



EXECUTIVE summary

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This Issue's Theme: **New Market – How Do We Face Fiscal Constraints And The Increased Competitive Edge**

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New Market – How Do We Face Fiscal Constraints And The Increased Competitive Edge

by Olessia Smotrova-Taylor

The government contracting market is somewhat chaotic, although it breathed a sigh of relief when Congress agreed on the spending bill, preventing government shutdown. We should see a barrage of procurement activity between now and the end of the fiscal year.

And, although we have narrowly avoided one train wreck, there still remains the \$85 billion in automatic budget cuts known as sequestration. Over time, this may affect some businesses more than others, depending on the specific contracts they hold or pursue. Companies, especially those in the DoD arena, should carefully check market forecasts and their portfolios to dampen the hard hits by diversifying their customer base. If they have not strategized and done market research already, it is an urgent priority now.

There is also the ever-present Lowest Price, Technically Acceptable (LPTA) evaluation criteria, where quality of performance erodes due to over-emphasis of “cheap.” Everyone is becoming a commodity no matter how complex the services they offer are. Some contracting officers believe that each contractor is just like the next one, might as well pick the least expensive. However, it is not only the



contracting shops' fault. Companies fail to differentiate themselves, and they pay for it in lost deals and profits.

Differentiation starts with measures to avoid LPTA during capture while interfacing with the customer. LPTA is often inappropriate, and companies have to make a concerted effort to prove it to the government. It means an early capture start when one can still talk to the customer.

There should also be a capture effort to start with. *The necessity of running capture to avoid unnecessary losses is akin to having a doctor wash their hands to avoid spreading more disease and causing iatrogenic illnesses.* It seems unfathomable that so many companies still do not invest in proper pre-proposal preparation. They cultivate bad habits that have a higher probability of

disastrous results. The current market favors the sharp and the quick, and it is unforgiving.

Speaking of differentiation and not using “hope-to-win” as a strategy, proposals have to get much better in several additional areas to maintain the competitive edge. This means consciously applying proposal persuasion techniques such as win themes with detailed benefits and proof, customer-focused graphics, professional presentation, and so on. Do not settle for “good enough” as it may not get you the wins you got last year.

And, now we come to the biggest challenge of all: the sinking profits. *According to the Grant Thornton's 18th Annual Government Contractor Survey, 60 percent of the participants reported either no profit or profit in the 1–5*

The current day's challenge is how to do more with less, while achieving spectacular results in a much tougher environment.

percent range. This compares with 37 percent in the prior year's survey. With all the need to differentiate yourself through capture and proposals, how does one scrape up enough money to invest in business development?

The current day's challenge is how to do more with less, while achieving spectacular results in a much tougher environment. Bid and Proposal budgets are becoming even tighter, leaving fewer options for business developers to bring in consulting help. Companies do not invest in professional business development, leaving these duties to untrained operations personnel. Without creating the value in the customer's eyes, the only option is to keep cutting costs in order to win.

How do you succeed in this new market?

Gone are the cumbersome processes. The new approach is to run lean techniques, which produce faster results. Every process has indispensable steps, and those that can be sacrificed with caution. The remaining steps have to boil down to the level of a checklist, so your staff does not

spend valuable time on planning repeatable tasks, or reworking and scrambling because someone forgot to perform a vital task. Companies need to invest in a process book to save significant money in every pursuit thereafter.

Just outsourcing business development to project personnel is a recipe for stunted growth. Project personnel need to be trained in business development first, because it is an actual profession. These professionals need skills to find and recognize opportunities, support capture efforts, brainstorm to develop solutions, write persuasive proposal sections, and conceptualize graphics. This way, a company can achieve high growth rates with its existing resources, avoid burning out its dedicated proposal staff, and cut expenses by bringing in consultants only for targeted tasks.

Consultants are there to help companies maintain a sharp edge in this highly competitive market. Not every consultant is the same, as they are not a commodity, just like government contractors. It is important to get the best ones when you are looking for a winning difference. A great consultant with experience at multiple companies has the snapshot of the industry that few employees who stay at one company possess. Great consultants adhere to higher standards, making them more effective and efficient at what they do. But there is a price tag associated with their use, and it feels

like an unattainable luxury for many companies in the lower-profit range or revenue bracket.

The secret to giving your capture and proposals an edge is to target consultant use to the specific areas where they can produce the most impact. For example, have a consultant facilitate your win themes and strategy development session, or develop your solution. Have them outline your proposal to ensure it is compliant out of the gate. Invite them to run your reviews, to raise your proposal quality a whole grade. Have them evaluate your proposals and BD processes as a whole to give recommendations you can implement right away, to improve the way you go after business.

In a nutshell, in this world of chaos and fiscal constraints, you need to rethink how to go about developing business. You have to be aggressive and smart. You have to develop new habits. And, you have to pull all the stops within your financial means to differentiate yourself and beat your competition.

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Proposed LinkedIn NCA Discussion Group Guidelines – Updated February 9, 2013

The following guidelines will be posted to the NCA LinkedIn discussion group upon approval by the NCA Board. Once the guidelines are posted, an email blast will be sent to the group, informing them of the new guidelines and requesting compliance. The guidelines will also be shared with APMP International as a courtesy.

NCA LinkedIn Guidelines

Please adhere to the following LinkedIn guidelines for APMP National Capital Area Chapter (NCA) group discussions/polls, promotions, jobs, and requests to join.

Discussions/Polls

1. Discussions, information sharing, questions and answers, and other dialogue are highly encouraged. Please include the content of your discussion in the discussion title and details, and not via a link to an external website. A link to an external website can be only provided if the content of the discussion doesn't fit in the allotted word count, and additional materials can be found at the website. A link can also be provided pointing to additional materials helpful to the discussion.
2. Do not insult, berate, or lecture others. Respect their views and beliefs and always consider the impact of your contributions.
3. Avoid discussions and polls that are not directly relevant to the group (including advertising, self-promotions, or spam) will be deleted by the NCA Group Manager.

Promotions

1. Product, service, and event promotions are allowed, but can be posted in Discussions only if they do not detract from the overall quality of the group dialogue. They have to clearly benefit the members. They should be structured in a way that promotes dialogue, feedback, and other discussion responses.
2. APMP-NCA event Promotions are strongly encouraged in Discussions.
3. Other promotions posted to Discussions, that are not relevant to this group and that don't follow the guidelines above, will be deleted.

Jobs

1. Job postings are encouraged, but must be relevant to the group or will be deleted.
2. Please remove job postings once they have been filled.

Requests to Join

1. We welcome business development professionals from all job functions, all seniority levels, and all geographies who have a genuine interest in contributing to the group.
2. LinkedIn members with no obvious connection to this group, or those flagged as having zero (0) connections, may not be allowed to join the group.

We reserve the right to block or exclude any LinkedIn member who repeatedly infringes upon these group guidelines.

Participate. The most important guideline for this or any social media group is to participate. Please generate Discussions, Polls, Promotions, or Jobs and "Like", "Comment", "Follow", "Share", "Flag" (Promotions/Job), or "Reply Privately" as appropriate to increase the value for you and other group members.

Suggestions? These guidelines have been established to increase group participation and value for current and future group members. If you have any suggestions for improving the group, including amendments to these guidelines, please contact Chris Simmons, LinkedIn NCA Group Manager at chris@rainmakerz.biz, or 202-255-2355, or Bridget Skelly, APMP-NCA Marketing Chair at bridgets@apmpnca.org or 703.431.4423.



How Do I Win During Sequestration?

by Mike Parkinson

Expect fewer opportunities and stiffer competition in 2013 for Government contracts. Layoffs, budget cuts, and price shoot-outs will be commonplace. To win in 2013, you need strategies. Consider this “4-D” approach:



1. Diversify. Can your existing solutions help commercial companies? If so, refocus (and if needed, rebrand) your products and services to support small and large commercial companies, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions. There is likely an underserved niche or an unanswered challenge that you can solve with your existing solutions.

Consider this strategy to change your pricing. Rob Ransone of Ransone Associates supported Army’s Light Observation Helicopter proposal. Hughes Helicopter Company underbid the competition with the understanding that some of the technology developed could be used in a commercial version of the helicopters. It was a win-win-win: The Army bought helicopters at cost and saved money. Hughes Helicopter Company won the bid

and used the R&D to make a commercially viable product. Commercial businesses had access to a new, innovative helicopter.

2. Differentiate. Clearly define why your company and solution are different so your customers can picture these differences in their minds. Showing your superiority should not be the main focus of your marketing; showing your uniqueness should be the top objective. Humans pay most attention to that which is different. Contrast is key. When your customers think of you, what immediately pops into their minds? Is it clearly different from your competition? (If you do not like your current differentiators, change them. It takes time but consistent exposure coupled with validation will help your new differentiators stick). Many Government contractors will advertise their IT services, systems integration, or innovative solutions. These are not differentiators if these services are similar to their competitors. Once you define your differentiators, build them into your brand. Better yet, make them your brand.

