Our mission is to advance the arts, sciences, and technology of new business acquisition and to promote the professionalism of those engaged in those pursuits.



# CEO FORUM

## "What's in it for me?"

At APMP, we want to ensure that you don't ask this question without one or more ready, compelling answers. In today's rapidly changing world, we are carefully choosing the Association's goals. One goal is developing a common terminology. We really do all speak the same language; we just use different terms. So we are working on a glossary of general proposal terms. Other goals include:

***Looking at the Government*** – continuing what we have started

- Supplementing the Government Liaisons Board Members with advisors from federal procurement policy organizations
- Continuing government participation in annual conferences
- Starting a regular column in the *Perspective* on procurement policy and trends
- Continuing to participate in Government acquisition reform teams.

***Looking at the Commercial World*** – increasing our focus

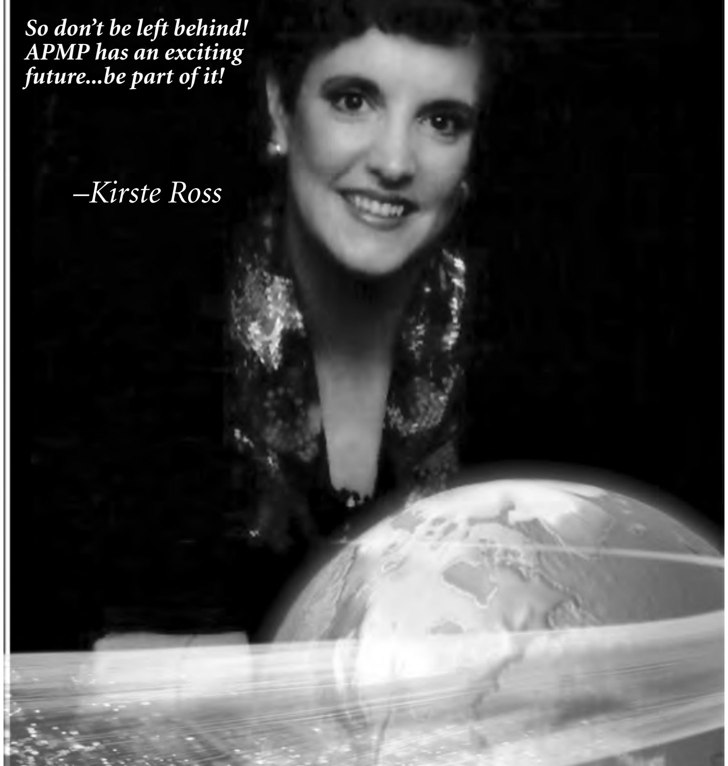
- Increasing Commercial Board representation to three members
- Starting a regular column in the Perspective to highlight commercial issues/concerns
- Continuing to increase the annual conference content to include more commercial presentations
- Identifying strategic commercial companies and procurement associations to develop a customer perspective
- Continuing to support the Commercial Interest Forum
- Developing metrics and benchmarks that are specific to commercial enterprises
- Involving membership through surveys
- Encouraging research and sharing new proposal and procurement methods
- Highlighting industry role models in APMP publications and recognizing these role models at the annual conference.

***Looking at International Growth*** – Our newest initiative! We have started a new chapter in the United Kingdom, added new members from 14 countries, and increased the international focus in conference presentations and publications.

Of course, we are also continuing to improve the things that are already working...the *Perspective*, the *Proposal Management* journal, and the APMP web site.

***So don't be left behind! APMP has an exciting future...be part of it!***

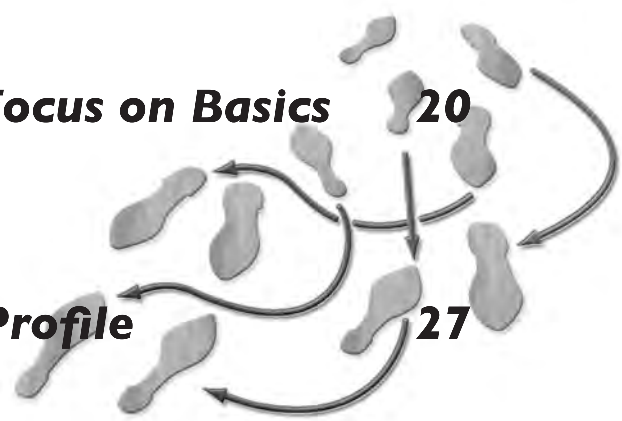
*–Kirste Ross*



# Proposal Management


*Cover Art by Colleen Jolly*





The Journal of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals

# IN THIS ISSUE



# JOURNAL**STAFF**

**Proposal**Management • *The Journal of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals*


Green

### Managing Editor
R. Dennis Green
Proposal Management
8810 Bellwood Rd. • Bethesda, MD 20817
rdengreen@aol.com
Voice: (301) 469-2777 • Fax: (301) 469-2778


Sokolow

### Assistant Managing Editor and Editorial Advisory Board Chair
Dr. Jayme A. Sokolow
The Development Source
4312 Garrett Park Rd. • Silver Spring, MD 20906
jsoko12481@aol.com
Voice: (301) 933-3989 • Fax: (301) 946-5907


