development tool implementations, and they can last for months. It can take months for people to agree upon what their process is going to look like before you do the configuration. Expensive, very expensive...

Now Privia has the proposal module, which helps tailor down to proposal management and capture needs. But, again, I don't know how much it costs these days. The last time I looked at it there was a hefty implementation fee with another configuration fee, so it came to nearly $20,000 for less than 25 users.

Microsoft Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is another expensive but great business development tool one can use to run virtual proposals. I've implemented Microsoft CRM at two different companies. We actually created a process inside the CRM that allowed us to put all the business triggers, bells, and whistles into the proposal process that we wanted. As an example, when the RFP was released, we put that date in, and five days later it sent out an alert to everybody that said "Have you read the RFP completely?" That was an interesting little prompt that we found really helped, because we had a problem with the people actually reading the RFP when it was released.

The tool literally had tabs. The first tab had a checklist in the form of the tasks. As soon as you got an RFP, the first task was to email it to all concerned parties. Number two, confirm they've read it. Number three, prepare for shredding. Number 4, develop a master schedule. And you couldn't move onto the next tab unless you checked off those pieces. We did the whole workflow in CRM, and it was so nice because of course it married right up to Outlook. Every time someone sent an e-mail that had to do with the proposal, they could press a button that said CRM, and it allowed them to attach that email to the CRM file associated with that part of the proposal. You ended up with all your capture material in one place, and the audit trail was invaluable. CRM was used company-wide, from the admins up to business developers and project people. We were able, in the proposal department, to track back and look at the history all the way through capture and BD, as opposed to having to walk over to the BD department and say "Hey, what did you guys do with the proposal X?"

It was appropriate for that company, but the implementation cost was $20,000-plus. If you're a business that can handle that, well that's great, but when we needed to change some of the navigation and processes that we had initially designed as we refined our process, we had to call Microsoft consultants back to make changes in the CRM. We didn't have access to the design tools that allowed for the configuration of the CRM.

O: What is the ideal tool set that you absolutely need for running a virtual proposal, such as project management and document repository type tools, MindJet for brainstorming, webcams, GoToMeeting, or teleconference services?

B: I have two scenarios: One is if I did a proposal for a small business that had nothing; the other is if I came into a large company that had infrastructure.

If I went into a small company with a blank slate and a limited budget, I'd use Central Desktop, Pidgin for Instant Messaging (IM), GoToMeeting, PowerPoint, and a drawing tablet. Then, I'd need a scanner. I never seem to use fax anymore. I'd need Microsoft Office Suite plus Visio and Project. I need to have Adobe Acrobat

"It's all about clarity and frequency of communication."

Professional edition and Adobe Photoshop, in lieu of having the entire Adobe Creative Suite, which is preferred. Then, there are other tools: AcronymFinder.com, and a piece of ShareWare that actually rolls up acronyms from the document. I think it's called Acronym Master. I should also mention RFP Monkey. I've used it a few places, and it shreds RFPs rather nicely. It's membership based at about $300-$400 a year for their basic package. When you receive at 200-page RFP, it's well worth the investment.

O: Have you heard of Office Communicator? It has a video chat option, and an IM tool. It is part of the Microsoft Office Enterprise Edition.

B: Yes, I like staying with Microsoft Office to the extent that I can leverage it. That being said, of course there are free services of which Skype is the best known. You can do video chat, exchange documents, you can do IM, you can do teleconferencing, all in a free environment. But Skype doesn't interface with Microsoft. It would be nice if the Skype scheduling feature were to interface with the schedule in Outlook...but it doesn't.

O: In a large company, would your ideal tool list change?

B: Yes, I'd alter it slightly. I wouldn't go for some of the ShareWare programs, like Pidgin or Skype. They inherently have some problems that pay-for products have worked out, and that's the value of paying for them. I would absolutely use SameTime as my document and IM exchange, and it also does video chat now. I would also use SharePoint, because this is where large companies are naturally headed anyway. I never had good experience with Privia, so I would leave it off my list. I personally like Microsoft CRM, if you're looking for something to manage contacts and a deeper database for document archiving.

O. What features should you absolutely have in a proposal collaboration tool? For example, I have to have frequent digest emails to feel the proposal team's heartbeat, email notification when the files get posted, version control, announcements, self-maintaining contact lists, calendars, task management feature, integration with e-mail, the ease of adding people and controlling their rights, and all of it in a web-based, highly secure solution. What are those for you?

B: Well actually, you just hit the list. In my mind, I also really like SameTime features. I like knowing who and when is online and available, and having the ability to IM. I'm a big IM'er once we are in the proposal cycle. I use e-mail for external team members, but I love IM with the production and internal staff, and love knowing when they're on, when they're off. You can see who's on. You can set your status...If you're running to lunch for 20 minutes you can have it say "Running to lunch for 20 minutes." You can also push files and images across.