For example, what pops into your mind when you think of Google, Apple, or FedEx? Compare those companies with their competitors. Look at FedEx versus UPS. Each company does an excellent job differentiating their brand even though they offer similar services and products. Visit their websites to learn how these companies spread distinct messages.

3. Design. Design is the first thing influencers, decision makers, and evaluators see. It quickly differentiates us, communicates our professionalism, increases recollection (38 percent—Harvard University) and understanding (200 percent—University of Wisconsin), and is proven to influence decision-making (43 percent—University of Minnesota School of Management). For example, the Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab asked 2,440 participants how they evaluated the credibility of websites they were shown. Almost half (46.1 percent) said the website’s design (color, graphics, layout, etc.) was the number one

How Do I Win During Sequestration

criterion for discerning the credibility of the presented material. Design is the fastest way to communicate characteristics of your solution and company. It influences perception, and perception is reality. (Download the first few chapters of Billion Dollar Graphics for more research and real-world examples).

4. Direction. Focus on capture/sales to influence the direction of the RFP, RFI, RFQ, TOR, and so on. Influencing the direction of the RFP greatly impacts the likelihood of success. This strategy is far from new. In fact, many RFPs are directed (biased) toward a specific

solution or solution provider. Meet with and listen to your Government contacts. Give them relevant whitepapers and other educational materials that help them develop an informed RFP. (For ideas, check out this list of 24 Ways to Influence RFPs.)

Mike Parkinson, PPF.APMP, is an internationally recognized visual communications expert and APMP Fellow. He is a partner at 24 Hour Company (24hrco.com) specializing in bid-winning proposal graphics. His Billion Dollar Graphics website (BillionDollarGraphics.com) and Get My Graphic website (GetMyGraphic.com) share best practices and helpful tools with proposal professionals. Mike Parkinson can be reached at mike@24hrco.com or call 703-533-7209.

NCA is Incorporating

Because of changes in the IRS laws, all chapters of APMP are required to incorporate. The NCA Board of Directors has updated the chapter's bylaws, which have not been revised since 2001. Papers are being filed for incorporation in accordance with IRS and guidance from APMP International. Look for the updated Bylaws published on the NCA website: <http://www.apmpnca.org/resources>.





Uncharted Territory

by Mark Amtower

We have faced tough budget situations and downsizing before. Many of us saw this in the early and mid-90s. We have also dealt with continuing resolutions before. In fact, many cannot remember when the last budget was passed on time.

However, a sequestration is uncharted waters—we have not been here before. Now add in travel and event restrictions, LPTA and FSSI, and we have a massive quagmire.

What this means for agency budgets I do not know and will not speculate on. As for what it means for marketing, sales, business development and overall business growth, I have a few thoughts.

We know the government will not stop spending, as they do not have the internal resources to do everything that needs to be done. Some contracts will proceed and task orders will occur. Competition for the new contracts, especially vehicles like the grand-daddy of them all, SEWP V, will be intense.

The first reaction to tough times by many companies was to see where cuts could be made. We have all seen the downsizing at various companies, often starting with BD and marketing. While this may be understandable to bottom-line focused C-levels, it will not help them retain or grow marketshare.



Retaining marketshare is job one. Growing marketshare, or planting the seeds for market growth, is job two.

So what are companies going to be able to do to retain current business and go after and win new business, especially in ways that incurs minimal cost?

There are several key activities that must continue regardless of employee count. And that means people will be asked to do more for the company, activities outside their respective areas of expertise.

Among these will be having all staff now wear marketing, sales and business development hats. Senior management must take an active role here and devote some resources to helping those less familiar with sales, marketing and BD to develop some skills in these areas.

This is not to say that an administrative assistant will become a BD pro, but there are certain things an admin

might be able to do if they find themselves in a situation – any situation – where a core strength of your company is mentioned.

Let us start with cross-training. Educating your employees about your business is something that should already be in place. Regardless of what each employee does, everyone should be educated on what your company provides to the government and how you sell it. Two methods of training can be easily implemented: ‘lunch and learn’ and webinars.

There are several key activities that must continue regardless of employee count. And that means people will be asked to do more for the company, activities outside their respective areas of expertise.

Lunch and learn has been around for decades and it is exactly what the name implies: a lunch session (often a brown bag affair) with a speaker and Q&A. Speakers from various internal disciplines talk about what they do and how it is done. This in turn can help other staff understand the telltale signs of a lead, which can then be passed off to the appropriate staff member.

Webinars can provide the same content as lunch and learns but do so online. While there may be no direct Q&A, information can be imparted in a relatively short amount of time. Thirty minute webinars for internal use by staff can guarantee that all are on the same page.

Key elements for either platform would be to explain what the discipline is, what the telltale signs are for a decent lead, then to explain who to pass it off to. Part of the education process should include helping non-sales and marketing staff become comfortable when sharing the company message. Teach people to give short, coherent elevator pitches on what your company does. Without this part of the training, your employee may try to recite your mission statement when a few words would suffice.

The ability to share a few cogent thoughts on what your business does can

lead to a business relationship. If your administrative assistant is trained properly, he or she could well do a little BD activity at a high school sporting event. There is always down time during events, time to strike up a conversation with someone new. And it almost always includes a question about 'what you do.'

While this may seem a little far-fetched, let me remind you about where we live, then throw out a scenario.

The national capitol area is fueled by three industries: politics/government, associations and contracting. The largest regional employer by far is the government contracting industry. So when you are at a school event for your children, you are likely to strike up a conversation with someone who either works for the government (Federal, state or local), or for a contractor.

When I look out my front door I can literally see the homes of employees from NSA, Army Corps of Engineers and Commerce.

Government employees and contractors are always within close proximity in the D.C. area. If your employees know what to ask, sooner or later good contacts can be made and hand-offs to the right internal employee for further contact can be done.

The second method for expanding your reach without spending money is the deployment of all staff in social networks. Granted, some costs may be incurred on training your staff on the proper use of social networking tools like LinkedIn, but the dividends are tremendous.

Anyone who reads my column or sees me speak knows that I am a proponent of LinkedIn. I consider LinkedIn



to be the place to be for business social networking, second to none.

There are several things LinkedIn can do for your company, but let us start with a few facts:

- 205,000,000 members (by the time this is published, probably over 210 million)
- 1,624,492 groups
- 2,899,350 company profiles
- Fortune 500 all represented
- Washington Technology Top 100 contractors all here
- All federal agencies are well-represented on LinkedIn
- 5.7 billion internal searches on LinkedIn in 2012
- Highest per capita of any major social network
- Most educated of any major social network

Contractors and government agencies are using LinkedIn to research companies applying for business, claiming various areas of expertise, and more. Contracting officers, primes and teaming partners want credibility from their vendors, subs and partners. They want to know

who you are, where you have been and what you have done. They often look at LinkedIn first, ergo those 5.7 billion internal searches.

If they are looking on LinkedIn and you are not there, that could be a problem.

It can also be a problem if they are looking on LinkedIn and your company employees have little or no uniformity in their messages about the company.

If there is no company profile, or a company profile with minimal information, people will have little reason to remember the company. It is not difficult to add some compelling information.

If the individual profiles and the company profiles are done well, traction can start on LinkedIn. At this point, training for connecting and sharing information through the groups is necessary.

The more pertinent information your team shares via LinkedIn, both the company and the individual get higher visibility. The better the information, increased credibility occurs as well.

Regardless of what each employee does, everyone should be educated on what your company provides to the government and how you sell it.

Educating and empowering your employees to network, live and via the web, is a great way to extend your sales, marketing and BD efforts in tough times. There are no simple answers, but these few things can go a long way to help you retain and perhaps even grow your marketshare in tough times.

Sounds simple, right? But how many companies actually do this? Surprisingly few.

Mark Amtower is a leading GovCon marketing consultant, author, LinkedIn Black Belt, radio host and the Director of the Government Market Master continuing professional education program at Capitol College in Laurel, Maryland.



Budget Cuts – Doing the Same With Less Is Nothing New

by Tim Pepper

A young project manager's task order came up for renewal. The customer asked what the next year's funding needs were to support the program. The project manager responded, "About the same as last year, plus a little more." The customer reacted negatively to the comment, which perplexed the young manager. After all, is that not how the federal government works? The customer admitted the support was excellent, and when program problems were anticipated, they were avoided or quickly resolved. The staff performed well and working relationships all around were professional and positive. The program was, by all measures, successful and growing. What was the problem? The customer informed the young manager that budgets were going to be cut in the next year by an unknown percentage. The customer had a few questions:

- What funding would it take to maintain the current level of service?
- If funding were reduced by a certain percentage, what would suffer?
- What was the absolute minimum funding to sustain adequate program support?
- How could the manager reduce costs?