Freeman

### Publication Design and Production Manager
Rich Freeman
Senior Proposal Manager
Aurora Flight Sciences
9950 Wakeman Drive • Manassas, VA 20110
rfreeman@aurora.aero
Voice: (703) 331-3620 • Fax: (703) 331-1080


Rider

### Articles Editor
Rick Rider
Rick Rider Resources
8404 Beech Tree Rd. • Bethesda, MD 20817
riderr@erols.com
Voice: (301) 365-0839 • Fax: (301) 365-2132


Hannigan

### Books Editor
Joanna Hannigan
Anteon Corporation
3211 Jermantown Road • Fairfax, VA 22030
jhannigan@anteon.com
Voice: (703) 246-0200 • Fax: (703) 246-0382


Elder

### Commerce-Products Editor
John Elder
CACI International, Inc.
1100 North Glebe Road • Arlington, VA 22201
jelder@caci.com
Voice: (703) 841-7809 • Fax: (703) 528-7232


Jolly

### Book Composition & Cover Design
Colleen Jolly
24 Hour Company
6521 Arlington Blvd., Ste 501
Falls Church, VA 22042
colleen@24hrco.com
Voice: (703) 533-7209 • Fax: (703) 533-3959


Mitchell

### Senior Editor
Linda Mitchell
Senior Proposal Manager
Sprint
13221 Woodland Park Rd.
Mailstop VAHRNA0606
Herndon, VA 20171
Linda.n.Mitchell@mail.sprint.com
Voice: (703) 904-2041 • Fax: (703) 904-2654

### Editorial Advisory Board Members
(Contributors, Spring/Summer 2003, in Alphabetical Order)

| | |
|---|---|
| Nancy Cottle | BJ Lownie |
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### Advertising, Subscriptions and Information
David Winton
APMP Executive Director
PO Box 668 • Dana Point, CA 92629
apmpinfo@aol.com
Voice: (949) 493-9398 • Fax: (949) 240-4844

**Correction**: In Trends and Views, Fall-Winter 2002 (pg 11), the defense industry B&P funding increase should have been shown as $600 million. We apologize to the authors for this inadvertent mistake.

***WELCOME TO NEW TALENTS***

With this edition, we welcome three new staff members to the journal team: Joanna Hannigan, John Elder, and Colleen Jolly. Colleen and the 24 Hour Company are a new and creative resource for journal book and cover design—as we clearly see in this edition.

THANKS and best wishes are extended to the new staff's talented predecessors: Doron Krinetz (cover design), Amy Bennington (Books), Jennifer Parks (Books), Greg Wilson (Products-Commerce), and Heide Randall (composition support).

## CHANGES OF ADDRESS AND CORRESPONDENCE:

Members of APMP should send notification of change of address via e-mail to b.n.fields@worldnet.att.net or by mail to: APMP; 300 Smelter Ave. NE #1; PMB 383; Great Falls, Montana 59404.

Any change in correspondence relating to non-member subscriptions should be sent to the same address. Subscription for APMP members is included in the annual membership dues. For non-members, a subscription is $40 per year. Individual issues may be purchased for $20 each from the APMP office while supplies last.

Proposal Management is published bi-annually by the APMP.  The APMP Professional Journal is printed in the USA. Claims for missing copies must be made within three months of publication date. Missing copies will be supplied as reserve stock permits.

## ADVERTISING RATES AND GUIDELINES:

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Please visit the APMP Home Page at www.apmp.org for additional information about the APMP Proposal Management, including archive editions.

## MEMBERSHIP:

APMP's mission is to advance the arts, sciences, and technology of business development acquisition and to promote the professionalism of those engaged in those pursuits through the sharing of non-proprietary proposal methods, approaches, and processes. APMP conducts meetings and events, both on a national/international scale and at the local level through individual chapters.

Our annual membership fee is $95. APMP's Federal Tax I.D. Number is 87-0469987. You may obtain a membership form in Adobe Acrobat/PDF format from the APMP wesbite, www.apmp.org. Send your completed membership form to: APMP Attn: Membership Applications, P.O. Box 668, Dana Point, CA 92629-0668. (949) 493-9398, (949) 240-4844 facsimile.

# Invitation to Writers

Now you can share your expertise and experience in a worldwide forum of business development acquisition and proposal management colleagues and peers. Gain visibility. Demonstrate your successes. State your opinions or air your complaints. Send us a letter, submit an article, or propose your topic of interest. Submit a short (50-word) proposal for your article summarizing its principal thesis, issues, basis, and scope. You do not need to be an APMP member to contribute.

| *Typical Schedule* | *Spring/Summer Issue* | *Fall/Winter Issue* |
|---|---|---|
| Concept Approval | Late October | Late April |
| Summary & Outline Due | Mid November | Mid May |
| Article First Draft Due | Late December | Late June |
| Article Final Draft Due | Late January | Late July |
| Peer Review & Updates | By Late March | By Late September |
| Print and Distribute | May-June | Mid November |

Contribute to our next issue. Let us hear from you today. We are open to many and varied topics of interest to professionals in our field. FOR MORE INFORMATION or to plan your contribution, call or e-mail us.

