



EXECUTIVE summary

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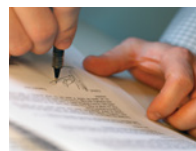
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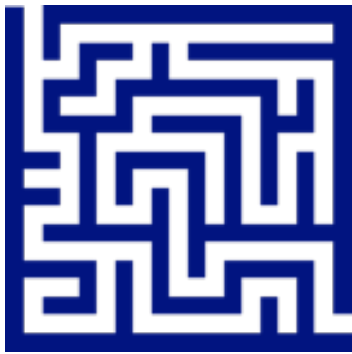




In Search of New Cheese – Avoid Stagnation

by Maryann Lesnick, CP APMP, APMP-NCA President

When I learned of the topic for this quarter's eZine, one of my favorite books came to mind – *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson, MD. The story is a metaphor about life. It's about dealing with change and avoiding stagnation. It's a parable that takes place in a maze. Four characters live in the maze, and they must search for Cheese to survive. The maze is long and confusing, and the Cheese is often difficult to find.



The characters include Sniff and Scurry, who are mice. They are non-analytical and non-judgmental. They just want Cheese and are willing to do whatever it takes to get it. The other two characters are Hem and Haw, mouse-size humans who have an entirely different relationship with Cheese. It's not just sustenance to them; it's their self-image, their belief system, and they become emotionally attached to the Cheese they have found.

The "Cheese" is a metaphor for the things we pursue in life – our jobs,

careers, and relationships. The maze is how we navigate through the challenges we face in our pursuit of that Cheese.

As the four characters search for Cheese, the story reveals traits that either help them move forward or hold them back. It reveals how stagnation, apathy, complacency, entitlement, and blindness can affect the search for new Cheese.

One thing is certain: the Cheese is always changing and moving, and we need to change with it to survive. When the Cheese runs out, it's time to put on our running shoes and search for new Cheese.

Can you relate to these characters?



- **SNIFF** – who can smell change in the air; always on the lookout for opportunities; acts more than reacts; likes to keep options open.
- **SCURRY** – who goes into action immediately; not afraid to try new ideas; acts more than reacts; likes to keep things simple.
- **HEM** – who does not want to change; afraid to take risks;

overanalyzes situations; reacts more than acts; likes to stay in his comfort zone. *"It's not fair!"*

- **HAW** – who is startled by change; likes to procrastinate; but then accepts change and moves on to enjoy New Cheese.

At different points in life, or even at different points of my day, I can be any of the four!

During the story, Haw begins to write notes on the walls of the maze (*"Writing on the Wall"*) that hold lessons for us. They reveal ways to turn our Hems into Haws. Here are some of the lessons we can learn from the book –

- Change your beliefs about change. See change not as a threat but an opportunity. Make it work to your advantage.
- The more you learn about the maze, the easier it will be to navigate.
- Imagine new Cheese. *"Fake it until you make it."* See yourself enjoying the new Cheese and make it a reality. Imagining yourself enjoying new Cheese will lead you to it.
- Why is it sometimes we cannot find new Cheese? The missing ingredient might be PASSION!
- Instead of falling behind and complaining about how inconvenient changes are, stay ahead of the game and learn new concepts. Take risks and don't be afraid.

See change not
as a threat but
an opportunity
Make it work to
your advantage.

- Many of us don't move until we feel comfortable and safe. But growth does not come from stagnation, it comes from change. Though difficult, if we embrace change, we will find new Cheese.
- As humans, we all resist change. We hide behind our fears, insecurities, lies, food, alcohol, toys, comfort zones, stubbornness or whatever else keeps us stuck. But these are just delaying the inevitable.
- Change is inevitable. Monitor your environment and anticipate change. Your Cheese may disappear!
- Noticing small changes early helps you adapt to the bigger changes that are to come.

- The quicker you let go of old Cheese, the sooner you find new Cheese. New Cheese is often better. Old beliefs do not lead you to new cheese!
- When the Cheese moves, you either need to move with the Cheese or find new Cheese. Do not stay where there is no Cheese.
- It is safer to search the maze than remain in a Cheeseless situation.
- When you move beyond your fear, you will feel free.
- When you change what you believe, you change what you do.
- The fastest way to change is to laugh at your own folly – then you can let go & quickly move on.
- And finally, **NOTHING GETS BETTER UNTIL YOU CHANGE.**



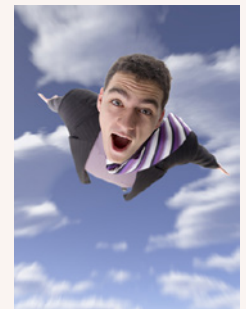
Change comes in many ways, but two that stand out are those we initiate (proactive – a new job) and those that are imposed/forced on us (reactive – a layoff). In change, we find opportunities for growth – for finding new Cheese. As the writing on the wall states, *“If You Do Not Change, You Can Become Extinct.”* We need to monitor, anticipate, adapt, and most importantly, enjoy change!