The meeting ended with a homework assignment for the young manager and an educational journey began through the Kübler-Ross model of the five stages of grief. Denial and anger occurred simultaneously. Disbelief that the solid program could possibly suffer any sponsor shortfall shocked him. The team had done almost everything right for the customer. They performed well, made the customer look good to his peers and superiors, and handled logistical problems with ease. Why were they targeted for cuts? After a few hours of depression and self-pity, the manager moved on to bargaining and personal acceptance. He met with the staff, and solicited ideas for cuts – which triggered the grief cycle in them and inspired fear for their jobs, making things even worse for the project in the short-term.

He reached out to more senior managers and received some excellent advice, coupled with insight they had gained from direct experience in similar situations. A few days of collaboration with these mentors helped shape a new approach to the problem. The young manager called the staff together again and presented the plan. In this instance, they looked for process improvements to boost efficiency, save time, and lower operating costs. The company was rolling out a new quality management initiative based upon ISO 9000, and the project manager volunteered the project as the first internal test case for process improvement. Every aspect of the project—ordering, receiving, staging, data entry, technical reporting, and financial management was scrutinized. The team discovered areas for streamlining activities and identi-

The company was rolling out a new quality management initiative based upon ISO 9000, and the project manager volunteered the project as the first internal test case for process improvement.

fied physical plant layout changes to reduce unnecessary material movement. Lastly, it consolidated data forms to clarify records, simplify data entry and support faster reporting.

Upon applying the changes, the team processed more volume in a smaller amount of time. Forecasting the early improvements over the next year allowed the project manager to offer the ability to maintain performance and potentially greater volume within the same budget. The program would be able to provide the previous level

of support, even with a possible small percentage reduction, but if the funding remained the same, additional customer needs could be incorporated without raising overall project costs. The next customer budget planning meeting went significantly better.

In later years, another round of potential cuts loomed. The customer's organization had implemented Lean Six Sigma on their side and selected this same project for a fresh look. The project manager's team had thoroughly embraced the process improvement mindset throughout the years and this time, the identified redundancies, delays, and overlaps were primarily on the customer's side of the program. The team rapidly synchronized activities to attain greater efficiencies and continue support without significant funding reductions. Savings from this project flowed over to parallel tasks and fed overall program growth.

Doing the same with less is not new. The news from Washington in 2013 appears tuned to exaggerated disaster

language—fiscal cliff, sequestration, budget crisis, debt ceiling crisis. It has all been said before. During Base Realignment and Closure meetings in the 1990s, forecasts made it sound as if the only way to avoid total local collapse would be to expand every base under consideration. In the end, several bases were closed and activities merged to other locations. Local economies adapted, identified alternatives, and experienced changes. Just like the young project manager, we can all benefit from a fresh look at the overall picture and a thorough review of how we do business.

Tim Pepper applies more than 18 years of experience in capture, proposal, and program management for the Federal and DoD markets. He is a Senior Proposal Manager and Proposal Center Manager for General Dynamics Information Technology in Chesapeake, VA. He leads proposal development (managing, writing, editing, and producing) for pursuit and capture of large corporate strategic and tactical bids involving multiple divisions and subcontractors. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration/Computer Information Systems from Saint Leo University and is AM.APMP certified.

Fun Fact...

Jellyfish have lived in the waters of the world for more than 650 million years, long before the dinosaurs, making them the oldest multi-organ animal.^[1] The uncoiling of the jellyfish's small stingers is one of the fastest actions in nature. Stingers shoot out even faster than a bullet from a gun.^[2]

[1] King, David C. 2006. Jellyfish (Animals Animals). Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark

[2] McFee, Shane. 2008. Jellyfish (Poison!). New York, NY: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.





Proposal Yoga

by Lisa Pafe, PPM, APMP and PMP

Yoga is a great way to reduce stress, increase flexibility and regain composure. Those things are all beneficial to the harried proposal professional, especially during times of increased competition, fiscal constraints, and uncertainty. You do not need to roll out a yoga mat in order to relax. Just take 10 minutes at your desk and try these five proposal yoga poses. Remember to ease into these poses and stop immediately if you feel any pain or discomfort.

Sun Salutation – Kickoff

Greet the day (or the sunset). Stand up beside your desk, with your shoes off. Slowly raise your arms above your head, breathing in through your nose until your palms touch. Then, slowly swan dive down to the floor, breathing out through your nose and letting your head, neck and arms dangle. You can shake your head yes and no to further relieve tension. If hamstrings are too tight, bend your knees slightly. Then slowly rise, breathing in, one vertebrae at a time, and raise your hands until palms touch above your head. Finally, slowly bring your palms together in front of your heart breathing out. Repeat as many times as needed.

Neck Stretch – Blue Team

Perfect for when the proposal team is a pain in the neck! Continue to stand or sit back down in your chair. Slowly move your head to the left and let your gaze follow upward, and then the right. Follow with the Yes pose, in which you tilt your head as far back as comfortable and then tilt forward with your chin near your chest, relaxing into the pose each time and breathing slowly. Repeat the positions two more times.

Wrist Stretch – Pink Team

You have been up all night writing and reviewing, and now your wrists hurt. Sit up straight in your chair and press your hands down on the chair, fingers pointing outward. Raise your shoulders up and down slowly. Repeat several times. You can also do this pose standing by placing your hands on your desk.



Back Twist – Gold Team

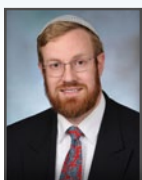
Relieve the pressure and tension of impending deadlines. Sit in your chair, cross one leg over the other and grasp your top knee with your opposite hand. Hold the back of your chair with your free hand and slowly twist your upper body and head towards that arm. Hold for 10 counts. Switch your legs and arms and twist in the opposite direction.

Meditation Pose – Home Stretch

Useful when you cannot figure out how to cut five more pages to get the proposal within page count and still remain compliant. Sit down in your chair with your feet on the floor. Relax your hands on your lap, palms facing upward. Close your eyes and relax your face and jaw. Focus inward on your third eye (between your eyebrows). Slowly take a deep breath in through your nose for five counts, hold briefly, and then breath out of your mouth for eight to 10 counts. Repeat several times.

I have been practicing yoga—both in the studio and at my desk—for several years, and can attest to the mental and physical health benefits. Remember, even if you only have 10 minutes free, you can regain a little bit of sanity through these poses. Namaste!

Lisa Pafe, PPM, APMP and PMP, is Principal Consultant at Lohfeld Consulting Group, Inc. and serves on the APMP-NCA Board of Directors as Chair of the Speaker Series Committee. With more than 20 years' experience in capture and proposals and four years' experience in yoga, she credits her practice with increasing her flexibility, balance, empathy and serenity.



The More Things Change . . .

by Shlomo D. Katz

The 19th century French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr is quoted as saying, “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” Applied to the current environment of reduced Government funding, this serves as a reminder that, despite the fiercer competition for pieces of a smaller pie, that pie must be divided up using the same Federal Acquisition Regulation (“FAR”) provisions and other laws and regulation as before.

So what does this mean for the proposal business?

One acquisition technique that may see greater usage as budgets continue to shrink is selection of the low-priced, technically acceptable (LPTA) offeror. This means that offerors who jump through certain minimum technical hoops will be considered for award, with the trophy going to the lowest-priced, lowest-cost offeror in that group. There is nothing improper about that; provided, of course, that that is what the evaluation criteria in the solicitation called for. But, if the solicitation said that award would be based on “best value,” then choosing the low-priced/low-cost offeror solely on the basis of price/cost is a violation of the FAR and could be grounds for a successful protest.

Of course, the low-cost offer might actually be the best value. But, if the RFP invites offerors to propose



enhancements, added features, innovations, or the like, and the source selection official fails to consider the value of those items in his selection decision, that would be unfair to offerors and would violate the rules.

In this era of reduced funding, agencies may not want offerors to propose extras, and the RFP may actually say that award will be to the LPTA offer. In that event, offerors who propose extras likely are wasting their time. Surprisingly often, disappointed offerors want to protest the non-selection of their technically superior offers, even though the RFP stated explicitly that award would be on the LPTA basis. While “excellent,” “good” and “satisfactory” can have different shades, “acceptable” cannot. It is pass or fail. For the proposal team, the ultimate message is a familiar one: Read the RFP and give the customer what

it is asking for. And, if the agency awards to your competitor on some basis other than what it asked for, remember that you, as a disappointed bidder, have rights.

Let us say you know what the ultimate customer wants is different from what the contracting officer wrote in the RFP. Perhaps you know that the customer does want your enhanced solution, even though the solicitation says that award will be to the LPTA. Unfortunately for you—but fortunately for the procurement system in general—award must be made strictly on the basis of the RFP. If you win on the basis of your more expensive enhanced solution, expect your victory to be short-lived if a protest is filed.

