



Summer 2009

Volume XV, Issue III

IN THIS ISSUE

P1 Recapping 20th Annual APMP International Conference, June 9-12

P6 Ask the Graphics Guru

P8 How to Create Great Proposal Themes (Part 5): Who You Gonna Call?

P11 Writer's Roundup Unveiling the Disguise of Three Weak Writing Habits

P13 APMP-NCA Proposal Basics Boot Camp

P15 Virtual Proposal Centers: Will They Work for You?

P17 Building a Proposal Center of Excellence: Interview with Bruce DeNormandie

P23 Protect Your Investment

Executive Summary

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

President's Corner

RECAPPING 20TH ANNUAL APMP INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE JUNE 9–12, 2009

“KNOWLEDGE IS POWER” AND A PROPOSAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE: WHAT CAN IT DO FOR YOU?

By Beth Wingate, AM.APMP, NCA Chapter President

In early June, the exquisitely peaceful Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort and Spa located in the high Sonoran Desert of Arizona hosted this year's 20th Annual APMP International Conference “Knowledge is Power.” An authentic representation of the Gila River Indian heritage and culture, the resort offers an inspirational experience celebrating the architecture, design, art, and legends of the Akimel O'otham and Pee Posh tribes.

“Knowledge is Power” segues nicely into our summer Executive Summary's theme of “Proposal Centers of Excellence.” Enjoy this issue filled with articles celebrating the design, art, and legends of Proposal Centers of Excellence—how they came to be, and how to create your own. Also, join us at our July 15 Roundtable and hear first-hand accounts from three industry leaders of how they set up their own Proposal Centers of Excellence!

This year's conference, an oasis in the middle of a desert, offered more than 550 conference attendees the opportunity to relax in peaceful surroundings and enjoy many site-seeing opportunities after their fully packed days. We attended Tuesday's First-time Attendee Orientation, opening reception, special “welcome back” ceremony hosted by Akimel O'otham and Pee Posh resort staff, and APMP Fellows presentation, as well as a “getting connected” speed networking session by BJ Lownie and Jon Williams of Strategic Proposals. The session had all of us in the ballroom on our feet Wednesday morning chatting madly with our fellow participants. We also enjoyed a keynote presentation on mentoring and coaching by Dr. Terry Bacon and more than 50 conference sessions focused on proposal and capture management. The week concluded with a session hosted by BJ Lownie and Jon Williams who reflected on the past 20 years of APMP and proposal professional highlights.

Conference Sessions Included:

Title	Presenter(s)
40 Years of Getting in the Winner's Circle	Jay Herther
Benchmarks in World Class Proposal Writing (and White Paper)	Charlie Divine
Bid Busters Australian Style—Exploding the Tender	David Lunn
Bridging the Knowledge Gap	Tom Sant

Title	Presenter(s)
Capture Planning	Virginia Ainscough
Capturing the Proposal	Steven Martin
Demystifying Capture Strategy Development	Peggy Steele
Expand Your Career and Knowledge through the International Business Development Council	Vicki Griesinger & Dick Eassom

"Consider Joining APMP (go to www.apmp.org to sign up)."

Title	Presenter(s)	Title	Presenter(s)
First Things First – Requirements Management	Wayne Egan	Power of Price	Gary Knight & Mike Tresko
Fixing the Broken Red Team: Knowing Ways to Power the Quality of Your Proposal	David Warley, Michael Forster & Saibal Sen	Pursue or Don't Pursue—It's All In the Opportunity Assessment	Mary Ann Anelli
Getting Team Cohesion in Proposal Orals (or) Does Your Orals Team Come Across as Stumblebums or Winners?	Tom Leech	Qualifying Opportunities with the 24 Questions	Maria Witkowski
Getting Under the Skin of the RFP	Richard Jenkins	Qualifying Opportunities with the 24 Questions	Maria Witkowski
Getting Winning Prose from Non-Professional Writer	Olessia Smotrova-Taylor	Results of 2008 Salary Survey	Don Stewart
How Can You Stay Sane in This Crazy Business?	Wendy Frieman & Vicki Kempf	Results of the Big Proposal Management Study 2009	Christopher Kälin
How to Ensure your Company is Ready at RFP Release	Carl Dickson	Review Teams: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly	Bob Weissman
How to Stand Out from the Crowd	Sandy Pullinger	Seven Skills for a Winning Oral Presentation (and workbook)	Dave Draper
How to Win Before Writing the Proposal	Rob Kempinski & Stacey League	Stop Wasting Precious Proposal Time	Chris Simmons
How We Take Our Coffee (and handouts: Blank and Answers)	Danielle O'Grady & Jay Rivera	Successful Capture Strategy: The Art of Winning—Preliminary Findings from the Cost Analysis Task Force	Bruce Morton & Bill Brigadier
ID/IQ Panel Session:	David Bol (Chair)	Take Your Kick-off Meeting Up a Notch	Robin Davis
Creating a Winning Task Order Proposal Process	Beth Wingate	The Art of the Question (and White Paper)	Amy McGeady & Michelle Petty
Rapid Response Process to Quick Turn RFPs	Richard Caldwell	The Backend - Taming the Beast	Lyn Buckley-Mogan & Renee Roman
Want Fries With That? Responding to Task Orders Like a Short Order Cook	Jenny Stewart	The Great Proposal Management Quiz Show	Christopher Kälin
If It's 9am in Mumbai...	Laura Higgins	The Proposal Resource Center: Tips and Techniques	Linc Williams
Integrating the Capture and Proposal Processes	Bob Lohfeld	The RFP Green Thumb: Planting Proposal Seeds for an Abundant Harvest	Chuck Keller
Interest Based Negotiation	Matthew McConville	The Robust Annotated Outline	Basil Chiasson & Bob Mahoney
It's Okay to Have a Career in Proposals!	Carey Potter & Tracy Warren	The Secret to Winning More – Bidding Less!	Michael O'Guin
Killer Win Themes—The Workshop	Bill Russo	This Old Proposal: A DIY Guide to Proposal Graphics (and Speaker Notes)	Colleen Jolly & Mike Parkinson
Lessons Collected Ain't Lessons Learned	Ed Alexander	Using CMMI, ITIL & PMBOK® to Improve Operations	Brenda Crist
Making Continuous Improvement Part of the Process	Karen Hyman	What Makes a Good Proposal Team?	Graham Ablett
Meet the New Boss: Talking 'Bout My Generation	David Sotolongo	What Were We Thinking? How and Why We Act and React	Kristin Dufrene
Poet's Guide to Proposal Management	Jessica Gaulke		

Many NCA Chapter members provided educational and entertaining conference sessions. Be sure to download their presentations, as well as all the others, and check out their speaker notes on www.APMP.org on a members-only Page at Conference >Past and Future APMP Conferences

>APMP Conferences 2005-2009 >2009 Presentations. Members must log in to access this page.