R. Dennis Green
Managing Editor
(301) 469-2777
e-mail: rdengreen@aol.com

Jayme Sokolow
Assistant Managing Editor
(301) 933-3989
e-mail: jsoko12481@aol.com

If you consider submitting an article, begin by reading the Editorial Statement and Guidelines for Authors at the back of this issue. There you will find our general guidance on manuscript preparation, scope of content, style, and methodology for submission and review.

*Highlights on news and educational initiatives throughout the association at large.*

## Three Fall Symposia – Around the World

Opportunities abound to network with peers at these upcoming Fall symposia. For more information on these activities as well as other association programs, please contact the "Local Area Chapters" pages at our web site, www.apmp.org.

### In Atlanta, Georgia – September 26, 2003

The Georgia-Chattahoochee and Carolina Chapters are co-sponsoring the Southern Proposal Accents Conference at the Crowne Plaza, Powers Ferry, in Atlanta, Georgia. The theme for this conference is "Proposals - Back to the Future." It will offer attendees an opportunity to learn the latest in proposal technologies, trends and processes. Additional information is available through Keith Propst, SPAC Co-chair at keith_propst@bellsouth.net.

### In Chandler, Arizona – September 26, 2003

The Valley of the Sun Chapter is hosting a fall symposium at the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass. The symposium will explore the synergy between work and personal life. It will help attendees develop strategies for transferring real-life skills to the proposal world, and vice versa. Please contact Don Stewart for additional information at don.stewart@honeywell.com

### In Warwickshire, England – October 9, 2003

The 2nd annual UK APMP Conference will be held at the Marriott Forest of Arden Hotel and Country Club in Warwickshire. Titled "Bid Management, Launching the Profession," it will launch a career path and certification program for Proposal Professionals. This program, developed in collaboration with Shipley Associates, will be presented here for the first time anywhere in the world. A call for papers was still open at the time of journal publication. For additional information, please contact Jon Williams at ceo@ukapmp.org.

## BD-CMM Update: Public Release Planned Later this Year

The construction of the Business Development Capability Maturity Model (BD-CMM) is virtually complete. Shipley Associates, the model's principal developer, distributed a monograph of the entire model to participants at the APMP Annual Conference in New Orleans. The model is expected to be released into the public domain in the fourth quarter of 2003. This complies with the guidelines for CMMs (i.e., that they should be owned by industry and reside in the public domain). The APMP Board and BD-CMM Steering Committee are examining the role APMP should play once the public model is released.

The BD-CMM provides proposal management professionals with a road map for process improvement in their organizations. The model's scope encompasses the full business development life cycle, including advance marketing, sales, proposal development, and sales account management.

# Beyond Compliance

## Toward Solution and Storyline Development as Valuable Proposal Management Core Competencies

**By Robert S. Frey**

*Traditionally, proposal managers—both full-time staff members within a federal contractor organization and freelance and agency-based consultants—bring solid experience and a knowledge base focused on compliance, process, and documentation. Today and in the future, however, compliance- and process-driven proposal management approaches alone will not produce winning proposals or stellar oral presentations on a sustainable basis. Instead, proposal managers must combine these important baseline approaches with solution development and facilitation; idea generation and genuine creativity; and proactive, engaged leadership. By doing so, these managers become more valuable to their organization, and more sought-after knowledge workers in the marketplace at large.*

The need for expanded and renewed focus on solution development competencies within the ranks of proposal management professionals has arisen in large part from the migration toward performance-based contracting within the federal government marketplace, which is discussed below.

Solution development refers to the critical activity of building and articulating fact-based *storylines* or *story arcs* that convey a federal contractor's specific approaches to providing meaningful, measurable, achievable, and risk-aware outcomes for its federal government customer. Robust solution sets must encompass technical requirements, program management, staffing, phase-in, and past performance. The storylines must link together major elements including "Understanding the Customer Environment," "Approach," and "Measurable Outcomes" in a manner that ensures the continuity of major sales messages, or themes.

In today's extraordinarily competitive and solution-driven federal marketplace, the delta, or difference, between winning and coming in second borders on the microscopic.

Solution sets and their associated storylines are fact-based, quantitatively validated articulations of the framework and spirit in which a federal contractor provides services and/or products to the federal government. These services and products must be *to the direct benefit of the customer* given the contractor's understanding of the government environment, requirements, and mission. The customer will most likely include the specific government agency, its users, customers, and stakeholders.

In today's extraordinarily competitive and solution-driven federal marketplace, the *delta*, or difference, between winning and coming in second borders on the microscopic. Proposal managers can provide very tangible value to their organizations

(as measured by an enhanced proposal win rate) by fortifying their skill sets to span all of the key elements presented in Exhibit 1. These important proposal management competencies include detailed compliance with the solicitation document and process flow coordination (#1 in Exhibit 1); documentation and production, editing, and quality control (#2 in Exhibit 1); and configuration control. In addition, and most importantly, proposal managers must develop and hone their skills in solution development and leadership (#3 and #4 in Exhibit 1) to attain proposal management success.