O. Do you use MP3s as a recording of the stand-ups or just-in-time training? I think with communication, the rule is to repeat the same message six times until everyone gets it. In a virtual proposal, it is easy to under-communicate. I tend to post MP3s for people who cannot attend the meetings, so that they can be on the same page.

B: I haven't, but that's an excellent idea. I'll have to integrate that into my process. I've had a lot of resistance to recording, especially at a corporate level, so I haven't had a chance to promote it or use it yet, but I am now going to. What I'd like to record are the Win Strategy brainstorming sessions. I tend to be particularly diligent at capturing everything, but so much is lost when you take everyone's enthusiasm and creativity and try to convert into words and bullets on the fly. It would be a great place to record.

O: Now, let's switch gears here from the tools to process. What are the process steps that need to be added to manage a virtual proposal more efficiently and effectively?

B: It's all about clarity and frequency of communication. I tend to over-communicate in a virtual proposal. We always do stand-ups—as many as people can bear. If they let me do it daily, we'll do it daily. If they let me do a morning and a noon one, we'll do a morning and a noon one. That's mostly because I tend to run stand-ups very efficiently and quickly. Stand-ups are not a place for debating, you do that at sidebars. Stand-ups are where you get information pertinent to the management of the team.

I also tend to require daily status updates that go out in an e-mail. I have a rule with all the virtual workers—if they're going to miss their deadline, they let me know at least a few hours in advance.

If they do that, I have no problems with them missing their deadlines because I'll know who's online and available at any given moment, and I can help them. That's really my job—to help them succeed. Some proposal managers think it's everybody else's job to make them look good. I go about it the opposite direction. It's my job to make them look good.

O: I'm glad you said that, because I'm of the same school. I'm on the soap box frequently enough about it.

B: I am a personal believer in processes, routines, and in scheduling, whether it's a virtual proposal or working in the war room together. So we set up very strict processes, call-in times, and virtual stand-ups. Processes are even more valuable in virtual proposals. It is somehow easier to get things done when you're in a war room with people, because you can hear things in the room, you can see people's reactions.

In lieu of having that, it's very important to have a virtual schedule which is posted and easily accessible by everybody. I tend to use some bells and whistles. On some of the proposals I've done, we've been on SameTime. SameTime not only allows instant message and file distribution across the network. It actually allows me to see who's hitting their keyboard. So I can literally tell that I have three editors out here, two of whom are online right now. I know in real time whom to ask to drop everything and do a section for me.

Another communication secret is that not every call I make to a worker is about the proposal and business. There has to be some relationship building that goes on too. You have to call and go "Hey, how's your dog doing? I know you took it to the vet yesterday" and not have it be "and oh by the way, how's the volume coming?" You have to actually do some relationship building, that's very important. You can usually tell the people who need that more than others.

O: Is there anything you do differently as far as progress reviews? Do you tend to have more frequent checkpoints?

B: You know, that's a really good question. I'm a "nervous Nelly." I have lots of checkpoints. I'm not compulsive, though. I'm nervous in that I always want to know the status real time. But I try not to make everybody crazy.

I put a lot of checkpoints in progress. Especially when I'm managing a large group of editors, graphic artists, and desktop publishers... I tell people this all the time: "Listen, I have no problem with you not being able to meet a deadline, I have a huge problem with you not communicating that first. If you tell me, then we have no problem, because I can find somebody to jump in. But don't wait until after the deadline to contact me, and Lord forbid, don't make me track you down."

O: Is there a system you use for follow up?

B: You know, it's different for every proposal. I don't have a formal communications plan. It's just my nature to follow up. My nature is to empower people to be in that same culture of communicating frequently, over-communicating, really letting everybody know where they're at. I just find that it makes for a smoother process and people do appreciate it.

O: Some people, when they do virtual proposals, like to use some in-person meetings such as kick-offs, reviews, or brainstorming sessions. Do you think a proposal can run well completely virtually?

B: Completely virtual teams work well for mostly everything. The only area that's more difficult in a virtual proposal is conceptualizing graphics. It's facilitated easier in person when you can actually whiteboard. What I end up doing is using GoToMeeting in combination with a tablet and PowerPoint, so I actually draw and others can see it remotely.

O: Yes, I just bought a Wacom tablet for that exact purpose.

B: Oh yes, yes. This way one can virtually whiteboard. I have done it for years, interviewing SMEs and pulling the graphics out of their heads. It's true, there is a lot that you get by interacting in person. It's a little more sterile in a virtual environment, but again, I don't want to leave anyone with the thought that it doesn't work. Conceptualizing graphics virtually does work, it just works a bit better in person.

O: What about brainstorming, such as development of a concept of operations, solution, and win strategy, especially when you have a large group?

"I use GoToMeeting and a tablet anytime we need to whiteboard something and take extensive notes."

"Hallway chat is basically IM. I use IM in place of that hallway chat."