If you would like access to these files, consider joining APMP (go to www.apmp.org to sign up.)



Many conference attendees took time out to enjoy the resort's famous golf facilities and 2.5-mile Gila Riva reproduction with boat rides to the Wild Horse Casino and the Rawhide Western Town and Steakhouse.

"Be sure to put June 1 – 4, 2010 on your calendar for next year's 21st Annual APMP International Conference & Exhibits, 'Going Green: Global Initiative – All Things Considered' at the Walt Disney World Dolphin in Orlando, Florida."

We also found time to hold two very productive APMP Chapter Chairs (Presidents) meetings with the APMP Board of Directors to discuss issues and opportunities for furthering the goals and mission of our association and our individual chapters worldwide.

Additionally, the Board presented new and updated initiatives to conference attendees during a general membership meeting. Initiatives included growing membership and adding membership benefits (including new student and retiree memberships), instituting a mentoring program for the Practitioner-level accreditation program, rejuvenating the APMP Accreditation Program, growing the APMP Body of Knowledge, supporting the new International Business Development Council (see www.ibdc.org for more details), and adding paid staff to the APMP International organization to support association activities.

APMP stands at the highest membership levels in its history—3326 as of June 6, 2009. The Board also updated us on the APMP professional accreditation program's status. We now have 1,140 Foundation, 128 Practitioner, and 38 Professional accredited individuals—more than one-third of our worldwide membership!

APMP also reiterated the importance of our BD-Knowledge Base™, jointly developed with

the BD-Institute. This is an indexed collection of best-practices artifacts from the APMP Journal, past conferences, and other parts of our body of knowledge. It will become a reference work for the APMP accreditation program. APMP created a BD-Wiki for collaboration and development of best practices; the link is available on the APMP website member page.

APMP Forums continue building momentum on the APMP website. Forums include multiple proposal-related topics such as proposal processes, proposal production, executive summaries, metrics, price development, storyboards, capture planning, and teaming. Individual APMP chapters also have forums available for our members. Any APMP member can start a thread within a forum, and any member can reply to a thread. Non-members will be able to read a thread. Use your member ID and password to access these forums at the APMP website, www.apmp.org.

Be sure to put June 1–4, 2010 on your calendar for next year's 21st Annual APMP International Conference & Exhibits, "Going Green: A Global Initiative – All Things Considered" at The Walt Disney World Dolphin in Orlando, Florida. The call for presentations will be coming soon to an e-mail near you! See you there!

20th Annual APMP International Conference June 9-12, 2009

Many APMP Corporate Partners and Members exhibited their services to conference attendees. Attendees also enjoyed access to the APMP Bookstore where they could browse through books suggested by conference speakers for their valuable hints and tips.



The NCA Chapter held an NCA members reception on Wednesday evening after conference presentations concluded. Quite a few NCA members joined us for a delicious nachos bar and lots of networking.



XR Solutions shared RFP analysis insights with visitors who dropped by their booth.



For their contributions to the proposal and business development industry, APMP selected the NCA Chapter's own Ali Paskun and Betsy Blakney as two of its 2009 Class of Fellows. David Winton, APMP Executive Director, announced the 2009 Fellows during a special "Welcome Back" ceremony hosted by members of the Akimel O'otham and Pee Posh tribes.

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 22 years' proposal development experience. Beth is Managing Director, Proposal Development and Corporate Communications for Lohfeld Consulting Group, Inc. (www.LohfeldConsulting.com). Contact Beth at beth@apmpnca.org or BWingate@LohfeldConsulting.com.



Job Board

More Exposure...

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

Post more jobs and get more savings!

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
 bea-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

Job Title: **Your Job Title**
 Company: **Your Company**
 Contact: **Your Contact**
 Company
 Address
 City, State, Zip
 Email
 Date Posted: 00/00/0000

Job Title: **Your Job Title**
 Company: **Your Company**
 Contact: **Your Contact**
 Company
 Address
 City, State, Zip
 Email
 Date Posted: 00/00/0000

Job Title: **Your Job Title**
 Company: **Your Company**
 Contact: **Your Contact**
 Company
 Address
 City, State, Zip
 Email
 Date Posted: 00/00/0000

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 540.869.1919 (Office) 703.675.1311 (Mobile)

ASK THE GRAPHICS GURU



Where should I go to get inexpensive graphics and photographs?

Mike Parkinson

You can add quality graphics and graphic elements to your proposals quickly for very little money but you need to know where to look to get the best graphics. Below is a list of the sites I recommend to develop quality graphics.

There is **no** substitute for the benefits derived from using a qualified, experienced designer; however, in these challenging economic times, organizations and consultants are searching for ways to cut costs. Unfortunately, cutting costs often means cutting quality, which will increase your risk of failure. Until the financial storm passes, use one of these low-priced, quality solutions.



1. Dreamstime

(\$1–50 per photograph and illustration)
(www.dreamstime.com)

Dreamstime is a library of almost 5.5 million photographs and illustrations. Users purchase credits and use those credits to download graphics. The more credits you buy, the cheaper the per-credit price. Users can also buy subscriptions, which further lower the cost of each download.

2. iStockPhoto

(\$1–50 per photograph and illustration, \$15–100 for videos, and \$1–10 for Flash files)
(www.iStockPhoto.com)

iStockPhoto is by far my favorite. They cost a little more, but are easier to use, and I often find what I need in less time. Plus,



they offer certain images exclusive to this site. It is set up similarly to Dreamstime. Users have a choice between credits and subscriptions. The more you buy, the lower the price per download.

3. Shutterstock

(\$3–10 per photograph and illustration)
(www.Shutterstock.com)

Shutterstock requires a subscription (as low as \$49) to download from their 6.6+ million-image library. If you are a high-volume user, this is the best choice, because larger subscriptions equal low-cost graphics.

4. StockExpert

(\$1–25 per photograph and illustration)
(www.stockxpert.com)



Using credits and subscriptions, you download graphics from their extensive library. This site is owned by Juniper, which owns other stock image sites (like Photos.com). Of all Juniper's sites, StockExpert offers the best user experience and selection.

5. Stock.XCHNG

(free) (www.sxc.hu)

Stock.XCHNG is a great site if you need basic, professional images. Plus, all their images are free!

6. BizGraphics On Demand

(\$4–45 per PowerPoint graphic) (www.BizGraphicsOnDemand.com)

Search and download information and business graphics that are editable in



7



PowerPoint 2007. Again, users have a choice between credits and subscriptions. The more you buy, the lower the price per download.

7. Brands of the World
(free) (www.brandsoftheworld.com)

Thousands of popular brand and corporate logos from around the world are available to download for free. Most logos are vector, which means they are resolution independent and can be scaled to any size.