*Exhibit 1. Solution development, creativity, and leadership are critical competencies for proposal management professionals now and in the future.*

## The Changing Federal Procurement Landscape

Let's take a closer look at performance-based contracting. Migration toward performance-based contracting is a key and growing element in the federal marketplace. The Request for Solution (RFS) is becoming as common, if not more prevalent, than the traditional Request for Proposal (RFP). And even many RFPs have performance-based components, including quantitative metrics, performance standards and thresholds, options to propose most efficient organization (MEO) staffing options, and performance-based work statements (PBWSs).

Now, the focus is on innovative, risk-aware solutions. Proposal documents and oral presentations must be presented in clear concise words and illustrations that build on industry best practices and disciplined approaches, including the Software Engineering Institute (SEI) Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) structured software engineering methodologies, ISO 9001:2000 and 9002:2000 standards, and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) guidelines. Importantly, performance-based service contracting is a major component in President Bush's Management Agenda, which emphasizes market-based, results-oriented, citizen-centered government.

Performance-based contracting is a procurement strategy defined in FAR Subpart 37.6 and in the Office of Federal Procurement Policy in its Policy Letter 91-2 (dated April 9, 1991). That strategy structures all aspects of an acquisition around the purpose and results of the work to be performed, as opposed to either the manner in which the contractor or offeror must perform the work or the processes that must be used. The WHAT is emphasized over-and-above the HOW**.** In general, if the level of effort, staffing levels, skill mix of staff, or educational levels of staff are specified in the RFP, then the contract is not performance-based.

The key elements of a performance-based work statement for services are: (1) a statement of the required services in terms of output and support for the agency's mission; (2) a measurable performance standard for the output; and (3) an acceptable quality level or allowable error rate. The government may employ a variety of measurement methods, including a project surveillance plan or an award fee evaluation plan. The primary elements of a performance work statement for hardware or end-item deliverables are: (1) a specification of what the end product must do in terms of performance, along with any critical constraints such as weight or footprint, and (2) measures of quality that are related directly to the end products' capacity to perform its intended use. According to the September 30, 2002, issue of Federal Computer Week, the Bush Administration is now considering issuing further directives for federal agencies' use of performance-based contracting. *The intended goal?* More vigorous competition.

> *All federal contractors must be able to prepare proposals that demonstrate innovative performance approaches for managing risk while ensuring superior quality.*

This innovative federal performance-based contract strategy leverages the ingenuity of industry while providing the government with access to the best commercially available products, services, processes, knowledge, and technologies. From the government's perspective, use of performance-based contracting strategies reduces acquisition cycle time and costs, since contractors are not compelled to perform to detailed design-type specifications that can inhibit creativity and efficiencies. Most importantly, performance-based contracts help to ensure contractor *accountability for mission-focused results*.

Fundamentally, all federal contractors, including small businesses, must be able to prepare proposals and oral presentations that demonstrate *innovative* performance approaches for managing *risk* proactively while ensuring superior *quality*. In return for performance excellence, contractors earn positive monetary incentives for meeting technical, schedule, and cost standards and thresholds.

## Effective Solution Development

*So how can proposal managers become integrally involved in solution and storyline development?* Proposal managers can provide significant benefit to their organizations by proactively leveraging the resources depicted in Exhibit 2 to conceptualize, develop, and produce results-focused storyboards, solution sets, storylines, proposal narrative, and graphics concepts in concert with other capture and proposal staff. Building on the Exhibit 2 resources, proposal managers must educate themselves about (1) the ultimate customer and its vision and mission; (2) the specific customer line organization and its vision, mission, and strategic plan, including how these link with the overarching mission of the parent agency; (3) relevant technical, programmatic, staffing, and contractual issues and "hot buttons;" and (4) policy directives that govern the customer's activities, buying decisions, and deliverables to its own users and stakeholders.

**Understanding the Customer**

Call Plan Results—Trip Reports

Customer Web Sites

Mission and Vision Statements

Direct Interviews with Program, Management Staff, and Technical Staff

Strategic Plans

Customer Technical Library

***Exhibit 2****. Sources to leverage for developing innovative, knowledge-based proposal solutions.*

In the course of that self-learning process, graphics concepts, background information on government leaders and other useful information emerge. For example, in researching information technology standards that are applicable to a given customer, one might locate a compelling graphic concept that is already known to that customer because it is an integral part of their web site. That graphic may be used as is, or modified, to convey a key concept in a federal contractor's proposal narrative or oral presentation. Or, a listing of critical-path activities that a proposal manager locates through the federal customer's technical library can be built into a table in the proposal that demonstrates understanding of that customer's operational environment.