A quick and enjoyable read, I highly recommend *Who Moved My Cheese?*

Maryann Lesnick, CP APMP, PMP, CSM - Principal Consultant with Lohfeld Consulting Group, has more than 30 years of technical, management, and BD experience. Currently the APMP-NCA Chapter President, Maryann served as the 2012 and 2013 Vice President, as the APMP-NCA 2011 Logistics Chair, and on the APMP-NCA Boot Camp Committee for three years (2008, 2009, 2010), serving as Boot Camp Chair 2010. Maryann is a Practitioner Level APMP certification mentor, an ACT-IAC Fellow, a CMMI Level 2 Internal Assessor, ISO 9000 Internal Auditor, certified Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS), and holds a BS in Mathematics and Master's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. mlesnick@lohfeldconsulting.com

Fun Fact...

Our best problem-solving happens during a mixture of conscious and unconscious thought, so break through roadblocks by giving your mind time to wander.





Capture and Proposal Innovations: Heed the Law of Physics

by Lisa Pafe, CPP APMP Fellow, APMP-NCA Vice President

A law of physics states that *"an object at rest tends to remain at rest, and an object in motion tends to remain in motion."* Scientists call this tendency inertia.

The same holds true for our professional growth. When we do the same thing day after day, our aspirations wither on the vine. When you enable stagnation by remaining at rest, you end up making yourself and those around you miserable.

Are you stuck in your cubicle or war room staring at the four walls and wondering how to ignite fresh career growth? So many of us think that being a great capture or proposal professional involves a lot of time at the office. We tell ourselves that now isn't the right time to try something new, that we're too busy to find time to work out, much less explore new career avenues. Somehow, it's never the right time to leave our comfort zone.

So, like the law of physics with regard to inertia, we remain at rest. Luckily, so many opportunities are right in front of us to remain in motion.

Pursue APMP Certification.

Either take the first step to get Foundation certified or the next to obtain Practitioner or even Professional level certification. Studies have shown that certification offers clear Return on Investment (ROI) through career progression and professional impact.



According to APMP, certification offers the following benefits:

1. Demonstrates you are serious about your career and profession
2. Improves your own business development capabilities
3. Provides an independent validation of your knowledge, skills, and leadership abilities
4. Enhances how others in the organization see you and how you see yourself
5. Defines and validates your role as a professional contributor

Certification mentors are willing to help if you are uncertain how to proceed.

Participate in APMP at the International or Chapter Level.

At the local level, APMP-NCA is largest Chapter in the United States with nearly 1,100 diverse business development, capture and proposal professionals. Serving on the APMP-NCA Board or participating on one of the Board committee brings clear benefits:

1. Expands your network of peers, professional contacts and community thought leaders
2. Helps you develop and grow as a leader
3. Cultivates new skills and experiences

Capture and Proposal Innovations: Heed the Law of Physics

4. Makes an impact on the capture and proposal community
5. Rounds out your own resume

Contact any of us on the [APMP-NCA Board of Directors](#), and we will find the perfect opportunity for you to participate and grow professionally!

Be Heard! APMP-NCA offers members the chance to present new ideas, share strategies, and start a dialogue with peers – at quarterly Speaker Series events, live webinars, our annual Mid-Atlantic Conference & Expo, and our Capture Breakfast. You can also be heard by writing an Executive Summary eZine article or a blog post. Public speaking and professional writing opportunities help avoid stagnation with the following unbeatable benefits:

1. Provides a venue to meet new or strengthen existing contacts
2. Improves communication skills
3. Shares your ideas with the professional community
4. Rounds out your resume
5. Boosts self-esteem

Join Our Mentor-Protégé Program. The APMP-NCA Mentor-Protégé Program is accepting applications until December 1. This award winning program invites the industry's best and brightest to partner together for professional growth. Our program:

1. Builds lasting professional and personal relationships

2. Bridges the generation gap
3. Shares lessons learned
4. Helps you learn about the Chapter and our members
5. Adds yet another item to your resume

With all of these great professional growth opportunities, it is hard to imagine how any of our members could fall prey to inertia!