8. Wikipedia—Public Domain Images
(free) (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain_image_resources)

Wikipedia provides a long list of websites that offer public-domain imagery. Be sure to check the rights of use for each site.

8



9. Federal Government-specific Imagery (free)

Search and download government-related still, motion, and multimedia imagery. Typically, government agencies request that you give attribution when using the imagery in your proposals.

- DefenseImagery.mil (www.defenseimagery.mil/index.htm)
- DefenseLINK (www.defenselink.mil/multimedia)
- U.S. Army (www.army.mil/media)
- U.S. Navy (www.navy.mil/view_photos_top.asp)
- U.S. Air Force (www.af.mil/photos/)
- U.S. Marines (www.marines.mil/news/Pages/photos.aspx)
- U.S. National Guard (www.ngb.army.mil/resources/photo_gallery)

9



- U.S. Coast Guard (www.uscg.mil/top/downloads)
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—NOAA (www.photolib.noaa.gov)
- USA.gov (www.usa.gov/Topics/Graphics.shtml)
- NASA (www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery)

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.

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How to Create Great Proposal Themes (Part 5)

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?



Chris Simmons, Founder and Principal Member of Rainmakerz Consulting

This five-part series began with the definition of proposal themes and a description of the benefits of theme development in the proposal process. We looked at the two primary components of winning proposal themes (features and benefits) and described how to get

Many companies fail to standardize theme-development processes or lack sufficient resources to follow them efficiently and effectively.

the most out of proposal themes by providing discriminating proof to truly set you apart from the competition. We tied all the concepts together with a recipe for success—a proven methodology for developing winning proposal themes.

It all sounded so simple...didn't it? Then why do many organizations con-

tinue to fail to apply these fairly simple concepts consistently? Part 5 concludes this series with some common theme-development challenges and industry-leading resources you can use to help you create great proposal themes.

Theme-Development Challenges

Most companies have established proposal processes that include some form of proposal theme development. However, many companies fail to either standardize these processes or lack sufficient resources to follow them efficiently and effectively.

Unless the capture or proposal manager takes the theme-development task on alone (not recommended), some form of proposal theme-development working sessions is required. But, getting the right people in the same room to discuss proposal themes, features, benefits, proof, and discriminators requires significant planning and meticulous execution. Without the appropriate focus, a common understanding of terms, and the right meeting facilitator, theme development working sessions can be a monumental flop.

Theme Busters

In the 1984 comedy classic *Ghostbusters* film, Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, and Harold Ramis play three eccentric New York City parapsychologists-turned-ghost exterminators. Using plasma blasters, they set out to rid the city of annoying, frightening, and elusive ghosts that are wreaking havoc on the city.

Proposal themes have many of the same scary characteristics as the ghosts in the film. Many companies don't have the internal wherewithal to plan and execute theme-development processes. Instead, they hire consulting companies (theme busters) to assist. These companies range from well-known organizations with international reach to one-person consulting firms. The following recognized companies provide methods, processes, and people (aka plasma blasters) you can call for help.

Shiplew Associates (www.shiplew.com) is probably the most widely recognized name in the proposal industry. Shiplew has been around since the early 1970s and literally wrote the book on proposal management and proposal writing. Their Proposal Guide includes a topic-oriented approach that includes everything from Abbreviations to Virtual Team Management, with sections on Features, Benefits, Discriminators, and Theme Statements. Shiplew Associates provides training (instructor-led and e-Learning) and consulting services to help you with your specific proposal theme challenges. For more information, call Andrea Madison, Marketing Manager at 888.772.9467.

SM&A (www.smawins.com) has been in business since the early 1980s. Their SM&A® Win Strategy provides a systematic process that can help you identify the required steps (including theme development) to win competitive procurements.

“Without the appropriate focus, a common understanding of terms, and the right meeting facilitator, theme development working sessions can be a monumental flop.”

The SM&A methods, tools, and templates are not generally available unless they are bundled with SM&A-provided proposal and capture management services. For more information email (don't call) info@smawins.com.

CapturePlanning.com (www.captureplanning.com) is one of the newest entrants into the proposal development methodology arena (2001). CapturePlanning.com has a surprisingly large following that includes more than 60,000 opt-in newsletter subscribers. Their MustWin Process™ Workbook includes guidance, forms, checklists, and an extensive website that features articles and tutorials on theme-related topics such as How to Capture the Win, 101 Win Themes for All Occasions, and What Are Proposal Themes and Why Are They Important. CapturePlanning.com is not a consulting company per se. They focus on developing and publishing process documentation and training materials and offer training and support through a network of consultant partners. For more information, call Carl Dickson at 703.898.4932.

The APMP Body of Knowledge (www.bd-knowledgebase.org or www.apmp.org) is a collaborative effort between the Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP) and the BD-Institute to create a business development (BD-KnowledgeBase™) body of knowledge.

Their website includes a number of articles on theme-related topics originally published in the APMP Journal and presented at past APMP Conferences. Also included are excerpts from the Shipley Proposal Guide. The website has a basic search feature and can be used only by members of APMP and the Business Development Institute. You can access the website using your email address (User Name) and APMP membership number (Password). For more information, call Charlie Divine at 314.223.3822 or send an email to cdivine@bd-institute.org.

Who You Gonna Call?

Despite the longevity and name recognition of Shipley Associates, SM&A, CapturePlanning.com, and APMP, no one organization has established itself as the ultimate theme buster. There are literally hundreds of reputable proposal consulting companies who have proven methods, techniques, and experienced consultants to help you. Who's the best company to call? The best place to start is with a company (or consultant) you like and trust. Call someone with a proven record of success creating great proposal themes for a broad range of customers. If you find yourself singing the following lyrics (to the Ghostbusters theme song), pick up the phone and call a local Theme Buster.

“ There are literally hundreds of reputable proposal consulting companies who have proven methods, techniques, and experienced consultants to help you. ”

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 comments or questions about this or other challenging proposal issues to Chris at chris@rainmakerz.biz or 202.255.2355. Visit www.rainmakerz.biz.



A Proposal Center of Excellence: What Can It Do for You?

With budget cutting the trend in today's economy, setting up a Proposal Center of Excellence is a way to increase the efficiency of your proposal operations and increase your probability of winning. Building an end-to-end proposal management, support, and training center can create cost-saving efficiencies and leverage stretched-thin proposal management and support resources—allowing you to bid on more “must win” proposals.

Find out what a Proposal Center of Excellence might look like in your company and how to use it to increase your P(win) at:

APMP-NCA's July Roundtable

July 15, 2009; 5:30 – 9:00 PM

Fairview Park Marriott, Falls Church, Virginia

Proposal Center Directors: Find out how to...