B: I would say the same thing... ideally it's better facilitated in person. But it doesn't thwart the value of doing it virtually. It's not even the difference between an A and an A+. It comes back to an earlier example. An artist can make something look pretty in PowerPoint or Illustrator, if they're an artist. Brainstorming can work well virtually or in person. If it's facilitated correctly, your players are playing, and the environment is set. It just comes down to how effective your leader is. A good facilitator of a brainstorming session, no matter if doing it in person or virtually, will get a high-quality result. I use GoToMeeting and a tablet anytime we need to whiteboard something and take extensive notes.

O: I would like to add one observation: whenever we virtually brainstorm, I like to have everyone dialed in on the phone using their own line instead of some group of people sitting around the table, and other people on the phone. That way everyone sees the screen, and it is so much easier to hear everyone speaking. It cuts down on frustration.

So are there any other important rules, besides telling you in advance about not meeting a deadline, that you tell your team?

B: Here is one: if you get bogged down... don't get bogged down for more than three minutes. IM somebody and get your answer in two more minutes.

O: Some people are convinced that it's nearly impossible to do fast-turnaround proposals virtually, especially with deadlines of 5 days or less. Would you agree with that?

B: I would disagree completely. In fact, I would submit that if you have an existing team that has some cohesion and is used to working in a virtual format, they can do it faster than a similar team that has to find time to meet in the office. The thing about virtual proposals is that you can access people instantly regardless of where they are—driving on the Beltway or on vacation.

O: What if it's not an existing cohesive team? Would they be able to do a 5-day turnaround?

B: Well, I think back to all the quick proposals and deliverables we did over the past decade at BearingPoint and KPMG...I guess the way I would answer that question is that it depends entirely on the quality of your staff. A high-quality, experienced staff can turn around a 5-day proposal whether they're working virtually or in the war room. Again, it goes back to the Illustrator and PowerPoint example—a real artist can use both. I think it's not so much about the tools or the technology, it is about the quality of the people. Do you have an experienced coordinator that can keep all the pieces moving? Do you have staffing at the right level and support services at the right level? Do you have an experienced proposal manager who can drive the writers and the volume leads? To me, it's more about management skills and experience than it's about being remote.

O: On regular proposals, a lot is done in the hallways, not part of a formal communication process, and not even by consciously picking up the phone. It's when you bump into someone accidentally and you suddenly remember you have to ask them a question. There is a lot of informal interaction, where people just "marinate in the juice," and just talk to each other randomly. People say you miss that completely in a virtual environment, do you agree?

B: It's definitely a benefit of a non-virtual environment that you have hallway or water cooler chit-chat that breeds creativity and ingenuity. I don't believe that's enough to counteract the advantages of a virtual proposal, however. A hallway chat is basically IM. I use IM in place of that hallway chat. Especially with Pidgin, you see people come on and off their computer, know when they go to lunch, or sit back down. They put little status checks under their name. I can put something like "buried in pink team material." It's a more informal way to communicate than e-mail or phone.

Again, if I call someone I'm managing every time about another task, I lose a dimension that's very valuable, like asking how's their kid, or just checking to see if they got to basketball practice in time. I do that on proposals because I understand the value of connecting with people. Especially when I've never met them or they are in another state, I always take the time to do it.

O: Is there anything you could advise people who have difficulties getting into virtual proposals?

If you sit down and do a pros and cons analysis, you'll notice that the benefits outweigh the risks for virtual proposals. The most common area for push back is cost. That's just an awareness issue, people aren't aware they can get powerful tools like Central Desktop at a low cost. People think they have to get SharePoint or some other enterprise-level system. So if you get pushed back on cost, I recommend people look at wikis, Central Desktop, or other low-cost systems. If they get pushed back on security, look at the fact that Verisign is used on most of these products. Central Desktop, for instance, has full encryption and a security profile that even enterprise corporations would be impressed with.

O: I give Central Desktop's whitepaper on their security to the companies that are nervous—so far it has passed the scrutiny with flying colors. I can also buy an extra package for $98 a month where we can specify the IP address from which team members can log on—this is extremely secure.

Are there any downfalls with virtual proposals that cannot be overcome with technology and processes and communication?

B: It's hard to receive pizza virtually, although I've done virtual pizza parties before with people. But seriously, it would have to be interpersonal, informal communication that does exist in a day-to-day non-virtual environment.

There's a creativity and spontaneity that does come out in being in proximity of someone that you don't have in a virtual environment. That being said, it wouldn't hold me back as there are ways to mitigate that, such as over-communication and reaching out to people on a personal level to build relationships. We're never going to totally create a water-cooler atmosphere in a virtual community, but besides that? I don't really see anything.

O: Could you share some lessons learned on virtual proposals?

B: Personally, I will never try out a proposal person for the first time in a virtual environment. They either have had to do one before, or I don't want to use them. I especially mean support personnel such as desktop publishers, graphic artists, and coordinators.

"The virtual environment is not coming, it is here-and it is driven by powerful economic factors, green factors, and changing corporate cultures."