Lisa Pafe, CPP APMP Fellow and PMP, is Principal Consultant at Lohfeld Consulting Group, Inc. and a LinkedIn Publisher. She serves on the APMP-NCA Board of Directors as Vice President and was formerly Chair of the Speaker Series Committee. She holds a B.A. in Political Science from Yale University, Masters in Public Policy from Harvard University, and Masters in Information Systems from The George Washington University.

Getting Value From Your Membership

The APMP-NCA Chapter has made investments the past two years in our infrastructure, most noticeably the [apmpnca.org](#) website. Our new structure is much easier to navigate and to maintain. If you haven't visited it lately, here are a few things to check out:

1. Want to improve the prospects for success with your next proposal? Tap our Body of Knowledge for more than a decade's worth of educational presentation notes, our [Executive Summary](#) e-zine.
2. View [videos](#) of past Speaker Series events.

3. Did you miss one of our Webinar Series? They are recorded and available in our [Body of Knowledge](#).

Other resources available to you include our Social Media sites:

1. [LinkedIn](#) discussion group
2. [LinkedIn](#) Company page
3. [Facebook](#)
4. [Twitter](#)

Finally, if you would like to be on our email list for announcements and our popular 5 Fact Friday, use the sign-up link on the [apmpnca.org](#) home page.



How Can I Make My Proposals Stand Out?

by Mike Parkinson, CPP APMP Fellow

Competition is getting tighter in the world of business development.

Most companies offer similar solutions. So, how do you differentiate? The secret is to do things that are obvious and seen as helpful. The following are five ways to ensure your proposals stand out and rise to the top:

1. Do the Unexpected

Content isn't king, contrast is. Humans pay attention to that which is different. Do the opposite of what your competitors are doing. For example, if your competitors submit their proposal in a standard three ring binder with a simple textual cover, submit your proposal in a different style of cover or binder.

If your competitors submit dense, text-heavy proposals, use more visuals and white space. Consider summarizing your proposal with an infographic. When possible, use a non-standard (legible) font or layout. Your proposal will likely be perceived as unique, professional, and easier to review.

For oral proposals, use clever transitions, animations, or builds to better explain your ideas and connect your presentation into one cohesive story. When possible, engage the audience with interactivity (e.g., questions, relevant physical examples to hand out, live demonstrations that support your assertions).



Binders courtesy of Paolo Cardelli proposal binders (www.paolocardelli.com).

Another approach is to deliver your proposal in an unconventional package. For example, a printed box, a gift-wrapped container, or custom packaging. Search the Internet for inspiration: <http://www.topdesignmag.com/70-unique-product-packaging-design>. (Be sure to make your package compliant and easy to open.)

Most thought leaders have touted that design is the best way to stand out because aesthetics quickly evoke a strong emotional response. What we see helps our brains distinguish one thing from another and usually results in split-second judgments.

2. Focus on Your Unique Strength(s)

What is it about your company that is unique, superior, or special? Perhaps, it is a proprietary tool or procedure? Maybe, it's

your corporate culture? Whatever your answer, highlight it in your proposal and clearly show how it helps the customer achieve their goals better, faster, and/or at a lower cost.

An approach is to incorporate a symbol throughout your document to



How Can I Make My Proposals Stand Out

draw attention to the item that makes you and your solution unique.

Although highly unlikely, if you cannot find a strength that is advantageous to your customer, partner with someone who can. Highlight their strength as a team advantage.

3. Make It Easy to Review

Highlight the benefits of your solution. Connect the dots between your solution and the customer's goals. Keep it simple and make it completely obvious.

Other approaches include the following:

- a. Start with a clear, benefit-driven message and prove it throughout the proposal
- b. Include a powerful, succinct, customer-focused Executive Summary
- c. Use a quick compare table to compare your solution with competing solutions
- d. Strictly follow the structure of the RFP

- e. Collocate RFP reference numbers within your proposal content
- f. Use the same language as naming conventions as your customer
- g. Have one writing style and one voice with clear, compelling content

4. Keep it Simple

Most proposal solutions are complex, but our explanation doesn't have to be. Einstein said, "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." Authors write as if their customers are just like them. For this reason, most proposals are written by authors for authors. If the authors were evaluating their own proposal, they would always win. Obviously, that is not the case. Most proposals include sentences that stretch over four lines with nonlinear explanations and puzzling diagrams. Unwanted complexity is a stumbling block for decision makers and evaluators because the confused mind always says no. Use review teams and good writing techniques to eliminate convoluted content and help guarantee clarity.