Web-based research on recent awards by a given customer to competitors can also shed considerable light onto that customer's buying habits and preferred technical solutions. Speeches and biosketches or *curriculum vitae* of key federal leaders, and published papers of those individuals can prove to be invaluable in proposing meaningful, on-target solutions to those same customer leaders. Given the level of executive review and approval, customer news releases are excellent sources of knowledge. Specific words and phraseology that are used can be incorporated into the proposal or oral presentation. Customer telephone directories as well as Web sites can help proposal managers understand how the customer's organization is structured, and provide insight into key graphic or word concepts that the customer frequently uses. Documented trip reports based on executive call plan execution can be rich reservoirs of direct insight into a customer's hopes, fears, biases, and critical issues and success factors. Federal government publications, such as Air Force Base papers, can shed light on the latest points of interest to the customer community. Specific examples include the *Space & Missile Times* published on behalf of the 30th Space Wing at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, the *Space Observer* at the 21st Space Wing at Peterson AFB in Colorado, the *Astro News* at the Space & Missile Center at Los Angeles AFB, and the *Army Times*. Another important resource for proposal managers is customer briefings to industry.

In the process of researching, thinking, and learning about the customer, the program, and the mission, the proposal manager should focus on how the knowledge and information being collected contributes to overall understanding of the customer, the strategy of his or her federal contracting company, the approach and solution that follows from that strategy, and the tangible and intangible benefits or "value proposition" that particular solution set brings to the customer, its program, and its overall mission (see Exhibit 3). The storylines for the proposal and the oral presentation that emerge from the critical thinking and synthesis of ideas are leveraged to populate such diagrams as the one shown in Exhibit 3.

***COMPLIANCE + VALIDATED STORYLINE + COMPREHENSIBLE PRESENTATION translates into a very high probability of winning.***

Let's examine a sample storyline: Our corporation will work in close partnership with the Department of the Army to enable greater knowledge sharing among Army communities in support of the overall Army Transformation. Collaborative web-based knowledge portals, e-learning technologies, systems integration, intelligent data mining, intelligent agents and expert systems technologies will be assessed and deployed with an enterprise-wide focus targeted to maximize the Army's investments in its people and knowledge assets. Such knowledge sharing will facilitate improved, fact-based decision dominance by commanders and business stewards in the battlespace, organizations,


*A dedicated Program Manager imparts her vision onto the team.*


***Exhibit 3.*** *Example of a customer-focused, benefits-based solution pathway.*

and Army's mission processes. This decision dominance will contribute directly to the effectiveness and day-to-day safety, security, and quality of life of America's warfighters worldwide.

This sample storyline conveys the tools, technologies, and approaches that the federal contracting firm will employ in delivering significant benefits to the Army mission of transformation and to the warfighters around the globe. Such a storyline would be used at an overarching level (1.0 or 1.1) in a Management or Technical Approach, with much greater qualitative and quantitative detail provided in the subsections that follow. In a recent government debriefing on a major winning proposal, my company learned that COMPLIANCE + VALIDATED STORYLINE + COMPREHENSIBLE PRESENTATION translates into a very high probability of winning.

## Complementary Roles and Responsibilities

Capture managers and technical leads are integrally involved in solution set and storyline development, but it would behoove proposal managers to become deeply immersed in this process as well. There is important dovetailing of capture manager and proposal manager functions. Proposal managers and capture managers are most effective together when (1) they communicate many times a day; (2) brainstorm solution sets and storylines together; (3) use each other as sounding boards for key ideas and concepts; and (4) share what they know about the customer, program, key staff, and applicable technologies openly and in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

From February to October 2002, I was the Proposal Manager on a half-billion dollar proposal for the U.S. Air Force Space Command. Every morning, the Capture Manager and I met to plan the actions and follow-up issues for the day, identify problem areas in the proposal process, share ideas about pivotal, solution-conveying graphics, and ensure that the major storylines were being articulated throughout all seven proposal volumes.

## Developing a Compelling Storyline

Contemporary proposal development is about articulating and illustrating a fact-based, validated storyline that provides tangible value for the federal government customer and its users, customers, and stakeholders. That proposal storyline must be told convincingly, while simultaneously being in full compliance with Sections L and M of the RFS from an infrastructure and requirements standpoint. Current and future proposal management professionals must prepare themselves to be an integral part of the proposal solution set and storyline development process. Compliance is necessary, but certainly not sufficient. To win proposals now and in the coming years, innovative, cost-effective, risk-aware solution sets and storylines are needed that span the people, processes, technologies, and knowledge assets that federal contracting firms can provide.

*Robert S. Frey serves as Vice President for Knowledge Management and Proposal Development with RS Information Systems, Inc.® (www.rsis.com), an Inc.500 minority-owned information technology and engineering firm headquartered in McLean, Virginia. Mr. Frey is author of* Successful Proposal Strategies for Small Businesses: Using Knowledge Management to Win Government, Private-Sector, and International Contracts *(Boston: Artech House, Inc., 2002, 1999, 1997), which explains how to plan and write proposals for government, private-sector, and international contracts. He can be contacted at rfrey@rsis.com.*