- Decide if a Proposal Center of Excellence will work for your company
- Set one up to maximize the allocation of people, money, and time
- Sell the concept to company executives and get leadership buy-in to make it work

Proposal and Capture Managers: Find out how to...

- Support the development of a Proposal Center of Excellence at your company
- Maximize your effectiveness within this new structure

Our three expert panelists, **Carol Frost**, **Kristin Pennypacker**, and **Jean Leonard** are innovators in setting up **Proposal Centers of Excellence** and making them live up to the **very highest expectations!**

**While you're there, visit with our Corporate Partner Guest Hosts:
AOC Key Solutions, Inc. and G4i Consulting Inc.**

Register now... Space is Limited!

www.apmpnca.org/announcements/071608_roundtable

WRITER'S ROUNDUP

UNVEILING THE DISGUISE OF THREE WEAK WRITING HABITS

Patricia Kent

Finally! The phone has stopped ringing, and most of the office staff have left for the day. Maybe now is a good time to review that proposal section you wrote last night. You know the content is there, but you also know you are not an editor. Besides checking for correct verb tenses and misplaced or incorrect punctuation, you're not sure what to look for.

This is not an uncommon situation for writers who are tasked with improving page after page of prose they sweated over for hours, maybe even days. One review option is word choice—what to use and where. For example, let me offer three words/phrases that cleverly creep into everyone's writing at one time or another. Disguised as normal writing habits, these offenders are easily overlooked because—in most instances—they are not among the top 10 of grammar's "most wanted list" of weak writing habits. However, years of editing experience have shown that recognizing and avoiding these constructions can make writing more crisp, direct, and meaningful.

1. *Very*—a four-letter crutch that we too often think intensifies or qualifies the meaning of other words. In actuality, it has two distinct drawbacks. One, using *very* as the intensifier can weaken clear and accurate descriptions:

weak

The entire incident made the staff *very* angry.

better

The entire incident infuriated the staff.

less forceful

That proposal section is very compelling and compliant.

more forceful

That proposal section is compliant and sends a compelling message.

Two, linking *very* to already strong words is self-defeating:

Conclusion—Replace *very* and the word it is qualifying with a word that expresses the action or description more definitively.

2. *Only*—another four-letter word that can be extremely useful, but also deceptive. This simple four-letter word denotes exclusivity and can change the entire meaning of a sentence just by where it resides in the sentence. For example, you might give your proposal production team this information: "*Only* FedEx and UPS provide express delivery to this office address." Now look at what happens when you move *only* to another position in the sentence. "FedEx and UPS provide *only* express delivery to this office address."

Conclusion — Determine what action or object you intend to label as exclusive in meaning, and place *only* directly in front of it.

3. *Verb-Noun Traps*—wordy culprits that hide naively, cluttering and lengthening our sentences. As the structural name indicates, these traps define what to look for. Check for verbs like *make/made*, *give/gave*, *submit/submitted*, and *use/used* (and there are others) that are followed by a noun that can become an action.

Give an explanation = *explain*

Submit a resignation = *resign*

Use a quotation = *quote*

"...experience have shown that recognizing and avoiding these constructions can make writing more crisp, direct, and meaningful."

Gave authorization = *authorized*

Made a decision = *decided*

Expressed opposition = *opposed*

instead of

The awardee's HR staff is in the process of interviewing the incumbent staff.

try

The awardee's HR staff is interviewing the incumbent staff.

And here is another "trap." When you use "in the process of," you are saying it is happening now; so why not avoid the extra wording and go straight to the action? This revision also tightens the sentence structure.

Conclusion—Here's a note of warning, however. Take care when translating verb-noun constructions into action. You'll soon discover that not all are candidates. The corrected wording must make sense.

And let "process" serve its intended grammatical purpose in a sentence, not as a mask to a perfectly good action word.

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.



Business Development Solutions to Grow Your Company

Are you tired of...

- ▶ Using a broken proposal development process?
- ▶ Lacking corporate commitment and support?
- ▶ Working too many nights and weekends?
- ▶ Your low win rate?

Call Rainmakerz Consulting now (202-255-2355) for a **FREE** Proposal Review to help **grow your company.**



Join the 65 companies who have won **\$57 billion in new business**, achieved **higher win rates**, and made **dramatic business development efficiency improvements.**

APMP-NCA PROPOSAL BASICS BOOT CAMP

Maryann Lesnick, AM.APMP



In 2007, APMP-NCA had a vision to hold a Boot Camp for individuals or organizations new to the proposal development industry. In 2008, the vision came to fruition, and for the second year the APMP-NCA Proposal Basics Boot Camp was held on April 24, 2009, at Northrop Grumman's Colshire facility in McLean, Virginia. Once again, the event was a huge success!

The objective of the Proposal Basics Boot Camp is to provide a training day for individuals and organizations new to the proposal field. It introduces the fundamentals of the proposal process and the tools and techniques that professionals use in this field.

The event also recognizes and supports our APMP-NCA corporate partners, limiting presentation slots to only representatives of our corporate partner companies.

This year's program again had three tracks that registrants selected at time of registration: *Proposal Management*, *Proposal Coordination*, and *Proposal Writing*. Each track had six sessions, for a total of 18 sessions—a full day of learning. Participants were free to move from one track to another, space permitting.

Like last year, the event was SOLD OUT. More than 240 individuals attended, and the rooms were filled to capacity. Topics ranged from *The Coordinator's Handbook—Everything You Need to Know to Hit the Ground Running*, to *Using Industry Best Practices for Improving Proposal Operations—Tried and True Processes*, and *Proposal*

Writing Made Simple—Conquer the Challenges That Confine You. A panel of four speakers provided quick tips and tricks for job efficiency, ways to work with editors and graphic artists, and insights into career options in the session: *From Proposal Coordinator to Rock Star—Achieve Fame Without Losing All Your Hair*. In a repeat performance in the Proposal Manager and Proposal Coordinator tracks, three vendor companies demonstrated technologies that support our profession in *Tool Time—The Latest Technologies for Proposal Management and Development*.

APMP members who hold APMP accreditations earned five CEUs for participation in this event.

A special “thank you” goes to Northrop Grumman for hosting the event for the second year and to the 22 presenters who so freely shared with us their time, talent, and wisdom. Much appreciation goes to Robert Lohfeld, the Boot Camp Planning Committee chair person, and the 25+ individuals who worked hard for 4 months to prepare for this event. The Planning Committee was organized into five subcommittees—Program Subcommittee (led this year by Marcia Horting), Facility and Catering Subcommittee (led by Amy Barden), Logistics Subcommittee (led by Bob Miller), Publicity Subcommittee (led by Pat Kent), and Project Management Subcommittee (led by Maryann Lesnick).

For those who would like to participate in planning this event in 2010, watch for news later this year. We welcome your participation and new ideas!