So, how can you sell your better mousetrap to a customer with limited funds? It is up to your business

For LPTA RFPs—
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development folks to convince the interested government parties before the RFP comes out that your solution is worth the extra money that the cash-strapped customer may have to pay under a best value award. Even better, if the facts warrant, convince the agency that you are so sure your solution will save the Government money in the long run that you would be willing to enter some type of cost-sharing contract. If your proposal is innovative enough, there is an outside chance you could even be awarded a sole source contract. If the RFP has already been issued, you may be able to influence changes through the question and answer process. The trade-off, of course, is that Q&As will

be shared with all offerors and you do not want to telegraph your solution to the competition.

Another potential consequence of funding shortages is an increase likelihood of procurements being cancelled. Agencies have the discretion to cancel procurements if they do so for legitimate reasons. And, generally, offerors have no real way of recouping the costs they sank into the now useless proposal. One exception is that those cases might be allowable as part of overhead under other cost reimbursement contracts that your company has.

A side effect of a cancelled procurement will often be that an incumbent will receive a sole source extension to its existing contract. That may be illegal, particularly if that prior contract has reached its maximum allowable length—often, though not always, sixty months. In that event, disappointed offerors can complain, whether to the agency or to the Government Accountability Office (“GAO”) or the Court of Federal Claims. Such protests can result in the agency reinstating the cancelled procurement or, potentially, in your recovering those bid and proposal costs you would otherwise have to write-off.

A final note: Some contractors are squeamish about protesting, especially

in times of reduced funding, for fear of angering their customers. True, no one can guarantee that a Government official will not take your protest personally. But, such occurrences are the exception, not the rule. Most Government procurement personnel are professionals who understand that protests are part of doing business and are not personal. Indeed, this writer is aware of more than one instance where a protest, or even the mere threat of a protest, caused a contracting officer in a multiple award situation to award a contract to an offeror who otherwise would not have received an award.

No one can predict when our current fiscal mess will end. One consolation is that the procurement rules that work in good times work in bad times also so that the pie is, in most cases, distributed fairly.

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, specializing in all aspects of Government contracting. Shlomo has spoken at APMP's Proposal Basics Boot Camp on topics including: “Why Do We Do What We Do? Understanding the Theories and Formalities Behind the Procurement Process.” If you have any questions about these or other proposal or contracting issues, please contact Shlomo at 202.536-1753 or skatz@brownrudnick.com



Driving PWIN With Help From Dr. Seuss

by Eric Wolf, Section M Consulting, LLC

I expect that the title to this article will have roped you in. You are likely wondering: “How can Dr. Seuss help me to improve my competitive edge? Am I going to have to rhyme my next representative task order? Will my next Performance Statement Of Work read: We will meet your SLA, we will meet it every day, else no award fee will you pay? I assure you I will not suggest you do any such thing. Read on, and you will soon enough see where I am going.

Maintaining your competitive edge, especially in our current Low Price Technically Acceptable environment is a complex balancing act. Driving probability of win takes keen focus on many factors across the capture lifecycle. Selecting the right team, identifying key staff, and developing competitive pricing are just some of the numerous elements that must be addressed, yet are often beyond the control of the Proposal Professional.

What is entirely within the control of the Proposal Professional is how we tell our story.

In a competitive environment your proposal is just one of many. As such, it is imperative that you are able to effectively deliver your message. There are many techniques that can be used to structure the delivery of your information within a proposal. For the scope of this discussion, I

would like to focus on the complexity of your writing.

Have you ever noticed that some books are a breeze to read and others seem to take forever? While this can depend on content and the interests of the reader, it is also

driven by the complexity of the writing. The more complex your writing style, the greater the chances that some members of the review team will not receive your message.

Not many people know it but Microsoft Word will rate your writing based on grade level and ease of reading. How you access this feature will depend on the version of Word that you are using. To use this feature, you need to get to your Spelling and Grammar options settings and select the **Show Readability Statistics option**. To find out how to do this on your version of Word, go to <http://office.microsoft.com> and search on “display readability statistics”.

After you have set the Readability Statistics option, you simply run a normal spelling and grammar check. At the conclusion of your next spelling and grammar check, the system will present you with a window that identifies a range of readability statistics. The figure above shows the Microsoft Word readability statistics on this article at the time of submission.

Readability Statistics	
Counts	
Words	1358
Characters	6445
Paragraphs	41
Sentences	73
Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	3.3
Words per Sentence	17.6
Characters per Word	4.6
Readability	
Passive Sentences	13%
Flesch Reading Ease	58.4
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	9.3
OK	

Flesch Reading Ease Score	Grade Level Comprehension
90 - 100	Easily understood by a 5th grader
60 - 70	Easily understood by 8th and 9th grader
0 - 30	Easily understood by a college graduate

Two key elements that I focus on are the Flesch Reading Ease and the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level. The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level correlates to the level of education required to comprehend the text. The Flesch Reading Ease provides a numeric rating of the complexity of the text where the lower the score, the more complex the writing.

An interesting fact is that the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level formula was developed under contract to the Navy, and was used as guidance for documentation standards. My

understanding is that a common target for content was grade level 9.

At the root of the formulas for Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level and Flesch Reading Ease are the average number of words per sentence and average number of syllables per word. Simply put, longer sentences with longer words will be scored more complex.

If you have made it this far, I expect you may have an inkling as to how Dr. Seuss fits into all of this...



For fun, I ran text from the Dr. Seuss classic Green Eggs and Ham through the readability check. Sure enough, it scored maximum reading ease and zero grade level. Dr. Seuss certainly mastered the art of ease in readability!

Then for kicks, I took the Seuss text and played with it a bit. I made the sentences longer. I added a few words with more syllables and I used passive voice. This drove the rating to a 12th grade level with a reading ease score of 45.7, and 33 percent passive sentences.

It has never been my preference to have eggs in a domicile and it is also not my desire or tendency to be offered eggs with a mouse. Given the opportunity it would not be my inclination or my desire to accept eggs with a mouse in this location or any other regardless of proximity. Hopefully the point has been made regarding the subject of eggs, dining companions and localities, Mr. Sam-I-am.

Reading Ease: **45.7**

Grade Level: **12**

Passive Sentences: **33%**

I should stress that I am not suggesting that Government evaluators cannot comprehend documents at the 12th grade level. I am simply looking for ways to ensure that my proposal is easily read and comprehended. **We cannot lose site of the fact that in addition to reading our proposals, reviewers are faced with the difficult task of evaluation that requires looking for specific facts and data.**

Therefore, the easier we make the proposals to read, the more likely we are to get our solution, message, and win themes across. This in-turn raises our competitive edge.

In case you think my premise is a leap, I will site two studies that demonstrate the value of making your content easier to read.



^[1]In 1947, Donald Murphy determined that lowering content grade level from 9th to 6th grade drove readership of one newspaper article up by 43% and another by 60%. It should be noted that he changed only the readability; all headlines, illustrations, and layout remained the same.

^[2]In 1948, Charles Swanson demonstrated that ease in readability improved reading perseverance. He found that by simplifying a story (lowering the number of syllables per 100 words from 173 to 131) the number of paragraphs that were read increased by 93% and the number of readers that read every paragraph increased by 82%.

At this point I will admit, I tend to write at a 12th grade level. It is simply the way my mind has been trained. However, I have become sensitive to the fact that an easier to digest proposal is one has a greater chance of being more carefully read by an evaluator; especially an evaluator

[1] Murphy, D. 1947. "How plain talk increases readership 45% to 60%." Printer's ink. 220:35-37

[2] Swanson, C. E. 1948. "Readability and readership: A controlled experiment." Journalism quarterly 25:339-343

faced with a stack of proposals from multiple vendors. Therefore, when writing proposals, I now take the time to run a readability check on my documents and try to drive the readability below the 12th grade level (as I did in this article).

Making documents easier to read requires considering the data listed in the Word Readability Statistics. It means: writing paragraphs with fewer sentences, writing sentences with fewer words, using words with fewer syllables, and using less passive voice.

So, the next time you sit back in your chair admiring the work of art you just created, take a few moments to run a readability report, and take a few lessons from one of the first authors most of us ever read, Dr. Seuss.

Eric Wolf began his career in the Federal space as a software engineer nearly 25 years ago and rose to manage IT Services P&Ls as large as \$200M. Eric is a PMP, holds a degree in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and studied business strategy through Harvard Business School's General Manager's Program. Today, Eric provides proposal support through his firm Section M Consulting.

Fun Fact...

At the center of Greek social and intellectual life was the symposium, which literally means, "drinking together." Indeed, the symposium reflects Greek fondness for mixing wine and intellectual discussion.^[1]

[1] Charters, Stephen. 2006. *Wine and Society: The Social and Cultural Context of Drink*. Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.





March Breakfast Event Highlights Different Perspectives On Difficult People

by Lisa Pafe, PMP, PPM.APMP

It all depends on how you look at it. APMP NCA's March Breakfast event gave attendees a range of new strategies for "Dealing with Difficult People Undermining Your Business Capture." Three panelists, Dennis Humphrey, Owner and Principal Consultant with Carvus L.C.; Katherine Viridi, President and Owner of Coaching Presence, LLC; and Dan Shyti, Founder of 4 Power Leadership, shared their insights over breakfast at Maggiano's Little Italy at Tysons Corner.