# David A. Franke –
## *Champion for Air Force Acquisition Excellence*

**By R. Dennis Green**
**Interview by John Meehan**

*The first thing you notice about David Franke in a social setting is his earnest and, at times, quiet and fatherly demeanor. But turn the topic to acquisition management and Franke, now Director of the Acquisition Center of Excellence (ACE), Headquarters, Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC), Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (WPAFB), will engage you in a provocative discussion about what acquisition excellence is, can be, and should be today. His deeply-rooted passion for this topic stems from his 30-year career with the Air Force, a career that has included senior acquisition management positions on military aircraft programs for the F-16 fighter and the B-1B long-range bomber. As ACE's Director, he currently supports more than 340 separate program, product, and service acquisitions, ranging from initial development of acquisition strategies to system retirement. Under his leadership, ACE's average annual procurements of $65 billion are managed by a total staff of 134 acquisition managers, specialists, and engineers (the 'ACEs').*

## Evolutionary Acquisition Management—More Than Reform

Few APMP initiatives have been as rewarding as those related to government relations and acquisition reform. Among the most constructive relations have been those jointly sponsored with the Air Force and David Franke. With his encouragement, APMP representatives participate in Air Force-sponsored industry summits, brief their counterparts on a range of reform topics, and field questions about the potential impact of proposed reforms. Franke and his staff have also participated in APMP's annual conferences, making presentations and sitting on panels.

Over the seven years APMP has worked with the Air Force, an acquisitions evolution has occurred: Air Force Acquisitions has evolved from the creation of a Centralized Request for Proposal Support Team (CRFPST), through the development of the Centralized Acquisition Support Team (CAST), to issuance of "Lightning Bolt" directives and the recent establishment of the ACE. APMP members have observed this evolution with interest.

What is the status of Air Force acquisition management? And is there still a role for industry to participate in Air Force reforms?

"We started with the Centralized RFP Support Team" said Franke, "looking at RFPs in a vacuum from the rest of the process, but at least it was a start. Then we moved to an Acquisition Support Team (AST) concept, empowered the AST to analyze our methods and processes, then used the analysis that AST performed to help programs evolve their acquisition strategies. But 'Acquisition Support Team,' per se, is now a term of the past."

"Our Acquisition Center of Excellence or ACE is the third generation of acquisition reform."

Franke explained how the concept of Acquisition Centers of Excellence expands upon the earlier Air Force acquisition reform organizations. "Now," he said, "we're looking at the full life cycle. We're looking at a concept that we call Agile Acquisition. And we're asking important questions," he said. "Like: How do we build better contractor relationships? How do we effect early industry involvement? How do we increase communications/collaboration? How do we take down the barriers and roadblocks that may exist in the acquisition process?"

Fortunately, Franke has some thoughtful, constructive answers. The Air Force Acquisition Centers of Excellence, such as the one that he directs, have become the means for resolving such questions, for fostering innovation in the marketplace, and for refining acquisition processes through incremental and constructive change. To date, Headquarters Air Force Material Command (AFMC) and all AFMC Product, Logistics, and Test Centers have established ACE organizations at bases across the country. Additionally, Franke's office continually reaches out to other acquisition organizations to investigate the feasibility of establishing 'ACE-like' organizations.

The secret of the ACE centers's successes to date may be found in the way they promote collaboration. "We're building partnerships and industry involvement through organizations like APMP," said Franke. "It's how we're going to help each other understand how the other does business. I think it's critically important for people on the industry side to have a clear understanding about how things are changing in the Air Force." And vice versa. "We need to have a partnership that evolves that process."

What Franke clearly communicates is that acquisition excellence is not a static target. "We started out with the 'Lightning Bolts'," said Franke, referring to the management directives first issued in May 1995 with two subsequent 'sets' of Bolts issued, the most recent in November 2001. They prescribed:

- Focus on results, not the process
- "Spiral" acquisition, developing and acquiring program capability in increments
- Establishing "roadblock busters"
- An environment that breeds innovators
- Establishing a Program Executive Officer for service contracts
- Establishing a "knowledge pipeline."

"The most recent set of lightning bolts," he said, "have led us to creating the current Acquisition Center of Excellence. That concept in itself is evolving. That, in turn, has led us to what we call Agile Acquisitio. It's continuous improvement. It's not status quo." And he adds: "It's not reform."

## Agile Acquisition

The distinction Franke makes between Agile Acquisition and reform is notable. For him, the term 'reform' is becoming archaic. "We've moved away from reforming anything," said Franke. "It has the wrong context. We're moving to acquisition excellence and continued improvement in everything we do. We're in a different world today."