I had a proposal manager for two years who had two children and who participated in the conference calls. We just set it up that way, and we would laugh about the kids and stuff. It was never a problem. And then, on the other hand, I've had so many people whom I've had to ask to turn down their TVs. Should you even be watching the basketball game while you're working on staffing problems? Some people just don't have the skills to work remotely. My lesson learned is I try to look at a person's skills and attitude and try to gauge if they will be an accountable, virtual worker.

I've had no security problems or issues ever, so I haven't learned any lessons there except to say that whole issue seems overhyped.

Lesson learned for version controls is that you do need an automated process using a tools like SharePoint or Central Desktop. They are always better than a manual process. I've seen some fantastic manual processes, but none of them stands up to the automated processes.

Also, people don't work for "virtual pizza" alone. Show them you care. Treat people with honor, value, and respect. I never treat them as a replaceable proposal specialist. As a manager, I tend to think I get a lot more back from my people than other managers do. This is because I walk into the situation respecting my peers, and I have an absolute desire for flexibility and finding ways to work things out. If someone says I "have to take two hours off tomorrow mid-day," I say "sure, do what you need to do, but we still have a plan to meet our goals, right?" That is a lesson learned. In my earlier career, I thought it was about instructing people in what to do, and they showed me respect by getting the work done. I've learned now it's about empowerment, and it starts with the proposal manager as the leader.

O: Yes, education, empowerment, and organization are key so that you enable people to function within the process.

B: Yes, indeed. Another lesson learned is when working with inexperienced or unknown writers, I always Google some passages of their work to check for plagiarism.

O: I never thought of that, but what a good idea!

B: Yes, it's sad. You'd catch more people than you think you would. We unfortunately live in that sort of time. Now, I don't have as much of a problem if they cut and paste from another internally developed proposal. Somebody externally can't Google and find it. That's not to say I want them cutting or pasting at all. But if I find something from a private website, then oh boy, I let them know how disappointed I am.

Another lesson learned is that the cost volume will be the last thing finished. It makes no difference if a cost volume is virtual or not, for some reason it just always takes longer. I can't put rhyme or reason to it, and I've worked with very accountable people, but every time the discussion of cost expands to fit the time allotted to it. You can count on it.

O: What is the single greatest piece of advice to take away from this discussion?

B: The virtual environment is not coming, it is here—and it is driven by powerful economic factors, green factors, and changing corporate cultures. I'm sure you've heard of President Obama's plan to expand broadband out to the rural areas. The plan has tremendous support because it will expand the workforce. We can then reach virtual expertise anywhere in the country. Since the virtual world is growing, get onboard now, learn the tools, make it work for you, and move forward. The amount of direct cost savings that one can equate to a virtual environment alone makes it a smart deal. When you add in some of the other efficiencies, it makes it imperative that you get with the times.

For this article, I put together a list of resources to help you with virtual proposals. You can find it by going to www.ostglobalsolutions.com/virtualresources.htm.

Olessia Smotrova-Taylor is president of OST Global Solutions, Inc, a Maryland company helping businesses grow by winning government contracts. She is the chair of the APMP NCA Executive Summary newsletter, and a practicing capture and proposal manager with a 94% win rate. Sign up for her ezine at www.ostglobalsolutions.com to get information on free business development webinars. You can reach her at otaylor@ostglobalsolutions.com or at 301.384.3350.

WRITER'S ROUNDUP: RESUMES WITH ACTION AND MEANING

Pat Kent

"Once the requirements are fully determined, the challenge of gathering relevant resumes begins."

"Avoid using the same action verb for each job/project."

One key component of every RFP (or other bid request) is the staffing requirement. As proposal managers, we drill through all of the sections/attachments looking for and documenting every reference to personnel. More and more, the government tends to place significant value on this commodity—the role the proposed personnel will play and the qualifications they must meet for their respective positions. Once the requirements are fully determined, the challenge of gathering relevant resumes begins. Next step: carefully review each one and make the down-select of the most promising candidates. This sounds like a fairly easy task, BUT IS IT???

Now I realize some of you are fortunate enough to have staff to spend hours interviewing your company's employees. They obtain top-notch information and transform it into formatted resumes, ready for safe storage in an accessible database. To you, I say congratulations! But what about the proposal departments who are not so lucky? Sure, there may be a standard template for formatting the resumes, but what about the content? What makes a five-star resume? Four key elements of an informative resume include:

1. Professional summary paragraph—brief and informative
2. Formal education, training, and certification data
3. Skill set section
4. Chronological career entries

In my estimation, number 4 is the heart of the resume. This section identifies and organizes the progression of your career. It should not only give where and when of employment but also clear, action-oriented statements of the position's responsibilities and quantifiable accomplishments. Let's examine this section more closely.

First, let me emphasize the term "action-oriented" with a couple of tips. Start each statement with an action verb (collect, analyze, calculate, control). Avoid using the same action verb for each job/project. Two words that are grossly overused are "provide" and "develop." Overuse produces poor writing. It indicates a lack of understanding of exactly what the action is or was. Search for precise actions that draw pictures in the reader's mind. For example, try a few of these on for size.