5. Prove It

Most proposals fail to prove their assertions. Backup your statements with evidence. For example, include testimonials, past performance stories, and quantitative evidence (e.g., customer evaluations, test results). Validating your statements reduces perceived risk and builds trust.

Mike Parkinson, CPP APMP Fellow is an internationally recognized visual communications guru and proposal expert, professional trainer, and award-winning author. He is a partner and head of marketing 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 professionals. Contact Mike at mike@24hrco.com or call 703-533-7209.

Note From the E-Zine Chair and Chief Editor, Sareesh Rawat, CF APMP

We are always looking to improve the E-Zine and would love to hear from you!

What did you think of this issue of the Executive Summary? What did you think of specific articles? Have questions, comments or suggestions for the authors or the editors? What articles, and themes would you like to see in future issues of the Executive Summary?

Please drop us a line at ezine@apmpnca.org or contact Sareesh directly at (301) 523-5157. We look forward to hearing from you!





Staying Out of Trouble While Growing as a Proposal Professional

by Shlomo D. Katz

Does your plan for personal growth involve changing jobs – either becoming a freelancer or seeking employment in-house at a mega-government contractor? If so, you are faced with the question, “*What information, approaches, templates, etc. can I take with me?*” (The firms you work for, on the other hand, should be asking what they can do to protect themselves against losing valuable proposal know-how.)

The first and most obvious place that both parties should look for an answer to this question is the contract or employment agreement and any signed non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). An employment contract or consulting agreement may state that the company owns all work products, may define who owns what, or it may be silent. Likewise, an NDA may prohibit an employee or consultant from disclosing certain company information (outside or even inside the company), except on a need-to-know basis.

What information does an NDA protect? Only by reviewing the scope of the NDA together with all surrounding circumstances can one be certain. An NDA is supposed to protect confidential information; thus, it is necessary to define the meaning of confidential.



The specific types of information that are considered confidential will vary from company to company. Typically, however, information is confidential if it could 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, confidential information is no longer confidential when it becomes general or public knowledge. For instance, when the information has been disclosed in a trade journal or left behind

on a Metro seat, it is not likely to be confidential. It doesn’t even 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).* Because of this gray area, an employee or consultant need not blindly accept a company’s claim that something is confidential. Rather, if the employee knows that the information is public, the employee may be justified in treating it as being non-confidential.

In fact, even before the information has become public, it may be difficult to argue that it is confidential if the company has not taken commercially reasonable steps to protect its con-

Confidential information is no longer confidential when it becomes general or public knowledge.

confidentiality. For starters, companies should mark the information as “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 a company’s proposal “memory” and can print, copy and email those materials at will, the company may be hard-pressed to argue that the material was confidential. It’s important, therefore, for a company to control employees’ and consultants’ access to information that the company wishes to argue is

confidential. It goes without saying that companies also should control the access of their subcontractors and teaming partners to information in their proposal center. *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).* Again, if the individual with access to the information knows that the company has failed to protect that information, that individual may have rights to use it.

Another strategy that some companies use is to have their employees sign non-compete agreements which ostensibly limit their ability to become or work for competitors after they leave the company. Note that laws vary from state-to-state, with some courts considering non-competes to be against public policy. 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.

It’s 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. If you are that new employee, don’t assume your new employer wants the documents in your briefcase or in the trunk of your car. 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 proposal because the new employer has been tainted by purloined confidential information. Whether the defendants win or lose, such litigation is expensive, and it distracts contractors from doing what they want to be doing—winning contracts and making money. For the proposal professional, it could be a career-ending event.

So, good luck with that new job or other career move. But remember what a wise man once said, “*You can’t take it with you,*”—at least, not all of it.



Shlomo D. Katz is Counsel in the Washington, DC office of the international law firm of Brown Rudnick LLP, a Corporate Sponsor of APMPNCA, specializing in all aspects of Government contracting. Shlomo will be speaking at APMPNCA’s upcoming Mid-Atlantic Conference and Expo on: “Why We Do What We Do (and how that knowledge can help you write better proposals).” If you have any questions about these or other proposal or contracting issues, please contact Shlomo at 202.536-1753 or skatz@brownrudnick.com

Election Results: Meet Your 2016 APMP-NCA Board of Directors!