“Like last year, the event was SOLD OUT. More than 240 individuals attended, and the rooms were filled to capacity.”

“Maryann Lesnick, AM.APMP, PMP, has more than 20 years of proposal development experience. She currently serves as Vice President of Proposal for Base Technologies, Inc. in McLean Virginia. Maryann is the chairperson for the upcoming 2010 APMP-NCA Proposal Basics Boot Camp.”



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**Another exciting and informative
APMP NCA May 20th
Roundtable Discussion!**

VIRTUAL PRO- POSAL CENTERS: WILL THEY WORK FOR YOU?

Roundtable Committee

The May 20 Roundtable event, Virtual Proposal Centers (VPCs), was another winning event. More than 130 people attended this informative event, chaired by Lisa Pafe, Director of Corporate Development and Proposal Operations for Ace Info Solutions, Inc. who served as panel moderator and Tim O'Connor, Senior Vice President of Business Development at AOC Key Solutions.

Panelists included Anna Boudreau, Director of the Proposal Development Center at L-3 Communications; Alan Richey, Vice President, Office

of Information Services at MAXIMUS, Inc.; and Michael Scruggs, Microsoft Project Center Manager at Microsoft.

The speakers provided three different perspectives on how VPCs offer a structure and process to assemble, customize, polish, and publish a winning proposal. This capability is important as it becomes more expensive and time consuming to bring together the best business development and proposal writing teams from geographically diverse companies. Panel participants provided lessons learned on creating the most efficient and effective VPC environments and giving teams the ability to collaborate, share knowledge, and manage version control on multiple documents from multiple locations 24x7.

The trio of presentations provided the many benefits of VPCs and resulted in a lengthy and engrossing Q&A session.

The Roundtable Committee would like to thank everyone involved in making this event a success. We look forward to seeing you at the July 15, 2009 Program – Proposal Centers of Excellence. We hope you plan to attend this educational Roundtable event!

“The speakers provided three different perspectives on how VPCs offer a structure and process to assemble, customize, polish, and publish a winning proposal.”



Left to Right:

Alan Richey, Vice President, Office of Information Services, MAXIMUS;

Lisa Pafe, Director of Corporate Development and Proposal Operations, Ace Info Solutions;

Beth Wingate, AM.APMP, NCA Chapter President and Managing Director, Lohfeld Consulting Group, Inc.;

DeAnna Boudreau, Director Proposal Development Center, L-3 Communications; and

Michael Scruggs, Microsoft Project Center Manager, Microsoft.

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We specialize in helping companies create winning proposals. As the premier Proposal Services consulting firm focused exclusively on government markets, we provide expert assistance to government contractors and help them bid and win highly competitive procurements.

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- Pricing/Cost Specialists
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- Aerospace engineering
- Systems engineering
- Professional services
- Other technology-related disciplines

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Note From the Editor:

Please take a few minutes and let me know:

What keeps you up at night as a proposal professional?

What articles and tips would you like to see in this *Executive Summary*?

Our *Executive Summary* team will be happy to get your feedback. I can be reached at Olessia@apmpnca.org or at 240.246.5305.

Olessia Smotrova-Taylor
Executive Summary
Newsletter Chair and
Editor

BUILDING A PROPOSAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE: INTERVIEW WITH BRUCE DENORMANDIE

Olessia Smotrova-Taylor

Many companies reach a point when they consider creating a dedicated proposal center. It usually happens when they have a constant volume of bids, and they are looking for a more efficient way to develop proposals and win consistently. They want to scale up, grow aggressively, and create a true business development engine.

In the course of my career, I have worked in a number of proposal centers, so I have seen the best and the worst of them—and anything inbetween. So, when I met Bruce DeNormandie, Director, Proposal Development at GTSI Corp., and we started discussing his work, I realized that he had done something extraordinary. He built a highly successful proposal center from the ground up in an organization undergoing a challenging transition from selling commodities to bidding on complex solutions. I thought that sharing his experience and lessons learned through this interview would benefit the business development community.

Olessia Smotrova-Taylor (O):

Bruce, how did your career lead you to GTSI and building the proposal center?

Bruce DeNormandie (B):

I started in the IT field with Digital-Equipment Corporation. My career is best described as “zigzagging” back and forth from staff job to line job. I got exposure to both specific and general functions. I was in the trenches and moved up the line, gaining the understanding of what people have to do to get their jobs done.

During one of my zigzags, I moved into capture and proposal management. After my company was sold twice and eventually acquired by HP, I decided it was time to go out on my own. GTSI

recruited me five years ago after my short tenure growing a proposal capability at an 8(a) firm, so I submitted to them a business plan to grow their proposal center.

When I joined GTSI, it was built on commodity sales. Staying ahead of the current trend, the company decided to expand its portfolio with services and solutions. At the time, GTSI used to go after two to three bids a year. They were bidding on large IT product-oriented GWACs and IDIQs. Upon winning a contract, they passed it to the sales department to “go sell products.” GTSI did everything in-house with a core group of six to seven people—a director, a capture manager, a pricing person, two hardware solution architects and some engineering support personnel pulled in when needed. They did well at preparing for when an RFP would hit the street. They understood how to respond to the technical requirements. But, they didn’t have professional proposal managers or other support. They even developed their own graphics in Visio and did their own editing.

This business development group was successful at what they did when they went after a couple of bids a year, but when you need to crank out 4, 5, or 10 proposals a month, it wasn’t scalable, and not as efficient or competitive as it could be.

O: So, how did you start streamlining and reorganizing everything?

B: Well, I knew that I needed the right people, systems, and tools to create a scalable organization. I got nearly a blank check to start the whole process, because I had very supportive upper management. This was the most important thing, senior management buying into the vision.

I started with the people. First of all I added a professional graphic artist, editor, and desktop publisher. I also brought in professional proposal managers who already had Shipley experience. **If you start out with a process and don't have the people who know the process, you're going to spend too much effort to retrain.**

I have to say, I didn't hire 20 people right out the gate. As the volume increased, we brought in additional resources as needed to handle the increased flow of RFPs. I also trained the people who were already there. It wasn't a straightfor-

ward process, as we couldn't stop doing all the proposal work—so we had to grow using existing people, working with the way they did things, while educating and training them.

GTSI Corp. provides a Technology Lifecycle Management (TLM) approach to IT infrastructure solutions delivered through professional and financial services. GTSI is headquartered in Northern Virginia, outside of Washington, D.C and was named as one of "Best Places to Work" in 2009. Further information about the Company is available at www.GTSI.com.

As I brought people in, I developed job descriptions for them that fit well within the new processes. This was a challenge because prior to this, the job responsibilities were not clearly defined because the folks here did everything themselves, including graphics and editing. Now, instead of doing everything from A to Z, our people were able to focus. For instance, the engineers could focus on engineering instead of editing. I also got people involved with APMP so they understood there was a professional world out there and that it wasn't just a temporary job.