TECHNICAL			MANAGEMENT		
Administer	Find	Notify	Advise	Head	Present
Apply	Execute	Order	Arrange	Identify	Produce
Conduct	Fulfill	Outline	Communicate	Introduce	Publish
Control	Furnish	Perform	Counsel	Lead	Rate
Coordinate	Identify	Prepare	Deliver	Manage	Recommend
Describe	Implement	Process	Design	Negotiate	Resolve
Disclose	Inform	Report	Determine	Orchestrate	Select
Distribute	Integrate	Resolve	Direct	Perform	Settle
Draft	Investigate	Settle	Establish	Persuade	Survey
Estimate	Justify	Support	Facilitate	Pilot	Train
Evaluate	Maintain	Transfer	Guide	Plan	Write

Second, don't use personal pronouns. Write objective statements, direct and appropriately descriptive. The readers don't want fluff or a

"Write objective statements, direct and appropriately descriptive. The readers don't want fluff or a personal commentary..."

personal commentary; they want to scan your resume quickly for personnel requirements and move on to the next candidate.

Third, turn the action into an explanation of how, with what, and with what quantitative results. The evaluators look for substance. For example, let's examine the following statement.

> *"Coordinates with customer user group on network and workstation changes and events."*

Right away, it poses a few questions. For instance, what are the changes and events? Is this person coordinating with our customer user group or is it a customer group? How frequently do these changes and events occur? Are they scheduled—based on what? Are they occasionally ad hoc? What technical characteristics need to be mentioned about the network and workstation? How many workstations are involved? Is this done on-site, remotely, or both? What tools and processes are used? But, above all, how does this support benefit the customer—cost savings, reduced man hours, etc.? So in actuality, we are turning a one-liner into a brief, yet far more informative, paragraph of two to four related action statements.

Lastly, consider the order of each action statement when formatting the resume. The objective is to convey the strength of your skills and experience by listing them in the order of importance and relevance to the requirements of the situation/event.

Obviously, the objective is to build a comprehensive and accurate resume, while being adaptable to its intended use. For instance, if it is used in a proposal, you want to convince the evaluators when your company is selected, that you, as a member of the proposed staff, will deliver specific, direct benefits associated with your position, and fulfill or exceed the requirements of the solicitation.

Patricia (Pat) Kent, a Proposal Manager for TechTeam Government Solutions, has nearly 30 years of experience in written communication, which includes having taught high school English and conducting continuing adult education classes in basic grammar and business writing.

The Proposal Team: Know The Types Before They Start Cutting Into Your Budget

Wendy Frieman, PPM.APMP

"If it is someone who wants to talk instead of work, establish milestones for production, define work products, determine consequences for non-performance, and stick to them."

You can count on certain types to make an appearance on every proposal. Knowing how to spot them early on and leverage their strengths (or cut your losses) is a key proposal skill. It is even more critical in a virtual proposal environment where you can't look everyone in the eye. Although expertise in this area comes primarily from lessons learned in the heat of battle, some guidance might be helpful for those who have yet to experience the range of archetypes encountered in the proposal business. Here is a short introduction to the different types and some suggestions for coping with each:

The Talker

This guy has a lot to say. And he keeps saying it, all the time, to anyone who will listen. If you are lucky, his ratio of talk to work is one-to-one, but with many talkers, it's much worse than that. It can destroy meetings and interfere with everyone's productivity. What to do with this one depends on substance. If what he says has value, work with the individual to capture his words in writing so that you can hold on to the good ideas. If it is someone who wants to talk instead of work, establish milestones for production, define work products, determine consequences for non-performance, and stick to them. If he's busy enough, he won't have time to talk.

The Bungee Jumper

This person swoops in and out. At one meeting he might delve down five layers into your work breakdown structure and explain why your approach did not work when it was tried on a contract in Bolivia last year. Then you don't see him for three weeks. At his next appearance, he gives a dissertation on the pricing strategy you ought to use. In between, you can't see or find this person. Someone told you that he has "good ideas," but he never produces any deliverables. This is a tough one because there are people who only contribute ideas, and they can be valuable. Just make sure you define his role, and minimize any dependencies so that his ideas are not part of your critical path.

The Martyr

There is one person on every proposal team who has to tell you of the hardships he undergoes and the sacrifices he makes. If you stayed up until midnight, he was up until two. If you have gone six months or years or decades without a break, he has gone longer. If you have put three kids through college, he has put six. No matter how busy you are, he is busier. The real challenge with this individual is that he alienates everyone on the team. No one wants to hear about it! They have their own kids and their own vacations to worry about. Moreover, working incessantly and regularly staying up all night are often not signs of competence—just the reverse. Ours is the only culture in the world where these kinds of bragging rights are coveted. Everywhere else, more hours are not seen as a sign of virtue, they are seen as a sign of stupidity, and someone who can't get organized to take some leave now and then is seen as not quite having it all together. Coach this person to focus on the team and the desired result.