The election results are in! APMP-NCA members have elected their 2016 Board of Directors. Please join us in congratulating the incoming Board members who will begin their terms effective January 1, 2016. We also thank all of our departing Board members for their service to the Chapter.

Executive Board (2-year term)	
President	Lisa Pafe
Vice President	Hélène Courard
Secretary	Jay Carroll
Treasurer	Eric Schwarz

Directors-at-Large (1-year term)	
Annual Events Co-Chairs:	Rebecca Link and Tremin White
Corporate Partners Program Chair	Anne Brothers
Event Logistics Chair	Mitch Galloway-Edgar
eZine Chair	Julia Quigley
Knowledge Management Chair	Marsha Mehan
Marketing and Publicity Chair	Debbie Chen
Mentorship/Professional Development Chair	Teresa Waitzman-Bannister
Membership Chair	Maryann Lesnick
Special Events Chair	Ros Angus
Speaker Series Chair	Russell Smith
Technology Chair	Tom Skrobacz

Fun Fact...

A good rule of thumb in proposals is to use your client's name three times for every one time you mention your name.





The Self-Directed Path: How Proposal Professionals Can Develop Their Careers

by Russell Smith, APMP-NCA Speaker Series Chair

Maybe one in 100 of us work at a company with a strong education program. The rest have to get our training because of a decision to find a path to career development.

At the top level, there are three characteristics that are most important for a proposal professional:

1. Personality
2. Character
3. Technical skills

Each of these three factors is equally important, but this article will focus on personality and technical skills.

For more information on character, see an article on *“13 Habits of Exceptionally Likeable People”*.

Here are five personal/personality skills a proposal professional needs.

1. Independent work
2. Group work
3. Self confidence
4. Dependability
5. Flexibility

These skills are so important because of the urgent, high-stakes work done by proposal people in such close quarters and under such stringent deadlines.

What can you do if you are weak in some areas?

1. Take a seminar
2. Sign up for a self-development program

3. Find mentoring, such as offered by APMP NCA
4. Find good books
5. Find an online training source

We all know the core proposal positions such as manager, writer, administrator, graphic artist, and pricing professional. If a person wishes to advance in any of these areas, he or she needs to have a goal and a strategy. For example, are you going to be a specialist or a manager? Are you going to stay in one specific area or advance across different types of positions? Do you want to become a leader?

Leadership

What if you want to lead but were not born a Caesar or a Napoleon?

1. Take a seminar
2. Read a book
3. Practice what you learned
4. Get mentoring

Education and training

Most of us need education to reach our potential. Let’s discuss education starting at the top:

1. Ph.D – a doctoral degree helps your credibility a lot
2. MBA – professionals with this degree can usually excel over those who do not
3. Any – a bachelor’s or associates degree is valuable:
 - a) A degreed technical writer can usually advance farther than a writer without a degree
 - b) An associate’s degree gives a person more polish than HS

4. Seminars – good way to receive intensive training

How do you get your education? At night, online, from APMP Career Day, or any other way possible.

Here are the types of advantages you can get from education:

1. Capture Managers – What if taking a strategy seminar helps you win your next bid?
2. Coordinators – What if that college degree lets you become pubs director?
3. Proposal Managers – What if leadership training moves you closer to the giant programs?

The advice of Plato to “know thyself” helps us determine the best career development path. Given our strengths, weaknesses, advantages, limitations, desires, and goals, what is the path that makes the most sense for you?

Russell Smith has been president of Organizational Communications Inc. (OCI) in Reston, Virginia for 31 years. OCI provides best value proposal consultant services to customers nationally. OCI has the largest consultant list in the business and provides lower prices than other leading companies. Russell has been an active member of APMP NCA since 1994. He served as president in 2004. Additionally, he served as Chairperson of the Speakers Committee from 2001 – 2003 and from 2014 – present.



Gaining Optimal Writing Fitness

by Nicole Johnston, CF APMP and Tania Villalonga, CF APMP
Graphics by Jay Taylor



In the world of business development, the most successful proposals are like a marathon, not a sprint. The best writers – the “elite athletes” – are those who train appropriately for the big race. And while most pursuit professionals will admit they can’t always prepare for a proposal six to twelve months in advance, conventional wisdom for marathon training can (and should) be applied to proposal development.