- Dennis discussed how understanding the motivations of difficult people can help capture and proposal professionals handle difficult colleagues and bosses more successfully. Understanding control positions can help us better frame our interactions, plan constructive responses, and de-escalate conflicts.
- Katherine described the "I Call all the Shots" Capture Manager, the Whiny "Why Me" Technical Writer, the "I am the Best Thing Since Sliced Bread" Subject Matter Expert, and the "Last Minute Larry" Support Analyst. She recommended creating a "circle of power and change" to look at difficult people through a different lens, understand their reality, and make them feel more valued and valuable.
- Dan treated the audience to the six Lifesaver flavors of difficult people encountered in capture and proposal efforts. He presented tested, real-world strategies for coping with the Grouch (lemon), the Ripper (orange), the Diva (lime), the Hand Grenade (pineapple), the Rock with No Roll (Butterscotch), and the Artist (cherry).

The event included audience interaction and a lively Q&A session, expertly moderated by Tim O'Connor of AOC Key Solutions, Inc., followed by raffles of Dan's soon to be released book, as well as free one-hour coaching sessions with Dennis and Katherine. The Speaker Series Planning Committee would like to thank our speakers, moderator,

and sponsor Paolo Cardelli, and all who helped make this event a success. We look forward to seeing you at the May 15 dinner event on *Effective RFI Responses*.



Dan Shyti engages in some audience interaction as Katherine Viridi and Dennis Humphrey look on.



The speakers listen to audience Q&A.

Lisa Pafe is Principal Consultant at Lohfeld Consulting Group, Inc. With more than 20 years of experience in business capture, process improvement, project and proposal management, and proposal operations, Lisa is an PPM. APMP and a PMI-certified PMP as well as a trained ISO 9001:2008 Internal Auditor. She currently serves on the APMP NCA Board of Directors as Chair of the Speaker Series Planning Committee.

She holds a B.A. in Political Science from Yale University, a Masters in Public Policy from Harvard University, and a Masters in Information Systems from The George Washington University



Can You Really Have It All?

by Colleen Jolly, PPF.APMP

Growing up, my mother always told me that I could be anything I wanted to be. Astronaut? Sure. President? Why not? Although, she did not have the same freedom of career movement that she espoused, she made me feel like not even the sky was the limit for my dreams. It never mattered that I had ovaries, so long as I had ambition.

Women have a long history of conflict in the workforce. Should a woman put her career first or her family? What say should men—bosses, fathers or casual onlookers—have in the debate?

While this debate is not new, it has come back into the media spotlight in recent months. Marissa Meyer, the new CEO of Yahoo!, has started making some uncomfortable waves at the technology giant. Women continue to lag behind their male counterparts in prominent positions at Fortune 500, 100 and 50 companies, so Marissa's hiring should be seen as a capital G "Good" for women. She has, however, sent some conflicting messages. She has allegedly built a private nursery adjoining to her office for her young son, while canceling telecommuting and working from home for all employees as of late February. Many publications and media outlets have seen this as an attack on working women, particularly those who do not have the buying power of a CEO to hire personal support staff



or otherwise mitigate the struggles of juggling family and career.

Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's current COO and another working mother in a prominent position at a tech firm, has published a book out this March called *"Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead."* The book, which I admittedly have not yet read, has been both heralded and lambasted for its opinions on women in the workplace. Some criticize her for, like Marissa Meyer, having enough money to mitigate issues many working mothers face. Others think her "superhuman" abilities do not resonate with common people and that her focus on encouraging women to concentrate on removing internal barriers to career success does not address larger issues in society, corporate America and the government that may be limiting women's ability to "have it all."

In response to these events, former Lehman Brothers CFO Erin Callan has entered the debate in a spectacular fashion, through a March op-ed published in the New York Times. She reportedly regrets being attached to her Blackberry 24/7 and cites her focus on work as a key factor in the divorce from her first husband. She eloquently writes against the super human workingwoman phenomenon:

"Until recently, I thought my singular focus on my career was the most powerful ingredient in my success. But I am beginning to realize that I sold myself short. I was talented, intelligent and energetic. It didn't have to be so extreme... I didn't have to be on my BlackBerry from my first moment in the morning to my last moment at night. I didn't have to eat the majority of my meals at my desk. I didn't have to fly

overnight to a meeting in Europe on my birthday. I now believe that I could have made it to a similar place with at least some better version of a personal life. Not without sacrifice — I don't think I could have "had it all" — but with somewhat more harmony."

Erin is now trying to rebuild a life centered on people and not her career. She is undergoing fertility treatments with her new husband in a bid to have a natural child.

On a recent flight to Brisbane, Australia I sat next to a man who turned out to be a dot-com era mega-millionaire. He admitted he was slumming—to save money, he claimed—by flying steerage to his Gold Coast beach property where he avoided the chilly Seattle winters. While typically my *modus operandi* for flights is to quietly watch movies, we engaged in an hours-long conversation about business. He encouraged me to do something similar to what Sheryl Sandberg recommends—to continue to lean into my career and work harder. "But you're so young," he said. "You have plenty of time." To which I answered, "But you miss one key point, I am a woman and according to my doctors it is best to become pregnant before 35, which, I've heard, changes life and work." At this proclamation, his face fell and his recommendations immediately changed. In the height of his dot-com era success he married a wonderful woman who was also very successful, and together they amassed wealth and success and continued to postpone having children. When they finally

decided it was the right time, his wife underwent several expensive rounds of fertility treatments at the best facilities in the world and still could not become pregnant.

Their marriage deteriorated under the stress and they divorced. He has never remarried and has no children. His advice to me immediately changed from, "Work hard, lean in," to "Have a baby right now. Work can wait."

This debate, as noted, is not new, but it is something that the women and men in my generation need to talk about. Some of us had our children early; some of us started our careers early. Others are not sure what they want. Women, much more so than men, are facing a time-sensitive, biological imperative. It is safest, according to current medical thinking, to have at least your first child by 35. If you do not, you could face expensive and emotional alternatives, none of which guarantee a natural child. Adopting or fostering a child may be a good solution; however, these situations can also be fraught with unknown expenses and difficult emotions.

An informal poll of female friends in their 20s, 30s and 40s who do not yet have children finds that many still do value motherhood in addition

to and sometimes more than their careers (current or dream). Those that do have children unanimously agree that there is no "good time" to have children regardless of what medical science recommends and that children do inexplicably change your life. While there are challenges, almost all my friends with children agree that children are a capital G "Good" in their lives.

So, how does one have it all? Is it possible? From my perspective it seems to rely very heavily on the personal details of your life. All three women mentioned above have talked about sacrifices in their career or their family. I would prefer to think of them as priorities. If work is a priority, then treat it as such. And, the same should be done with your family. Understand the things you value in life. Communicate honestly with those most directly affected by your choices. Identify where you need help as much as possible. This does not mean that



Are you prioritizing your life? Do you know what it means for you to “have it all?” These are very personal things and only you can decide how your life is shaped.

you have to choose one over the other, but you do have to prioritize one. That prioritization may change over time depending where you are (emotionally, financially, etc.) in your career or in your life.

For those of us who work outside of Yahoo!, flexible work hours or telecommuting are still readily available in many professions. Some of us may have extended family able to help or a supportive life partner to share domestic tasks. The career portion of one’s life may not always be a constant contest of climbing or in some cases, running, up the corporate ladder.

In his book “Goal Free Living: How to Have the Life You Want Now,” Stephen Shapiro describes an alternative method of thinking about life: that of a frog jumping from lily pad to lily pad haphazardly across a pond rather than in a straight line. He recommends conceptually knowing what you want out of life but letting the details fill themselves in. You might take a jump back in order to leap ahead in another way or aspect of your

life or even to see a new opportunity that was previously obscured.

You may choose to take time off of work to be with your children and then go back to your career. Will you come back to the same job at the same level? Maybe. Or you might start a new company or become purely a freelancer. You might choose, or be required, to work full time while you raise your children but prioritize their welfare in ways other than being primary caregiver. It is important to note that I, and the women noted above, are speaking specifically to the women who have the luxury of choice because they have the incomes or other financial advantages to support that choice. The “working poor,” including many middle class families in today’s economy, do not have the luxury of choice. For these families, you simply have to “make it work,” and that involves its own set of juggling acts.

Perhaps the women who are able to “lean into” their careers and choose when to have their children (if at all) are selfish, wanting a full family life and a robust, meaningful career. Or, perhaps they might be the frontierswomen who are forging a path for all women and men who wish to align

their lives closer to their priorities.

Other than telling me I could be president one day, my mother’s greatest gift to me was that she gave me choices. She never said that they would be easy choices, but they were mine to make. Understanding at a young age that I controlled my own destiny was powerful. If I, and all other women and men, exercise their ability to actively choose what they want in their own lives, we might just make it okay for everyone to live the life they want and not feel compelled to live a life they are “supposed to” live.