The Silent Warrior

This individual at first looks like the gift from heaven you have been waiting for. The antithesis of The Talker —someone who prefers working to talking! Wonderful! Maybe, maybe not. If she is not communicating at all, you have no way of knowing if she is on the right track. Review output and work products regularly to make sure this individual is working on the right thing and provide feedback. Make sure you draw her out to see if she has questions, roadblocks, or frustrations that someone might be able to help her with. Don't take her for granted —recognize her productivity in front of the group.

The Unemployed

If someone is available to work on a proposal and doesn't have to be pried loose from a contract or an important assignment within the company, the first question to ask is, why? Is there something wrong with him? If he really can add value to the proposal, he should be in huge demand. Sometimes it's possible to get lucky and find a prize candidate who just finished one assignment and is waiting for another to start. But often organizations just try to make the available person right instead of making the right person available. Watch out for this, one and stick to your guns. Changing proposal team members mid-stream, though sometimes unavoidable, is a huge burden for your budget and your schedule.

"The savior is a close relative of the drama queen or drama king."

The Savior

Many proposals have saviors who rescue the effort from near death. If this person is acting on the direction of the proposal manager, who has discovered a serious and potentially fatal error, be grateful that there is someone who can pull it out for you. Many are, however, self-appointed messiahs and discover something they believe to be a flaw so that they can fix it. Be sure you can tell the difference since the former need to be encouraged and the latter need to go home and get a life. The savior is a close relative of the drama queen or drama king. This individual thrives on panic and points with pride to the last-minute race to the customer's door 10 minutes before the proposal is due. Works for some people, perhaps, but most of us have enough grey hair (to the extent that we have hair at all) from dealing with supervisors, kids, parents, taxes, and other life vicissitudes.

The Dart Thrower

Everyone has met someone like this. She has something derogatory to say about everyone's contribution while contributing nothing herself. This person watches from the sidelines and adds no value. She refuses to put her own ideas on the line or make a serious commitment to the effort. Get rid of her as quickly and as gracefully as you can. Not only is she an unnecessary draw on your budget, but she will bring down the rest of the team.

"Set your standards high, stick to them, and don't let the types take over."

The Smoker

You have to love the smokers. They are so maligned, disdained, and ostracized. Smokers, although a relatively small group, constitute a cross-section of the organization and, in my experience, know exactly what is going on across the organization and can contribute valuable knowledge. A systems administrator could well be on a first-name basis with the chief financial officer if both happen to take smoke breaks at the same time. On one proposal I managed, three volume leads and the proposal coordinator were smokers and, even though I don't smoke, I joined them on smoke breaks just so that I could mine some of their invaluable insight. In theory, therefore, smokers can add value — the operative word being "can." If they aren't good listeners or if they are lone smokers, then the time spent smoking might be a net loss to the proposal rather than a potential benefit.

The Muncher

This person shows up whenever there is food in the proposal room (proposal food being a troublesome topic that deserves a whole separate article). It's uncanny. She just knows when there will be food. She eats and leaves. The rest of the time you can't find her via cell, BlackBerry, or walking the halls. No one knows where she is, but you can always attract her by ordering some pizza. If she produces, it's probably worth feeding her. If not, someone needs to teach her what a proposal budget is and how it can and cannot be spent.

The Whiner

This one needs no explanation. If you haven't encountered one, you haven't been on a real proposal yet. Stay tuned.

Dealing With Types

Many of the types described here could be people with enormous creativity, knowledge, experience, and ideas. The proposal manager has to make a determination early on as to the value of their contribution. If they are not adding value, they certainly are not worth putting up with. If they do contribute, they might be worth the trouble, and there might be ways to help them modify their behavior or redefine their role. This will come at a cost, an opportunity cost if nothing else, so make the value determination early and get it right. Proposal managers are accountable for the quality of the final document, so we are completely justified in fighting to get the best possible talent onto the proposal team. Set your standards high, stick to them, and don't let the types take over.

Wendy Frieman is a main thrust proposal manager at CSC. The views expressed here are her own and not those of CSC.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) For The NCA Chapter

Lou Robinson

"SIGs can provide programs for those who want to be in a smaller focused group while the Roundtables can continue the broad brush approach for the large groups."

A Special Interest Group is a group composed of people who are focused on a segment of Business Development. In our case, it would comprise NCA members who would like to network and receive training in a specific discipline within the Proposal / Business Development areas. The groups would be smaller and more focused than the NCA.

The NCA is now composed of about 800 APMP members and a large number of non-members. Members of this rather large community have a variety of interests. The planners for the NCA Roundtables do a great job in selecting a variety of topics for programs to allow coverage of many of the members' interests. However, the NCA cannot be too focused, or they will fail to touch on the interests of all NCA participants.