As writers, we should treat our craft like a muscle – the more we use it, the stronger it becomes. You cannot expect to do well in a marathon without proper training. And, if you want to stand out as having one of the fastest finish times or achieving a personal record, you’ll need to keep yourself motivated and engaged to train right. This is the difference between truly developing a winning proposal versus merely being compliant. You cannot expect a successful pursuit without optimal writing fitness.



Set a goal and start early

If an RFP has been issued, the end goal is already set for you. You may have six weeks to produce a 50-page proposal on why your firm should be selected as ABC Company’s external auditor, for example. It’s easy to fall into the trap of waiting until the last minute or, worse, repurposing content from a previous proposal to suit the needs of your new proposal. No matter how seasoned a writer you are, a proposal written in several days is never as strong as one developed over several weeks. Take the mindset of an endurance runner – set your timeline and milestones, then pace yourself.

You’ll likely lose energy on mile #2. You may even injure yourself. The muscles that keep your body moving forward will tire and eventually give out. The proposal writing process is similar to a runner increasing mileage over time. You start with an outline to establish your framework for the response. Then you add narrative and detail, building in your win themes, differentiators and graphics. As you get closer to your deadline, you pick up the pace to get the sections completed and the graphics finalized. It’s important to set smaller, manageable goals (e.g., daily or weekly milestones) to avoid burnout. The concept of “hitting the wall” happens in the war room, too.



Increase mileage over time

Start smart and know your limits. Imagine never having run a marathon before and, on your first day of training, attempting to run the full 26.2 miles.



Make time for rest and recovery

When training for a marathon, it’s important not to run every day. Your muscles need time to adequately recover between training

As writers, we should treat our craft like a muscle – the more we use it, the stronger it becomes.

runs so you can come back to the sport stronger and faster. Similarly, stepping away from your proposal from time to time will help keep your writing and your thinking fresh. Taking a mental (and even physical) break is important especially after a heavy draft cycle that has turned into an all-nighter. Not allowing yourself a chance to recover and reenergize can lead to diminishing returns in the war room. Instead, use this time to take a breather and fuel up.



Fuel appropriately

We're not talking about eating every hour as you crank out proposal

drafts, although having snacks in the war room is highly encouraged! Rather, fuel your writing by finding inspiration outside of the pursuit environment. Consult your peer network. Having a sounding board – someone to bounce ideas off of or to review your writing – can help you gain perspective when you're feeling too close to your document. Read for pleasure and explore other genres. Write something creative in your free time. Watch a TED talk on your smart device. Just as training can start to feel like a chore when you run the same route over and over again, you should explore other avenues for inspiration to keep your writing fresh and compelling.

When all else fails, lace up your sneakers and go running!

Nicole Johnston, CF APMP, is a Communication and Pursuit Strategist (CaPS) for EY's Global Pursuits Group where she has contributed to many of the firm's significant wins in Advisory and Assurance. Nicole brings nearly 10 years of proposal and business development experience, including five years supporting federal pursuits exclusively. Her niche is promoting strategic and creative thinking, as well as co-developing proposal strategies, value propositions, key themes and messages. She has completed the Baltimore Half Marathon and continues to run recreationally. Nicole is contemplating her next big race.

Tania Villalonga, CF APMP, co-leads a team of high-performing CaPS and Creative Design Managers across the US for EY's Global Pursuits Group. She brings more than 18 years of experience in proposal writing and management, strategic thinking and messaging, value proposition development and business communications. She considers pursuit strategy as her expertise, helping teams develop, manage and execute integrated pursuit campaigns to help win new business. Tania is Half Fanatic #602 and has completed 36 half marathons. She is currently on a running hiatus.

Fun Fact...

Millionaires tend to have clear goals and mentors that guide their career path, both of which are strategies to avoid stagnation.





Avoiding Stagnation – Ensuring Continuous Growth as a Proposal Professional

by Amy L. Rosenbery

The Proposal Professional: Rusting in the putrefied waters of Proposal

Land, at risk of disease-carrying bacteria eating away at her career, the dragonflies and mosquitoes come out to nip at her sallow skin while the algae forms on her 2-inch heels and biofilm begins to cover her once new-looking suit.

This Proposal Professional is languishing in slow, murky Proposal waters which leads to a gradual decline of her skills and work life happiness.