Are you prioritizing your life? Do you know what it means for you to “have it all?” These are very personal things and only you can decide how your life is shaped. There is no shortage of advice on how to manage your career or family life. Even if you do not feel like you currently possess the luxury of those choices, spend some time envisioning your ideals or your “have it all” scenarios. You might be surprised with what you discover. Only then can you make the right decisions for your life, regardless of what self-help gurus, well-meaning books, high level CEOs, or even your mom thinks.

Colleen Jolly, PPF.APMP, a 13+ year proposal veteran, manages a global professional proposal graphic company (24-Hour Company) with offices in the US and UK. Colleen is active in the APMP and serves as the current COO of the international board. She is the former Layout Editor for the APMP Journal and former Secretary of the NCA Chapter. She was named an APMP Fellow in 2010. She is a frequent worldwide speaker and writer on creative and general business topics, and has spoken at most APMP conferences around the world. She holds a BA from Georgetown University, and is active in leadership roles and Board positions in arts and women’s non-profit organizations. Colleen is an award-winning artist and business professional—most recently she won the APMP Insight Award in 2012 for her article on international business. Her personal blog on travel and international business is: <http://american-broad.blogspot.com>. She can be reached at colleen@24hrco.com



How To Make Money In The Age Of Federal Spending Cuts

by Rick Harris

There's an old saying in Hollywood that, *"in confusion there is profit."* Here in Washington, there is no doubt that sequestration has sowed confusion. The question before the local contracting community is how to survive and even profit in its aftermath.

The task won't be easy. A recent Wells Fargo study estimates that Uncle Sam's spending represents 20 percent of the greater Washington region's gross domestic product. With \$85 billion in cuts looming over us, some discomfort is inevitable.

But many local companies are changing how they develop and retain federal business in the age of austerity. Here are a few tips that could help local contractors survive and even thrive in 2013 and beyond.

Bigger isn't always better. The federal government has failed to hit its small business contracting goals for 11 consecutive years. That's about to change. Starting this year, compensation for senior agency officials will be tied partly to their agency's small business contracting performance. New rules also make it easier for small businesses to team up with one another on large contracts. With employee salary bumps on the line, you can bet federal buyers will look at small contractors in a more positive light. Start lining up your small business partners now so your team takes



advantage of the new rules that could minimize sequestration's impact.

Work the contract's total lifecycle. The release of a government request for proposal, or RFP, is often the culmination of years of preparation within a federal agency. Businesses that wait for the RFP's release before taking action do themselves a great disservice. Smart contractors use the "dark time" before the RFP's release to track the program, study the incumbent and other likely competitors, build relationships within the federal agency, and even influence the RFP's contents. Make sure your capture and business development teams are at the beginning of the lifecycle instead of at the end of it when the RFP is released.

Be an idea incubator. Great contractors not only excel at their work, but also become a wellspring of good ideas for how government can deliver better results on time and under budget. The more your dialogue with federal buyers includes sharing and implementing best practices that make them look good, the more indispensable you become to that agency.

Justify yourself. Bid protests are likely to rise this year as competitors fight over the rapidly dwindling federal pie. Likewise, federal agencies will increasingly hold contractors' feet to the fire to justify past and future costs, especially for sole source contracts. Consider an internal audit of your cost structures before someone else does it for you.

A recent Wells Fargo study estimates that Uncle Sam's spending represents 20 percent of the greater Washington region's gross domestic product. With \$85 billion in cuts looming over us, some discomfort is inevitable. discomfort is inevitable.

Better communication. Like any healthy relationship, communication between an agency and contractor

matters. At our Association, federal contracting officers often cite dialogue as an area where vendors could stand to improve. Identify a system to routinely communicate with your contracting officers to fully understand their needs and eliminate problems before they spoil a relationship.

Diversify markets. When saving for retirement, we don't put all our money in a single stock. We diversify for safety. Likewise, federal contractors should consider diversifying into new growth markets. Defense IT may get pinched this year, but health care IT is booming. Niche markets routinely emerge in the federal, state, commercial and international markets,

and business development teams that seize on them fastest could prosper.

Our region has been mired in sequestration's confusion long enough. With a few changes in how we develop and retain federal business, smart local contractors can survive and even profit in sequestration's wake.

Rick Harris is executive director of the Association for Proposal Management Professionals, the Washington-based association for professionals dedicated to the process of winning business through proposals, bids, tenders, and presentations. This article originally appeared in the Washington Post Capital Business Section on March 10, 2012.

APMP-NCA Members!

When was the last time that you logged into apmp.org and updated your profile information? It is easy to do and only takes a few minutes. Log in, and under "My Profile" go to Manage Profile and click on Edit Bio. Update your information and click on the blue "save changes" button at the bottom. It is that easy. Having your correct contact information makes it easier for the NCA Chapter to keep you informed on upcoming events and activities.

The screenshot shows the APMP website with a blue header and a world map background. The main navigation bar includes links for WELCOME, MEMBERSHIP, CHAPTERS, COMMUNITIES, ACCREDITATION, CONFERENCE, PUBLICATIONS, RESOURCES, JOB BANK, and STORE. A large banner reads "Join APMP and Affiliate" with the tagline "Become a member of the global leader in Proposal, Bid, Business Development and Capture". Below the banner, there are several sections: "Get Our Email Updates", "Read Our Publications", "Find or Post a Job", "Join a Chapter", "Get Accredited", "Get Resources", and "Visit our Online Store". A sidebar on the right contains a search bar, a "MY PROFILE" section with links to Profile Home, Manage Profile, Groups, Networks, Files & Links, Favorites, Messages, Connections, and Refer a Friend, and a "LATEST NEWS" section with a list of recent articles.



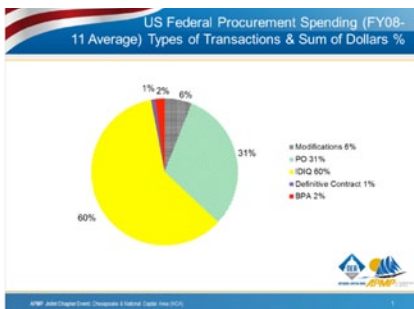
IDIQ Contracting – The Good, The Bad And The Ugly!

Highlights from the joint NCA and Chesapeake chapter networking breakfast, 24th April 2013.

by Ros Angus, Networking Chairperson

Our inaugural joint breakfast event, co-hosted by the NCA and Chesapeake chapters, was a great success and a wonderful example of collaboration between the two member groups. The topic of IDIQ – Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity Contracting drew an eager audience, and our speaker and star of the show, Gregory Garrett, really knew how to hold the attention of the crowd!

A published writer and contracting acquisition guru, Gregg spoke eloquently to the various aspects – the good, the bad, and the ugly – of the IDIQ vehicle, from the perspectives of the government, prime contractors, and also subcontractors. Gregg's 20-plus year background and experience spanning DoD government acquisition, program management, operations and business development provided him the ideal vantage point to speak cohesively and authoritatively to the various aspects and nuances of IDIQ contracting.



Spookily Bill Clinton-esque, (i.e. replete with southern accent, a wry sense of humor, and effusive energy), Gregg delivered substance with style. Gregg

impressed upon the audience how the number of transactions to award federal contract dollars went from half a million in 2000 to nearly twelve million in 2011 all with roughly the same acquisition workforce size. In other words, the acquisition community is looking for low risk, “easy button” ways to manage the workload, borne out by the fact that nearly 60% of all federally awarded contract dollars now go through the IDIQ route. Love them or hate them, IDIQ and GWAC – Government Wide Acquisition Contract contracting vehicles are here to stay. The question for government contractors is how to play their moves in these high stakes games!

To conclude the morning program, Gregg generously raffled not one, not two, but TEN autographed books resulting in several members of the audience leaving with veritable tomes worth more than the price of admission alone.

APMP members can access Gregg's slideshow presentation on the Body of Knowledge. Gregg's books are available for sale, and can be viewed at http://www.amazon.com/Gregory-A.-Garrett/e/B001JS7PAU/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_3?qid=1365779764&sr=1-3&utm_source=MailingList&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=04.15.13IDIQEvent.

Gregg Garrett's Bio:



Gregory A. Garrett is the Vice President of Business Operations at ARTEL Inc. a global satellite telecommunications company headquartered in Reston, VA. He is an internationally recognized expert

in government contracting, proposal/capture management, and program management. He is also a highly respected business consultant, best-selling author of 21 business books and 100+ business articles. During the past 30 years, he has managed more than \$30 Billion of large complex contracts and projects in both the U.S. government and industry. He is the recipient of numerous national and international business awards for his writing, teaching, consulting, and leadership.