SIGs can provide programs for those who want to be in a smaller, focused group, while the Roundtables can continue the broad-brush approach for the large groups. The two forums do not compete with each other, but are complimentary.

SIGs do require time and energy, particularly during startup. An ongoing effort is required to sustain them. All of us run on the edge of saturation, and many feel that one more thing might take them over the edge. So, we must now estimate if the return is worth the investment.

There are many possible areas for SIGs, including Graphics, Desktop Publishing, Capture, Grants, Performance Based Contracting, SBIRs, and Proposal Planning. Mike Parkinson and Colleen Jolly of the 24 Hour Company are considering forming a Graphics SIG. If this is of interest to you, please contact Mike or Colleen at 703·533·7209.

At this point, we need your help. We would like to know if you have an interest in being involved in a SIG, and we would appreciate your suggestions for the types of SIGs you would like to see developed. Finally (and most importantly,) we are looking for people organizations who would like to sponsor SIGs.

Please send your feedback to Lou Robinson, NCA Director at Large at lou@apmpnca.org.

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Virtual Proposal Centers: Will They Work for You?

As it becomes more expensive and time-consuming to bring together the best people in the most efficient structured environments, more and more proposal professionals are looking at virtual proposal centers (VPCs). Since VPCs require a major investment in capital and proposal team resources, the more you know about them, the better you'll be able to make them work for you!

Find out what you need to know before you consider a VPC—and if you already have one—how to make it function beyond your expectations at:

APMP-NCA's May Roundtable

May 20, 2009; 5:30 – 9:00 PM

Fairview Park Marriott, Falls Church, Virginia

Come to the May Roundtable with your proposal team and come away with the:

- Key factors to consider before you make a major investment in a VPC
- Ability to evaluate whether a VPC makes sense for your unique proposal environment
- Specific costs, benefits, risks, and challenges involved with actually implementing a VPC
- Real advantages and disadvantages of working in a VPC environment for proposal managers and other team members
- Proven best practices—and lessons learned—to make your VPC initiative a big success!

Our three expert presenters, Alan W. Richey, DeAnna Boudreau, and Michael A. Scruggs, are pioneers in researching and adopting new technologies in the proposal industry.

While you're there, visit with our Corporate Partner Guest Hosts: Brown Rudnick LLP, Organizational Communications, Inc., Propel Consulting, Inc., and Rainmakerz Consulting LLC.

Register now... Space is Limited!

www.apmpnca.org/announcements/052009_roundtable

Special Points of Interest

As an NCA member, you have more opportunities for networking and education than anywhere else in the country! Check our events calendar at www.apmpnca.org/events.html

Access presentations from previous APMP-NCA Roundtables at www.apmpnca.org/presentations.html

Anyone interested in a Roundtable topic is invited to attend our Rountables. 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 you to join us!

Self-update your email address directly on the NCA Member and Colleague Database page on NCA's Web site at www.apmpnca.org/redesign/members/login.cfm

Mark Your Calendar for 2009 APMP-NCA Events

- May 20, 2009—Roundtable
- June 9-12, 2009—APMP International Conference
- July 15, 2009—Roundtable
- September 16, 2009—Roundtable
- October 2009—Professional Day
- November 18, 2009—Roundtable

New Member Profile

Name:
Donna L. Quesinberry, President

Company:
DonnaInk (www.donnaink.com)

How did you originally hear about APMP?
I have been working in the industry since the late 80s. When I first heard of APMP, it seemed to be a "new" group passed on through rumor control. Folks in the industry used to talk about whether there was any merit in joining. I circumnavigated those discussions while observing my contemporaries' retorts. It was in the early 2000s when securing new work that I first began hearing folks ask, "Are you an APMP member?"

What made you decide to join?
APMP has grown over the years, and as a veteran in the business – I've decided to support the association. The members I've met thus far are interesting and fun to converse with.

What is your current BD role/responsibility?
Capture planning, business development, emergent media, and public relations—as a business owner.

What is your biggest BD challenge/issue?
Helping companies achieve their goals. There are so many wonderful emergent companies that want to establish themselves in the industry, and I love helping these rising stars.

What do you hope to get out of membership and NCA affiliation?
Everything it has to offer.

Fun Fact: I write eclectic performance poetry and freelance publications of varied and diverse mediums from pseudoscience to sexuality and religion. Some of my work is obscure and terse as well as cutting-edge and shrill. I love to workout, bicycle, and dance/sing with family. Family is the greatest!

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

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APMP-NCA Board of Directors Meetings are Open to Members

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

Local NCA affiliation is FREE and includes exclusive access to business development professionals, job opportunities, Corporate Partners, and the NCA Body of Knowledge.

Advertising Rates

Page Size	Width x Height	Rate
Full Page	8.5” x 11”	$500
Half Page	5.5” x 8.5”	$250
Quarter Page	3.5” x 5”	$150

Rates are for digitally provided actual-sized color or black and white artwork. Minimum resolution is 150 dpi. Artwork may be provided in .jpg, .ai, .eps, or .pdf format. Send all proposal/business development-related advertisement submissions to Olessia Smotrova-Taylor, Newsletter Chair, olessia@apmpnca.org (artwork only) and Eric Schwarz, Treasurer, eric@apmpnca.org (copy of artwork and payment details or request for a PayPal invoice for online payment).