All of us can go into an automatic 'idle.' We face the constant day-to-day Request for Proposals coming out, quick turn-around deadlines, endless meetings and conference calls, tussling to obtain winning solutions and competitive prices, sometimes all for naught—and then we do it all again the next day. This constant replay of each day's activities can lead to stagnation if we don't insert some energy and redirect ourselves.

In Jim Clemmer's blog^[1] entitled **Signs of Stagnation**, he states, "*Personal growth, continuous improvement, lifelong learning...these are mantras for many people today. But good intentions often don't become action. Recognizing when we've slipped into the stagnant waters of stability and certainty isn't*



easy. Like putting on weight, it happens so gradually until one day we notice how out of shape we've become."

Some Proposal Professionals do act on their personal commitments for staying up-to-date and in touch with learning and continuous improvement—and then there's the rest of us. Sometimes life just gets in the way. Some have kids to tend to, dinners to make, and homework to help with; for others, the long stretches of proposal work helps drive us into a robotic rut without realizing it.

Jim Clemmer goes on to describe a few signs of stagnation:

- "We've always done it that way"—we don't challenge our assumptions and frequently reflect on how we should do things now.

- Learning strictly through our own experience—it's often better to borrow experience than to just learn from our own. Not only can that be less painful, it's much faster. Books, seminars, mentoring, networking, group problem solving and the like are some of

Life is too short to stay in stagnant waters and ruts in which we find ourselves.

"To fall into habit is to begin to cease to be."
- Miguel de Unamuno

[1] Jim Clemmer, "Signs of Stagnation," <http://www.clemmergroup.com/>



the ways we can learn from other people's experience.

- Fuzzy focus — our growth and development should be taking us somewhere. If we don't know where we want to go, what we stand for, or why we're here, any experience and learning path will do. We just wander around and hope for the best.
- Fearing to attempt — we know that the turtle only makes progress by sticking his head out. Yet we sit and dream about what we're going to do someday. If we don't take steady steps toward our dreams, the walls around our complacency zone get ever higher and thicker."

So, to avoid languishing in these murky waters, what does the Proposal Professional do? What action does she take? How does she scrub clean the biofilm and flourish?

Carlin Flora provides an antidote to stagnation in the article From the

Pursuit of Happiness^[2] : *"Action toward goals... makes us happy. Though there is a place for vegging out and reading trashy novels, easy pleasures will never light us up the way mastering a new skill or building something from scratch will. And it's not crossing the finish line that is most rewarding; it's anticipating achieving your goal. University of Wisconsin neuroscientist Richard Davidson has found that working hard toward a goal, and making progress to the point of expecting a goal to be realized, doesn't just activate positive feelings—it also suppresses negative emotions such as fear and depression."*

Thus, inserting some energy into our lives and redirecting ourselves via setting goals (including continuous improvement activities) can lead to happier lives. What does that look like for Proposal Professionals? It could include joining—and being active in—the APMP for instance.

[2] Carlin Flora, "From the Pursuit of Happiness", <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200812/the-pursuit-happiness>, Published on January 1, 2009 - last reviewed on June 4, 2014

APMP has many of offerings for continuous improvement such as webinars, courses and certifications, and mentorship. A proposal professional could aim to get an article published for the eZine. Setting some goals for increasing your knowledge will also help you to advance your career.

Shiplely Associates, the mothership of proposal learning and processes, also offers training and courses, webinars, workshops, and certifications. Moreover, both Shiplely and APMP certifications are highly regarded in the industry.

In addition to professional development, hobbies also offset stagnation. I recently took up tennis again and feel reenergized, especially in the midst of USTA doubles competition. Having a portfolio of interests can help one feel refreshed.

Life is too short to stay in the stagnant waters and ruts in which we find ourselves. Setting goals for continuous improvement, lifelong learning, and engaging fun hobbies can help us lead more fulfilling lives. As Miguel de Unamuno wrote in *The Tragic Sense of Life*, "To fall into habit is to begin to cease to be."

Amy Rosenbery is a writer/editor at General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT). She seeks to avoid stagnation through the activities she mentioned in the article, such as APMP and Shiplely continuous improvement activities, along with playing in a competitive USTA doubles league.



From Historian to Proposal Professional: Applying the Skills of a Liberal Arts Education to Proposal Development

by Kevin Switaj, PhD CF APMP

As a Director of Proposal Development, people are always surprised to learn that I have a PhD in British history. I am often asked, “How did you get into proposals?” My answer is the basis of this article. In my experience, the skills required to be a strong proposal professional are those that you learn from a liberal arts education. As such, my academic background and experience have given me the tools to be successful in our industry.