Ros Angus serves as Director of Business Development with Proposal Development Consultants, LLC. She has 15 years' combined executive search and contingent staffing experience, advising Fortune 500 companies and federal government contractors to provide tailored human capital solutions. She is actively involved with APMP and served on both the 2010 and 2011 Boot Camp planning committees. In her current role as Networking Chair since 2011, Ros has organized several breakfast and evening events to further support APMP-NCA member interests.



Winning The War On Data –

Knowledge Management in the Business Development Lifecycle, Part 1

by Gillian A. Dionne, APM/APMP, Certified Knowledge Manager (CKM)

Part 1 introduces the concept of knowledge management (KM). Part 2 will explain how to apply KM concepts to specific activities and processes in the BD lifecycle.

As many of you have suspected, you are already acting as knowledge managers every time you retrieve a management plan from a document repository, track down a past performance reference, or generate a data call for a corporate capabilities matrix. Perhaps you think of it more as a “lack of knowledge management” in your organization, based on the time and effort you spend trying to locate previously written proposal documents, figuring out who has the latest company statistics, and identifying just how many employees hold a specific skill set required ... just to name a few things. Sound familiar? Well, read on here to learn more about how you can leverage knowledge management (KM) in your company to make proposal development less painful.

This article provides an overview of the concept of KM, defines the goals, and key components of a successful KM system.

An Overview of Knowledge Management

KM efforts typically focus on organizational objectives such as improved performance, competitive advantage, sharing of lessons learned, integration, and continuous improvement of the organization.

As defined by Wikipedia, KM^[1] comprises a range of strategies and practices used in an organization to identify, create, represent, distribute, and enable adoption of insights and experiences. Such insights and experiences comprise knowledge, either embodied in individuals or embedded in organizational processes or practice. These efforts typically focus on organizational objectives such as improved performance, competitive advantage, sharing of lessons learned, integration, and continuous improvement of the organization.

[1] Wikipedia, Knowledge Management, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_management

KM can be effective in organizing project past performance citations, prior proposals, and maintaining a comprehensive set of business development-related statistics—to name a few ways knowledge can be reused within the business development environment.

The Goal of Knowledge Management

KM as a field has been around since the early 1990s, and the mission of certified KM practitioners is to apply technologies and tools to transform information into meaningful knowledge. As mentioned earlier, an easy way to define KM is via the technologies and tools used; however, in real world application, a KM system (KMS) is not a plug and play commercial off the shelf package (COTS) but a custom integration of tools into an organization once a cultural change has been established to acknowledge the role and capabilities of such a system. These KM tools are a collection of technologies not necessarily acquired as a single software solution. While the tools must integrate with the existing (or planned) IT infrastructure for best results, there are actually five key components described by Robert Simmons^[2] that are critical to the success of the planned KMS: people, processes, technology, structure, and culture. And, all equally important, as shown in Figure 1.

The five components are so tightly interconnected that omission of one is seen as a failure point for the KMS.

1. People: Represents how you increase the ability of individuals within the organization to influence others with their knowledge.
2. Processes: Involves how you establish best practices and governance for the efficient and accurate identification, management, and dissemination of knowledge.
3. Technology: Addresses how you choose, configure, and utilize tools and automation to enable KM.

[2] Simmons, R. (2013, March 24). Implementing KM, Part I: Concepts & Approach. Retrieved March 24, 2013, from forsythe.com:https://fort.forsythe.com/na/aboutus/news/articles/ImplementingKM-PartIConceptsApproach

4. Structure: Implies how you transform organizational structures to facilitate and encourage cross-discipline awareness and expertise.
5. Culture: Embodies how you establish and cultivate a knowledge-sharing, knowledge-driven culture.

Each component brings its own challenges and hurdles, but all are necessary to ensure a system that is embraced by the user base, is configured to streamline and simplify the user's work, and is enabled to share and communicate knowledge that was previously stovepiped in legacy systems.

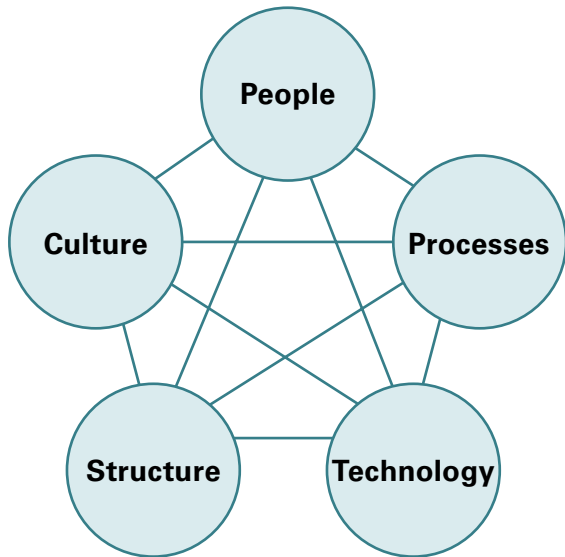


Figure 1. Core Components of a Successful KM System. People, Processes, Technology, Structure, and Culture are all interconnected and inter-dependent.

The Emergence of the Knowledge Age

KM is now acknowledged as an area of competency within many large organizations. Certified Knowledge Managers are increasingly called upon to assist highly efficient (Capability Maturity Model 3 or higher) organizations to leverage existing IT infrastructure and industry best practices to develop and maintain interactive, highly flexible capabilities in what is now known as the Knowledge Age. The advent of computers brought about the Information Age back in the 1950-1906s with the advent of data processing. The increasing volume of content, the emerging availability of highly sophisticated software and search engines, and the ready availability of high speed digital storage have created the perfect storm known as the Knowledge Age. We now focus on knowledge-intensive activities, rather than data and information.

Defining Data, Information, and Knowledge – What is the Difference?

Data is the most small of bits of information. Information is what data becomes when we do something with it. Massive amounts of data are overwhelming, unless we apply processes to classify and organize it into information. The Data Information Knowledge Wisdom (DIKW) hierarchy or pyramid is one model of representing structural and functional relationships between data, information, knowledge, and wisdom. The DIKW pyramid provides a roadmap for visualizing how the increased context and understanding of the transformation from data to information to knowledge to wisdom occurs along a predictable path. There are several iterations of this same hierarchy, but Figure 2 illustrates the DIKW^[3] structure as a series of transitions that are dependent on the understanding of interconnections between each stage.

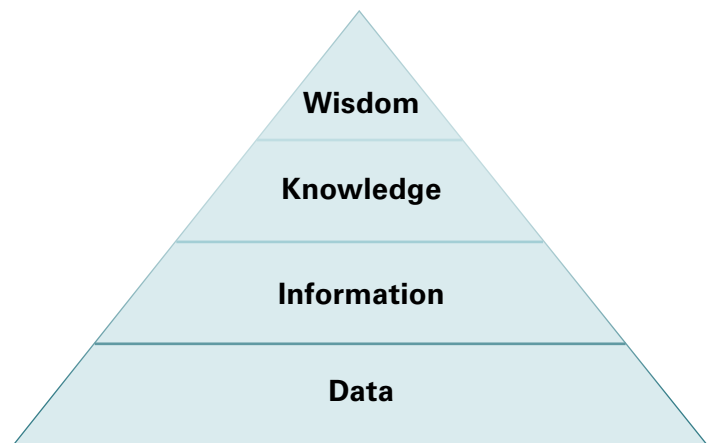


Figure 2. The DIKW structure provides a good visual metaphor for the transformation from data into wisdom. Massive amounts of raw data are transformed via classification, analysis, and organization into usable wisdom.

Defining the DIKW Structure

1. Data – A set of discrete facts about events.
2. Information – Comes from providing context to data.
3. Knowledge – Comprised of tacit experiences, insights, values, and judgments of individuals as well as from the analysis of information and data.
4. Wisdom – Ultimate discernment of the material and having the application and contextual awareness to provide a strong, common sense judgment.

[3] J. Rowley, The wisdom hierarchy: representations of the DIKW hierarchy, *Journal of Information Science* 33(2) (2007) 163-180.

An example of the DIKW structure applied to everyday life:

1. Data: You hear that there is an upcoming APMP-NCA roundtable and you want to attend.
2. Information: You go to the APMP-NCA website and locate the relevant information: date, location, cost, agenda.
3. Knowledge: You make a plan to attend—asking your boss if you can go, clearing your schedule, and registering for the roundtable.
4. Wisdom: Although the online mapping tool tells you it will take 25 minutes to drive there based on the route and mileage, you allow 45 minutes because you know that afternoon rush hour will affect your commute.

Now that we understand that data can be transformed into information, how do we further transform this information into knowledge and beyond? Knowledge is what we do with information to make it relevant and useful to the purpose at hand via context.

Why Invest? Why Change the Way We Have Always Done Proposals?

The average knowledge worker spends 16-25 percent of his/her time searching for information (that is 6.4-10 hours per 40 hours worked), and has a 20 percent failure rate.^[1] So, the concept of greatly reducing the time spent searching and the time spent re-creating information that cannot be found is a huge financial incentive for organizations. Imagine the time savings and the potential quality improvements of proposal development that is possible when team members can spend more time with the content, instead of looking for it.