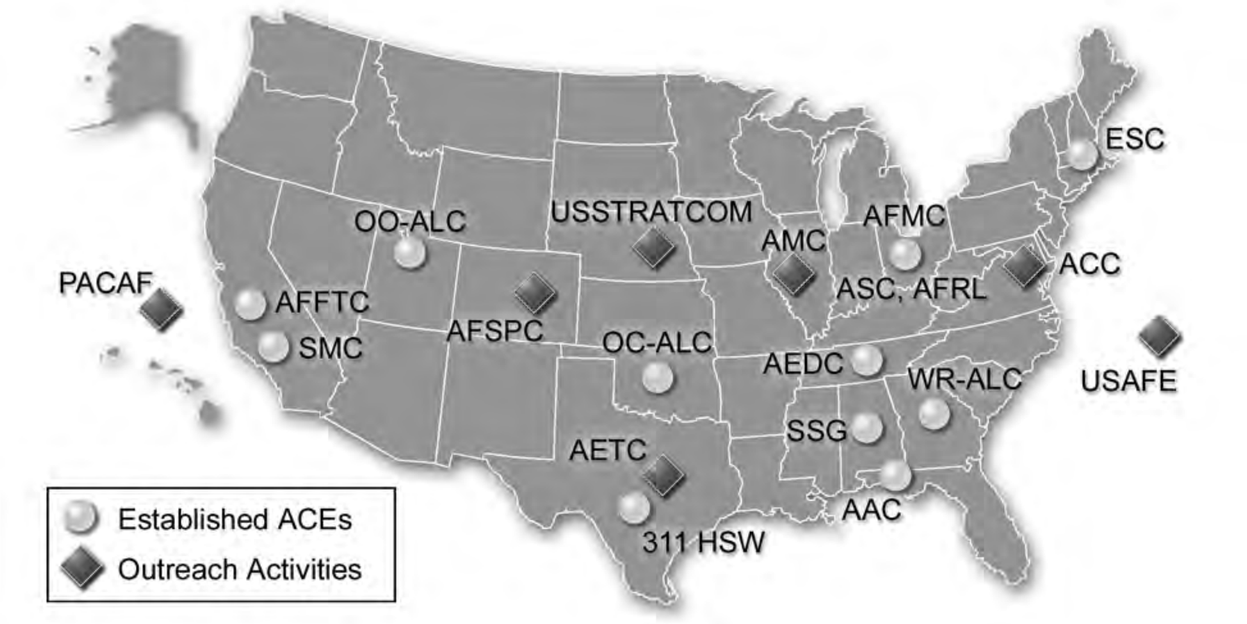
"Agile acquisition and its tenets are where we're going over the next five years. In today's world, with today's asymmetrical threats, today's relationship with the warfighter, today's scenarios are changing rapidly. The requirements mandates are changing much more rapidly than we've ever seen before. We can't take the time that we have in the past to field our weapon systems.

Mr. Franke defines Agile Acquisition by these three tenets:

1. Collaborative requirements definition
2. Transition of technology
3. Seamless verification.

What is collaborative requirements definition? According to Franke, it is driven by the inherent benefits in speed and ability that efficient collaboration can bring to the acquisition process. "How," asks Franke rhetorically, "do you bring industry, the warfighter, the acquirer, and the tester together as early as


***EVOLUTION OF ACQUISITION EXCELLENCE** – ACE is the third generation of recent Air Force acquisition reforms.*




***MULTIPLE LOCATIONS** – Implementing Acquisition Centers of Excellence Across the Air Force.*

possible to sit down and absolutely agree on what the requirement is of the end item that we're going to develop and deliver. How quickly can we do that? And can we do it in increments using the tools and philosophies of evolutionary acquisition and spiral development as a process?"

The second tenet looks at the transition of technology out of the laboratories and into real programs. Franke, again, asks the operative questions. "What are the mature technologies today that can meet the requirements of the warfighter? How do we engage the laboratories where new technologies evolve?" And, "Is the technology mature enough to deliver a capability to the warfighter now?" The relationship with the technology community has to be a strong partnership.

Seamless Verification, the third tenet, addresses unnecessary redundancies or inefficiencies in a conventional test program approach. "How do we merge the two testing communities (developmental and operational) into a single seamless process so that we don't go through and do a bunch of individual developmental testing, bring a product together, have a product completed, and pass it over the fence to the operational testers only to say, 'Now how do you think it works in the operational environment?' We want to be able to share test points. We want to be able to share and integrate test plans. We want to be able to share test methodology so that we remove the time from program development that would normally and unnecessarily be devoted to separate independent verification process or tests."

Agile Acquisition is a bold, brash initiative. Its tenants are in keeping with the 'lightning bolt' syntax and directives from which they sprung. But what actions might help encourage industry to more active participation with its government counterpart? How does industry justify spending its limited bid and proposal (B&P) funds in the era of a decreasing DoD industry base?

"I'm going to stay away from talking about how companies use their B&P funds," Franke said tactfully, "because that's not my area of expertise. But the reality of where we're going in Acquisition Excellence should be equally beneficial to both government and industry. Here's why."

"In order for companies to make a decision on how they use their (B&P) funds, what they're going to bid on and what they're not going to bid on, is largely dependent on their involvement on programs, what's going on, what the requirements are, and maybe most importantly, their understanding of those requirements."

It follows that early collaboration is good for all the parties involved. "Because," he continues, "I want to bring industry in on the very earliest day when I sit down and start thinking about what my requirement is. I want them to sit down with the warfighter. And I want them to sit down with the technologist and the tester. And I want them to sit down with the guys that are going to be the acquirers and do the actual program management. And get them together—all the way back to the initial steps of requirements development. "I want industry involved so that it is more knowledgeable about the process. I want to have more sessions where industry comes in and talks to the program staffs. I want to break down that wall between government and industry that used to say, 'I can't talk to you. I'm starting to build a requirement.' Because I do want to talk to you. I want to know what your thoughts and answers are to my requirement. If I'm headed down a path to a requirement that you can't possibly get to, I want us to be honest and discover that now. I don't want to ask you to bid a program [with requirements] that you can't get to."