As more IT development and engineering tasks become automated, tech companies have increasingly focused on hiring people with critical thinking and design skills. Seventy-four percent of CEOs believe that a liberal arts education creates a more dynamic worker. These non-technical skills are the ones I have found most useful in my own career: the ability to create strong content, guide others, analyze information and arrive at a conclusion, and develop innovative solutions.

Liberal arts students write. A lot. As a graduate student I put together papers on a wide range of topics. The vast majority were on history, but writing on 20th century European military history and 18th century African cultural history is as different as developing proposals on cyber security and program management support; the framework is the same but the details are very different. In both cases, one needs a clear process



to identify a central strategy and argument, find key proof points to back up the position taken, and articulate the points clearly, concisely, and convincingly within a limited number of pages while on a deadline.

Content development is, obviously, the most directly translatable skill from my educational background to proposal development. I first started my career in proposals by providing technical content for individual sections. After working on a couple of proposals in this capacity, I developed an interest in proposals and realized that other skills I had from my time in academia would benefit me in this field.

When I moved into proposal management, I quickly learned it was my job to guide others in content creation. I drew on my teaching background to provide this support. In my Master’s

and Doctoral programs, I designed and taught two classes and served as a graduate assistant for over a dozen classes from introductory to advanced levels. A key role was to help students write strong papers with arguments clearly backed up with evidence. As I support technical contributors one-on-one and in training classes, I cannot help but remember my time at Indiana University helping students craft papers on topics from the American Revolution to the Easter Rising of 1916.

As a graduate student, I had to look at all sides of an issue, identify a position to take, and clearly articulate a justification for that position. The same holds true as a proposal manager. I found myself well-prepared to help teams develop win themes and solutions based on this experience. Developing a synthesized, clear strategy for opportunities with bid teams

allowed me to provide added value to opportunities and helped advance my career.

History may seem to be static and stale, but historical writing projects look at old problems and questions in new, innovative ways. My dissertation focused on the trans-Atlantic slave trade through the spectrum of Victorian public memory. I investigated how the generations after abolition in 1807 remembered what happened and Britain's role in the slave trade. This analysis provides insights into Victorian social and cultural ideas, standards, and mindsets that allows for a better understanding of the period. This project took me 7 years to research (including multiple trips to libraries and archives around the US and Britain), write, revise, and defend in an oral presentation before a panel of four highly esteemed professors in my field.

The ability to analyze a historical topic, like Victorian Britain's memory of the slave trade, in a new way prepared me to look at proposal management

from a different perspective. Helping contributors develop and clearly articulate innovative solutions is a key part to improving any company's proposal responses. I have taken that challenge on, especially now in my role as Director of Proposal Development. I have also been keenly interested in new development approaches that ensure a proper balance between the collaborative benefits of co-location and the cost and productivity benefits of virtual development. I have contributed to the field using the analysis and innovation skills developed during my academic career.

As higher education increasingly focuses on job skills and "employability," a liberal arts degree has become an easy target of derision. In my mind, this is myopic and unfortunate. As former Kenyon College President Georgia Nugent states, "*it is a horrible irony that at the very moment the world has become more complex we're encouraging our young people to be highly specialized in one task. ... The liberal arts are still relevant because they prepare*

students to be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances."^[1]

The skills you need to be a success as a student of history, literature, or philosophy – namely, the ability to express oneself effectively both verbally and in writing – translate clearly into business in general and proposal development in particular. I am not the only to find these skills useful in business. American Express CEO Ken Chenault (history), and the last two CEOs of the Walt Disney Company, Michael Eisner (English Literature and Theatre) and Bob Iger (communications) all have had successful careers with a liberal arts degree.^[2] A history degree does not mean a life of Raman noodles – it can mean a successful and rewarding professional career.

[1] Mark Koba, "Why Businesses Prefer a Liberal Arts Education," CNBC, accessed September 16, 2015, <http://www.cnbc.com/id/100642178>.

[2] Elizabeth Segran, "Why Top Tech CEOs Want Employees With Liberal Arts Degrees," Fast Company, accessed September 16, 2015, <http://www.fastcompany.com/3034947/the-future-of-work/why-top-tech-ceos-want-employees-with-liberal-arts-degrees>.

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