O: What kinds of qualities did you look for when you were hiring the people?

B: The main quality I seek is teamwork. It is extremely important to me that the people I hire work well in concert with other people. Proposal work is stressful enough, so I look for someone who can provide leadership without arrogance, and create harmony with great team chemistry. They have to have the skills, talent, situational understanding, training, and knowledge of the Shipley process. Organizational ability is another important aspect of this work. You have to be organized to run a disciplined process, but be flexible and interpret what is needed along the way.

O: How exactly did you grow the team?

B: I realized that if you were going to do something that was scalable, you had to handle the production first. I promoted a proposal specialist to a production manager. We went and hired a desktop publisher, a technical editor, and a graphic artist.

I first focused on assessing the staff's skills for

whether this was a good fit and on retooling some of the people who were already here. We had a proposal coordinator who had potential to be a proposal manager, so I promoted her within a year. I also started interviewing proposal managers with experience in Shipley process. In the first year, I hired two of them. About two years into it all, we had four capture managers and five proposal managers.

O: How did you go about establishing the processes?

B: Once we had all the people on board, we then focused on making sure everyone had a clear role. We established a standard operating procedures manual that included job descriptions. We also defined the various steps in proposal development to institute the process discipline—from capture to hand-off; kick off; pink, red, and gold teams; and white glove. As an advocate of Shipley, I adapted the process to our needs—I don't use all 96 steps, it's more like 24 or 25. This became a standard baseline for how we handle an RFP.

We use a flexible approach. If we have a six-week RFP, we might use a full process. If we have something that needs to be turned around in a week, we still go through everything, but compact the process and reduce the number of reviews. We are very structured in regards to having a start and a stop. To instill quality, you can't depend on the final review—you have to engineer excellence throughout the entire process. For example, we have a standard package for kickoff that includes all the materials such as the compliance matrix, annotated outlines, storyboards, and so on. **That's how we reached our significant win rate of 70–75%.**

O: That's excellent! This is much higher than the industry average— and in fact, this is one of the highest rates one can get as a company, since you are always going to deal with the factor of price so it is hard to go much higher than that. How did you end up structuring your proposal center?

B: Currently, our organization is scaled up and it's geared to produce a significant amount of material. In our business development and proposal group, there are 30 people, with directors, capture

“ Now, instead of doing everything from A to Z, our people were able to focus. For instance, the engineers could focus on engineering instead of editing. I also got people involved with APMP so they understood there was a professional world out there and that it wasn't just a temporary job. ”

managers, solution architects, a pricing manager, proposal managers, and a service solutions team that coordinates with our professional services organization. We have an intern here who helps with production, and we've been grooming him to become a proposal specialist. We also have a really large sales section, with about 250+ people (which is half of what we used to have), as we are transitioning from being a commodity company to the solutions and services company.

We have five levels of proposals in our company. The first level is general proposals and white papers—very low-end, mostly services and product-related offerings that we sell off of contracts. We crank out 10–15 of these types of proposals a week. That's probably accountable for about 50% of our revenue because that's the type of contracts we have. Level two are proposals for more complex service solutions. Level three are task orders. Level four are solicited RFPs. Level five is the large GWACs and IDIQs, which some companies call “strategic bids,” where you need a capture manager.

Our company is a little more complex than many other companies out there. Others may only focus on the \$5–20M IT infrastructure labor contracts or go after commodity deals or the \$150–200M large O&M contracts. We do it all. As we grow and focus on these different levels, we want to make sure that everything we put out is a quality product.

O: When you say you have multiple directors but five levels of proposals, do those directors somehow correlate to the five levels?

B: No, the four directors correlate to pricing, and solution architecture, proposal development, service solutions, and capture management. Then, we have a senior director that heads everything.

O: Speaking of processes, you mentioned how you write processes and job descriptions. How exactly do you get it done?

B: Developing process and job descriptions is an iterative process. In proposals, the challenge is not so much the interaction between a proposal manager and a capture manager or the proposal

manager and the technical editor, but the interfaces as we bring more people into the fold and start developing complex solutions using the engineering resources from other departments that never took part in a proposal-development process before. They have to know how to interface with us—what they should do during kickoffs, stand-ups, reviews, debriefing, and the review recovery process. This is what we constantly revise as we add new people. Maintaining a quality driven proposal process is an on-going training process with people that do not deal with it on a day to day basis. We don't have dedicated process people—we have workgroups that come together across functional areas to articulate their own and company requirements, and we put them into the workflow.

O: Did you put together specific processes for each of the five proposal levels you defined?

B: Working together, the management team established processes and gate (or step) reviews for each of the five levels—starting with opportunity review and evaluation criteria and into proposal development. You have a sales rep that's working for a customer, and they learned that the government is looking to expand their network-storage environment. So, before it goes out as a competitive RFP, we'll inform the customer that “you have a contract with us, so we can get our engineering people to work with you.” This results in our writing a proposal to add scope to an existing contract to get that work done. This effort flows through the engineering department. Our engineers interview the customer or sit down with a sales rep, and then put the proposal together.

O: Did you develop a proposal collateral library to speed up proposal development?

B: Yes. For the level 1 and 2 proposals, we develop material but don't use a commercial tool for organizing it yet. It's sorted and kept in files, based on customer and what the material covers, more as a best practice. Almost all our solicited proposals are custom jobs, but as we go through our reviews, we capture things like program management office descriptions, or good language to describe our large warehouse integration and distribution facility in Chantilly. We give our authors and writers a sample of the material at

“Maintaining a quality driven proposal process is an on-going training process with people that do not deal with it on a day to day basis.”

“Almost all our solicited proposals are custom jobs, but as we go through our reviews, we capture things like program management office descriptions, or good language to describe our large warehouse integration and distribution facility in Chantilly.”

kickoff together with the writing assignments.

O: Do you retain resumes, past performances, or graphics?

B: Oh yes. We have a graphics database, and a past performance database in SharePoint—and we even have a dedicated past performance specialist, which is unusual for a company of our size. When we complete a project, the past performance specialist interviews the project manager and puts that information into the library, including full past performances and cameos.

O: What kind of tools do you use in your proposal center?

B: Right now we have a homegrown workflow and collaboration tool. Because we have a production support team of desktop publishers and graphic artists, they have very tight control over versions and workflow processing. However, because the company has grown and expanded, and we have more remote people now, we are currently working on integrating Microsoft SharePoint with our proposal workflow tool.

For the RFP side, we recently initiated the use of XRP Solutions' Meridian that helps us shred RFPs and automate action items, compliance matrices, outlines, and storyboards. We also use the CRM tool from salesforce.com. Because we have five levels, we examine the tools specific to each level and its processes.