Payment must be received via check made payable to “APMP-NCA” at APMP-NCA, P.O. Box 3063, McLean, VA 22103-3063 or via PayPal (contact Eric Schwarz to have a PayPal link set up for you) by the advertisement submission deadline for the advertisement to appear in that corresponding issue. Late submissions will appear in the following issue of the Executive Summary.

APMP-NCA reserves the right to reject advertisements for non-proposal or non-business development-related products/services or for content it deems objectionable.

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As an added value to our members, APMP-NCA has expanded the posting timeframe of our job board listings. Job postings now run on the board for 90 days. The price per posting is $65. Check out www.apmpnca.org/find_a_job.html

Job Listings: Find Your Next Proposal Management Job

Job Title:	**Proposal Manager**
Company:	Brainware, Inc.
Contact:	jobs@brainware.com 20110 Ashbrook Place, Ste 150 Ashburn, VA 20147 hea-jin.yoon@brainware.com
Date Posted:	02/11/2009

Job Title:	**Senior Proposal Manager**
Company:	Bowhead Technical and Professional Services
Contact:	4900 Seminary Road, Suite 1000 Alexandria, VA 22311 steven.holdsworth@bowheadsupport.com
Date Posted:	03/02/2009

Job Title:	**Proposal Manager**
Company:	Preferred Systems Solutions
Contact:	Eileen Zechman 8180 Greensboro Drive Suite 300 Mclean, VA 22102 ezechman@pssfed.com
Date Posted:	03/05/2009

Job Title:	**Technical Writer/Proposal Writer**
Company:	Preferred Systems Solutions (PSS)
Contact:	Eileen Zechman 8180 Greensboro Drive Suite 300 Mclean, VA 22102 ezechman@pssfed.com
Date Posted:	03/05/2009

Job Title:	**Vice President of Business Development**
Company:	G&B Solutions, Inc.
Contact:	Janet Oquendo Aquilent 1100 West Street Laurel, MD 20707 jobs@aquilent.com
Date Posted:	04/13/2009

Job Title:	**Recruiting Director**
Company:	The Hanover Research Council
Department:	Hanover Grants Division
Contact:	Marcelle Wood The Hanover Research Council 1801 K st NW Suite 325 L Washington , DC 20006 mwood@hanoverresearch.com
Date Posted:	04/17/2009

APMP-NCA Job Board Offers Quantity Discount

The APMP-NCA Job Board is starting its third year of operation. To commemorate that, the NCA Board of Directors approved a proposal to offer employers a discount.

Here is how the NCA Job Board works. Employers log on to the NCA website and complete the online form that includes the:

- Job title
- Employer name
- Job description
- Employer contact

The job posting runs for 90 days, and the cost to the employer is $65.

Employers can place 10 job postings on the NCA Job Board for $600. That is a saving of $50.

For more information, contact NCA Ombudsman, Rick Patterson, at richard@apmpnca.org or call 703.263.9240.

APMP-NCA Corporate Partner Program

The APMP-NCA Corporate Partner program is an opportunity for companies supporting the business development and proposal management industry in the Washington, DC metropolitan area to participate in NCA chapter activities. The program provides both in-person events and multi-media vehicles to facilitate interaction and information sharing between our members and some of the biggest thought leaders in the industry.

"Our 22 Corporate Partners range in size from large publicly traded companies to local consulting firms."

Corporate Partner Contributions

Our 22 Corporate Partners range in size from large publicly traded companies to local consulting firms. All have one thing in common—a dedication to our profession. Over the last 3 years, Corporate Partners contributed 36 articles to the Chapter's newsletter, the *Executive Summary*—last year, they provided the entire curriculum for our first Proposal Basics Boot Camp.

Benefits of the Corporate Partner Program include:

- One half-page ad a year and a listing on the Corporate Partner page in each of the five issues of the Chapter's newsletter, the *Executive Summary*—listing exclusive to Corporate Partners
- An opportunity to exhibit, with one free registration at the Chapter's annual Professional Day—exhibiting exclusive to Partners
- An opportunity to host one of six annual Roundtable dinners and four roundtable dinner passes a year—hosting exclusive to Partners
- A listing on the APMP-NCA's Corporate Partner Buying Guide web page with a link to the Partner's homepage – exclusive to Corporate Partners.

Program Eligibility

Eligibility in the APMP Corporate Partner program is open to all companies with an active interest in the field. APMP is an individual membership organization, therefore it is a requirement that at least one senior-level company representative be an active APMP member, affiliated with the NCA chapter.

For more information about the APMP-NCA Corporate Partner Program, please contact Marcia Horting at marcia@apmpnca.org.

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