KM Technologies and Tools

KM seeks to apply technologies and tools as listed below to transform information into meaningful knowledge. A KMS is not a plug and play commercial off the shelf software package; it is more typically a custom integration of tools deployed into an organization once a cultural change has been established to acknowledge the role and capabilities of such a system. Successful integration of a KMS into an organization requires commitment of a corporate champion in senior management, complete buy in from the

users who will be using and feeding the system, and the dedication of adequate resources to develop, deploy, and maintain the system.

A KM system is not self-maintaining; it requires constant upkeep. New inputs, analysis of new/emerging user requirements and use cases, and adjustment of content are not low maintenance activities. Useful (and usable) KMS require significant requirements analysis, system design, and continuous upkeep to maintain content relevance and currency. Too much old or irrelevant data = too much unusable information = no value-add.

Typical technologies and tools that KM embraces:

- Groupware/collaborative software
- Document management systems
- Expert systems
- Semantic networks
- Relational/object oriented databases
- Simulation tools
- Artificial intelligence
- Social computing—wikis, blogs.

KM capabilities have matured as the technologies that power the solutions become more sophisticated. For example, early KM implementations included “yellow pages” that listed experts and capabilities within an organization, and the earliest document management systems. So-called midpoint KM systems and tools included “Communities of Practice (CoP)” and the application of semantic technologies to facilitate search and retrieval of relevant information through enterprise search platforms and multi-faceted (filtered) search interfaces. The emergent trend in KM is social computing, tying together the legacy content and adding context provided by users in a real time interactive context, such as in private secure Intranet blogs and social networks.

Gillian Dionne is Director of Proposals at General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT) in Fairfax, VA. She has led the deployment of multiple KMS to support business development activities. Gillian is accredited by APMP at Practitioner level and is working on her Professional level certification. Gillian also holds the Certified Knowledge Manager (CKM) certification. Contact Gillian at Gillian.Dionne@gdit.com. © Gillian A. Dionne, All Rights Reserved

[1] Thomas Vander Wal (www.personalinfolcloud.com)



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Executive Summary eZine and PowerPoint Slides from our most recent Speaker Series. In collaboration with the Business Development Institute International (BD-Institute), APMP created the APMP Body of Knowledge for the business development profession, available only to members. It identifies practices, process elements and tools that are generally recognized as key practices and hallmarks of the business development profession.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

- May 15, Speaker Series “Effective RFI Responses”
- May 28-31, Bids and Proposal Conference 2013

We encourage all current members to support APMP NCA activities and ask that you invite guests to our activities.

Learn more about the benefits of APMP Membership and affiliating with the NCA Chapter to gain the knowledge and connections for success in the business development and proposal profession.

For more information on APMP NCA membership, contact Jay Carroll, Membership Chair at membership@apmpnca.org.

Note From the E-Zine Chair and Chief Editor, Alexis Dimouro

Please take a few minutes and let us know:

- What keeps you up at night as a proposal professional?
- What article and tips would you like to see in this executive summary?

Our executive summary team would be happy to get your feedback. We can be reached at ezine@apmpnca.org or at 703-678-5158.



Effective RFI Response

Government agencies issue Requests for Information (RFIs) as part of their market research process prior to issuing an RFP. RFI's can offer an opportunity to differentiate your company from the competition, especially in today's environment where budgets are limited and competition is increasing.

While RFI responses can be great ways to establish relationships before the RFP hits, Government contractors often wonder whether to respond, how to respond, and what happens to their response once submitted. Three panelists, including two Government procurement professionals and one industry expert, will discuss strategies for how to respond effectively to obtain the outcome you want, whether it be the type of procurement (competitive, sole source, down-select), set-aside type, technical scope, and requirements for key personnel, past performance and certifications. The panel will provide two perspectives: what is the most effective RFI response strategy for contractors AND what does the Government want?

Some key takeaways from this event:

- When to respond to RFIs
- Strategies for responding effectively to ensure the outcome(s) you want
- Why the Government issues RFIs
- How the Government evaluates RFI responses
- How to analyze RFIs to write the best response and differentiate your company from the competition

May 15th Speaker Series Event "Writing Effective RFIs" at the Westin in Tysons Corner Details:

5:30pm – Networking & Cocktails

6:30pm – Dinner

7:15pm – Chapter Business

7:30pm – Panelist Presentations and Q&A

8:30pm – Adjournment

Your Panel for the Event:

Olessia Smotrova-Taylor, AF.APMP, is the President/CEO of OST Global Solutions, Inc., a business development, capture, and proposal management company that helps businesses grow in the federal market. She has won more than \$19 billion for her clients, and helped many small businesses acquire game-changing opportunities. She is the President of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP) National Capital Area (NCA) chapter, and a well-known speaker and author (her most recently published book is *How to Get Government Contracts: Have a Slice of the \$1 Trillion Pie*). She has developed and taught a graduate course in proposal development at NASA for the Stevens Institute of Technology. Prior to founding OST, she won business for Raytheon and Lockheed Martin, and wrote for the *Financial Times* of London.

Patrick Breen is the Acquisition Group Manager for the Civilian Sector of FEDSIM within the Office of Assisted Acquisition Services in General Service Administration (GSA) Federal Acquisition Service. As Acquisition Group Manager, Mr. Breen manages the performance of the group, assists with business development, provides oversight for acquisitions, and advises internal and external stakeholders, among other duties. Prior to becoming the Acquisition Group Manager, Mr. Breen worked for the Department of the Treasury for nine years, starting in the Internal Revenue Service's Office of Procurement. Mr. Breen went on to lead an acquisition team for the Troubled Asset Relief Program. In 2010, he became Chief of the Procurement Services Division's TEOAF Branch, which provided acquisition support to the Treasury Executive Office for Asset Forfeiture, Office of Foreign Assets Control, Office of Information and Analysis, and Disclosure Services.

Lenise Lago serves as the Deputy Chief for Business Operations of the U.S. Forest Service, the largest agency within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In this position, Ms. Lago oversees acquisition, business operations, human resources, Civil Rights and

other functions that impact every Forest Service employee. She previously served as the Deputy Regional Forester in the Pacific Northwest Region, where she had oversight for numerous technical and support functions, including acquisition. Prior to serving as Deputy Regional Forester, Ms. Lago was the Forest Service Budget Director in DC. She prepared and presented five agency budget requests to Congress, and worked closely with congressional staff on annual appropriations, emergency supplementals and the Recovery Act. Lenise holds a Bachelor's Degree in Timber Management and a Master's Degree in Forest Resources from the University of Georgia.

Moderator:

Jeremy Arensdorf is a Vice President at Jefferson Consulting Group, where he manages the firm's government practice, Jefferson Solutions. He supports federal agencies

on a host of acquisition and management initiatives. These include developing performance-based acquisitions, conducting organizational and process assessments, developing messaging, branding and marketing plans, and monitoring and providing analysis of acquisition legislation and policy. Jeremy also leads Jefferson's proposal efforts, and provides procurement expertise, proposal support, and orals coaching to Jefferson's commercial clients. He is the Chair-elect for the ACT-IAC Acquisition Management Special Interest Group (SIG), and currently serves as the SIG's Vice Chair. In this role, has led a number of initiatives to improve government-industry communication during the acquisition process.

Register at <http://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1226059>

Bid & Proposal Conference

Hundreds of Proposal Lifecycle Professionals Prepare for Largest Worldwide Educational and Networking Event

The Association of Proposal Management Professionals® (APMP®) has launched the [APMP Bid & Proposal Con 2013 conference schedule](#), listing all of the sessions for the world's leading educational and professional development event for proposal management, capture, business development and graphics professionals. [APMP's Bid & Proposal Con 2013](#) will be held May 28 – 31, 2013 at the Westin Peachtree Plaza in Atlanta, GA.

The 2013 online schedule makes it easier than ever before for professionals to plan which APMP Bid & Proposal Con 2013 sessions and panels they will attend because APMP has linked the [conference schedule](#) to [details about each session and presenter](#).

"There's a rich schedule of educational opportunities lined up for APMP's Bid & Proposal Con 2013, which will attract more than 600 of the proposal lifecycle industry's leading professionals from around the world. The 2013 conference schedule is organized by areas of interest, with session titles linked to session information," said Rick Harris, Executive Director, APMP. "This will make it easy for APMP members and attendees to maximize the time they spend at APMP's annual conference."

Tuesday, May 28, 2013 is dedicated as [APMP Accreditation Day](#), with special onsite opportunities that deliver one-on-one, face-to-face education and certification, enabling attendees to raise their professional expertise.

To attend APMP's Bid and Proposal Con 2013, register at <http://www.apmp.org/?page=2013RegisterNow>

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 a telephone conference. If you would like to join a meeting, contact us by going to <http://www.apmpnca.org/contact/>.

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