As to interoffice communications, we use Microsoft Communicator with its instant messaging capability. We use Live Meeting widely, and we're pushing our people to use video cameras used with Live Meeting.

O: What kind of training do you give to your proposal center staff?

B: We do both the internal training and send people to Shipley classes. Now all our capture and proposal managers are Shipley-trained. We also get other training that's more specific to our proposal people's skill sets. For example, I have been looking into additional graphic artist training with Mike Parkinson and the 24-Hour Company. We also plan to get personnel from

other departments to take Shipley training, but that's on the horizon.

O: What do you do to get quality consultants pre-positioned when you need surge support?

B: Well first of all, I encourage all of my proposal managers to participate in the APMP functions, to network, and to get our name out there as a professional organization; and most importantly, to learn about different consulting companies available to help during proposal surges, so that we can get them pre-qualified ahead of time. We have lined up a number of firms with agreements and pre-negotiated prices. We have matured to the point where we can manage the budgets very closely, plan ahead, and forecast much better. When something is released early, we have processes in place by which we can rearrange priorities, substitute people, and get coverage in-house.

Interdepartmental communication is critical in getting consultant help quickly. We do it through bid review meetings and weekly interdepartmental reports on everything we're doing, such as the opportunities in the pipeline, in process, and pending award. We also invite cross-functional people from throughout the company to participate in kickoffs so people can learn the expectations and what resources are needed.

O: How does a company decide when it needs a proposal development center?

B: Well, it is a complex issue and every company handles it differently. It all comes down to the business case. The company has to determine where it is going, what type of business they want to be in, and would a proposal center suit their goals. You have to understand the basis of your growth to create the kind of organization that can best support the business you're in.

Here, because we had so many contracts, we had to handle a high volume of white papers and proposals, and have the flexibility to respond to multiple \$500K to \$1M task orders, and \$5–500M RFPs. On the other hand, I have worked in the past for a \$15B company where we went after one or two deals a quarter, with only three opportunity managers.

“ I encourage all of my proposal managers to participate in the APMP functions, to network, and to get our name out there as a professional organization. ”

“ We have lined up a number of firms with agreements and pre-negotiated prices. We have matured to the point where we can manage the budgets very closely, plan ahead, and forecast much better. ”

You have to ask yourself, what is the volume of the opportunities, and then look at the skill sets and the tasks at hand. I hired a desktop publisher, a graphic artist, and an editor because I knew that we were preparing to handle the production volume of 20 proposals a month. I also started out with two to three proposal managers based on the throughput.

We also grew the team, so we had to invest into developing reoccurring materials in a repository database instead of starting our responses from scratch. But, it wasn't until we saw the volume that we started to maintain the best effort descriptions of our warehouse and similar pieces.

Some large companies do their proposals and business development in sectors. Then again, there may be conflicts between proposal centers and the sectors because of deciding who pays the bills. There are some sectors that don't want to pay the costs for using the proposal center, and they prefer to develop business on their own. The downside for using the proposal center is that it can be expensive internally to the company and at what level do you carry the cost. So it doesn't work in all places.

O: What kinds of challenges have you encountered?

B: Because our sales organization is so large, the biggest challenge for our proposal center is to constantly make sure that the deals we get are fully qualified. As sales managers look to make their quotas, you get a lot of opportunity reviews that turn into education and coaching.

We now incorporate opportunity qualification into our training nationwide, and we also have instituted a gate review process. We also initiated an overall culture change. As a result, the quality of the opportunities brought to my attention now is so much better than the deals from 5 years ago. I don't see as many deals as I used to, but they are better deals.

Sorting through people has also been tough—although many have the skills, they also have to have the temperament to fit into a kind of a meat-grinder operation where you have to get along with everyone. My career has been about personal development, so I have been coaching

and counseling people and trying to get the right people to work well within the framework of a high-volume throughput organization. My biggest challenge was getting the right group of people to work in this environment and getting them to have the same commitment to excellence and passion that I have.

O: Any other lessons learned you could share with a company that's just starting its proposal center?

B: Well, you can't get people to adopt a process overnight—especially in a larger company. The way I did it was to hire people who understood what I wanted to do, and managed the pipeline as the gate-keeper. Then, I slowly expanded my sphere of process development and education by bringing in other constituents periodically, educating four to five people at a time. The challenge has been maintaining their mind share. When you are in front of them, you have their total attention. When you walk away, you're lucky if you maintain one small portion of their mind share. The whole success of educating people depends on how often you interface with them. If I have a person who deals with me daily, I can educate them and work with them. It is a lot trickier when you have hundreds of people you see once or twice a month, so keep it in perspective and don't get frustrated.

I am a full believer in maturity management: you don't get to level four overnight, you start with level 1. You have to crawl before you can walk. You can't change the company overnight. You have to be able to do it in incremental steps. It is also important to get the authority with a lot of control and the financial discretion to create that change.

Olessia Smotrova-Taylor is president of OST Global Solutions (www.ostglobalsolutions.com), a consulting and training company that helps 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. She teaches popular webinars on proposal and capture topics – find out more information at www.ostglobalsolutions.com/training/schedule. You can reach her at service@ostglobalsolutions.com or at 301.384.3350.

“ We also initiated an overall culture change. As a result, the quality of the opportunities brought to my attention now is so much better than the deals from 5 years ago. I don't see as many deals as I used to, but they are better deals. ”

Special Points of Interest

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Anyone interested in a Roundtable topic is invited to attend our Roundtables. 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!

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Mark Your Calendar for 2009 APMP-NCA Events

<i>date (2009)</i>	<i>subject</i>
July 15	Roundtable, A Proposal Center of Excellence: What Can It Do for You?
September 16	Roundtable, Business Development Pipeline
October 13	NCA Professional Day
November 18	Roundtable, Your Personal Business Network



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Larry's unique orals training flows from his real world experience "feeling the heat." He headed the Pentagon's top briefing team, responsible for daily briefings to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. He was later detailed to the State Department to "sell" controversial policies to critical, and frequently hostile, audiences. Author of The Shortcut to Persuasive Presentations, Larry is cited in several books and publications as one of the top presentation coaches in the US.

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I consider Larry Tracy the foremost orals trainer in the Washington, D.C. area. He conducts all orals training for our clients
Christopher Stahl, CEO, Govg4i

PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT



Shlomo Katz

“In other words, protected information is no longer protected when it becomes general or public knowledge.”

One of the benefits of a “proposal center of excellence” is that it centralizes much of your company’s procurement “memory” in one place. Done right, it will prevent the need for reinventing technical approaches and pricing strategies from one proposal to the next.

Ironically, those very benefits lead to serious legal challenges. While some of your employees may remain with you for their entire careers, you must assume in today’s highly mobile society that most of them will not. Thus, a proposal center of excellence exposes a vast amount of sensitive business information to employees who may be out the door next week.

What can a company do to protect itself?

The first, and most obvious, step is to have employees sign non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). At a minimum, an NDA will prohibit an employee from disclosing specific company information outside of the company, or even inside the company, except on a need-to-know basis. Of course, the NDA must have teeth, i.e., it should entitle the company to all rights and remedies available under law. And, it should entitle the company to obtain an injunction in any court to put an immediate stop to any improper disclosure.

What information should the NDA protect? It is not practical to prohibit an employee from disclosing every bit of information that he or she learns in the course of his or her employment. Rather, your goal should be to protect confidential information. The types of information that are considered confidential will vary from one company to the next. However, the information is such that would provide a competitive advantage to a person or entity outside of the company.

In order to qualify as “confidential information,” the information must be . . . in a word, confidential. The holder of trade secret or other confidential information can lose its proprietary rights in protected information if the information is disclosed without protecting the confidentiality of the disclosure. In other words, protected information is no longer protected when it becomes general or public knowledge. For instance, when the information has been disclosed in a trade journal or left behind on a seat in the Metro, it is not likely to be treated as confidential. It doesn’t matter whether the disclosure was intentional or not; once the information is in the public domain, it arguably has lost its confidential status. See, e.g., Digital Healthcare, Inc., B- 296489, 2005 CPD ¶ 166 (information available on contractor’s website is not confidential).

Furthermore, even before the information has become public, it may be difficult to argue that it is confidential if you do not take commercially reasonable steps to protect its confidentiality. For starters, the information should be marked “confidential.” Information on a server can be protected by requiring users who log-on or who call-up certain information to accept a confidentiality statement before gaining access. If every employee in the company can log-on to the server that houses your proposal “memory” and can print, copy and email those materials at will, you may be hard-pressed to argue that the material was confidential. It is important, therefore, to control your employees’ access to information that is confidential. It goes without saying that you also should control the access of your sub-contractors and teaming partners to information in your proposal center of excellence. See, e.g., Accent Service Co., B-299888, 2007 CPD ¶ 169 (information was no longer confidential after it was disclosed to visitors to the contractor’s office).

Another strategy is to have your employees sign non-compete agreements which limit their ability to become, or work for, competitors after they leave your company. Again, a non-compete agreement should provide for both legal and injunctive remedies.

A word of caution about non-compete agree-

ments. While laws vary from state-to-state, some courts may consider non-competes to be against public policy. Thus, in order to be enforceable, a non-compete agreement should be written as narrowly as possible (in scope and duration) to protect the employer's legitimate business interests without hamstringing the employee from earning a living in his or her chosen profession in the future.

Finally, an aside relating to non-disclosure and non-compete agreements. It is in an employer's interest to be sure that its new hires are not bringing confidential information from their former employers to their new jobs. Employers can, and

do, sue their competitors when former employees take confidential information to the competitors, and damages can easily be in the millions of dollars. The former employer may even seek an injunction to keep the new employer from participating in a procurement because the new employer has been tainted by purloined confidential information. Whether you win or lose, such litigation is expensive, and it distracts contractors from doing what they want to be doing--winning contracts and making money.

So, good luck with that new proposal center of excellence. Just be sure that you are taking the right legal steps to protect your expensive investment.

Shlomo D. Katz is Counsel in the Washington, DC office of the international law firm of Brown Rudnick LLP, a Corporate Sponsor of APMP-NCA. If you have any questions about these or other proposal or government contracts issues, please contact him at 202.536.1753 or at skatz@brownrudnick.com



About Red Team Consulting

Red Team Consulting is a woman-owned small business providing a wide range of consulting services in support of federal contracting activities. Our mission is to help our clients grow.

We provide a wide array of services including:

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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

New Member Profile



Name

Kathryn Bernardo-Preston

How did you originally hear about APMP?

Through one of the APMP-NCA members (Ann Unitas) who invited me to join her at a meeting.

What is your current BD role/responsibility?

To develop new business in key verticals and strategic client bases.

What do you hope to get out of membership and NCA affiliation?

Networking, learning, and building a cadre of PM professionals who can help develop great proposals.

Company

P3Solutions (www.p3solutions.net)

What made you decide to join?

To develop in-house expertise on proposal development and management.

What is your biggest BD challenge/issue?

Being equipped to respond to proposals with short turn-around times.

Fun Fact

I love ice skating, Pilates, spending time with my family, and learning.

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APMP-NCA Board of Directors Meetings are Open to Members

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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 Lou Robinson 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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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.

Job Listings—Find Your Next Proposal Management Job

Job Title	Proposal Manager
Company	Aquilent
Department	Human Resource
Contact	Janet Oquendo 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	The Hanover Research Council Marcelle Wood 1801 K st NW Suite 325 L Washington , DC 20006
	mwood@hanoverresearch.com
Date Posted	04-17-2009

Job Title	Proposal Coordinator/ Specialist
Company	Ace Info Solutions, Inc.
Department	Proposal Operations
Contact	Ace Info Solutions, Inc. Jaya Sapre 11490 Commerce Park Drive, Suite 140 Reston, VA 20191
	jsapre@aceinfosolutions.com
Date Posted	05-05-2009

Job Title	Proposal Writer/Technical Writer
Company	Reznick Group
Department	Government Services Manage- ment Consulting
Contact	Reznick Group Chris Van Bavel 7700 Old Georgetown Rd Bethesda, MD 20814
	chris.vanbavel@reznickgroup.com
Date Posted	05-06-2009

Job Title	Proposal Manager
Company	Project Performance Corporation
Department	Corporate Communications
Contact	Project Performance Corporation 703-506-3204 1760 Old Meadow Rd McLean, VA 22102
	sbarber@ppc.com
Date Posted	05-08-09

Job Title	Proposal Manager
Company	ArrowPoint Corporation
Department	Recruiting
Contact	ArrowPoint Corporation Jennifer Straccia 5999 Stevenson Avenue Suite 403 Alexandria, VA 22304
	jen_straccia@arrowpoint.net
Date Posted	05-21-2009

Job Title	Proposal/Technical Writer
Company	TeAM Inc
Department	
Contact	TeAM Inc Human Resources Manager 5113 Leesburg Pike, Sky 4, Suite 808 Falls Church, VA 22041
	tjohnson@teamconsult.com
Date Posted	05-21-2009

Job Title	Marketing Director
Company	AOC Key Solutions, Inc. (KSI)
Department	
Contact	AOC Key Solutions, Inc. (KSI) Timothy K. O'Connor 14030 Thunderbolt Place Suite 700 Chantilly, VA 20151
	toconnor@aoc-ksi.com
Date Posted	06-18-2009

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