"How you use your B&P is your business. How I give you enough information for you to make conscious and accurate decisions through your involvement in early program development is what's important to me."

## Corporate Councils

Collaboration between government and industry groups takes several forms. In years past, the Air Force invited industry and APMP participation in acquisition reform 'Summits.' Corporate Councils are the newest manifestation. As Franke explains, Corporate Councils are a tool to share the tenets of Agile Acquisition and to propagate lessons learned. They bring together representatives from all the Material Command Center ACEs, include representation from the other Air Force Major Commands, as well as industry and other government agencies. The tenets are typically promoted and reviewed on a program-by-program basis. The benefits to participants emerge from differences as well as similarities.

"We recognize that one size does not fit all," said Franke. "Somebody that's doing a collaborative requirements development on an aircraft at Aeronautical Systems Center at Wright Patterson Air Force Base (AFB) probably would not be doing exactly the same thing that the center at Warner Robbins AFB would be doing on buying a modification program and how they develop a requirement. So once a quarter, the corporate leadership comes together from all the Acquisition Centers of Excellence and shares what they have successfully accomplished at each of their centers on their programs on the implementation of those three tenets as well as other process innovations."

> *We recognize that somebody else may have a better idea. Others may have stumbled through some problems that we have not yet seen. We all can learn from that.*

Familiar operative questions drive the corporate council meetings, i.e., "Tell me about how you're implementing collaborative requirements development. Tell me how you're implementing seamless verification. Tell me how you're implementing technology transition. You may only be doing two of those on any given program," said Franke. "You may only be doing one on a program, depending on its life cycle. But now we've got nine centers worth of people taking everybody else's ideas home with them, and trying to broadcast across all the programs Air Force wide, not just AFMC." Participants on recent councils have included the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, National Air and Space Administration, and the other services and agencies. Industry and professional organizations such as APMP also attend.

"We're trying to have a better communication flow of process across everybody in the acquisition community. So when we talk about Agile Acquisition, we recognize that somebody else may have a better idea. Others may have stumbled through some problems that we have not yet seen. We all can learn from that."

## *Dispelling a Perceived Threat to Competition*

The concept of Evolutionary Acquisition/Spiral Development when enhanced program capability is tested and deployed in increments is one of the Lightning Bolt directives on which the Agile Acquisition approach is founded. Some DoD contractors regard this direction with trepidation. They worry that the program has potential, inherent conflicts, and that using this strategy can choke competition after the government progresses beyond the first increment or spiral.

Rather than deflect such a challenging question, Franke was eager to address it. "I want to dispel a belief that I think is out there," he said, "that I personally believe is incorrect. And that is that spiral development or evolutionary acquisition will either increase or decrease the competitive base or posture that we had before we moved to this entity. Because I do not believe that's true. I don't think those two affect the competitive base at all. What you as a contractor competed on before, you'll be able to compete on in the future. What you did not compete on before, you will not compete in the future. If a Program Manager was doing a spiral on an acquisition program such as F-16s, F-22s or F-15s, he would not suddenly say, 'I'm going to go out and see if somebody else wants to build F-16s.'"

"Once you develop that first increment and that first capability and you vet it down into a process, it's no different than doing modifications to another program. The difference in evolutionary programs as far as development is that you incrementally deliver the capability to the warfighter. It's not that you're suddenly going to find some new way to recompete at that point. So I don't see the competitive venue changing much, and I think that's a fear that we need to move away from. There are too many people that think that's the case."

Franke sees the roles of evolutionary acquisition and spiral development with passionate clarity. He says, "Evolutionary acquisition is a philosophy of evolving your development process as you go through a program. Spiral development is the


***ACE FOCUS AREAS*** *– Tools and training aids such as these are developed and deployed to promote excellence and continuous process improvement throughout each ACE.*

## *David Franke ... At Glance*

***Title:*** Director, Headquarters Air Force Materiel Command Acquisition Center of Excellence (ACE), Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (WPAFB), Ohio

***Prior Positions (Recent):***

- Director, Centralized Acquisition Support Team, Headquarters AFMC, WPAFB
- Deputy Program Director, F-16 SPO, Aeronautical Systems Center, WPAFB
- Assistant Director, Air Force Acquisition Logistics Division, Aeronautical Systems Center, WPAFB
- Director of Acquisition Logistics, Propulsion SPO, ASD, WPAFB
- Director of Acquisition Logistics, B-1B SPO, ASD, WPAFB

***Education:***

- Bachelor of Arts, Management, Antioch University (1988)
- Defense Systems Management College (1992)
- Program for Senior Officials in National Security, Harvard University (1993)
- Master of Aeronautical Science, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (1995)
- Leadership for a Democratic Society, Federal Executive Institute (1999)

***Birth Place:*** Milwaukee, WI

***Family:*** Wife, Gail; 1 Son, 1 Daughter

***Hobbies:*** Carpentry, woodworking, shooting

***Favorite Quote:*** "You don't know what you can't do until you've tried."

process by which you go through and do that. They are two distinct and different things. I'm going to do an evolutionary acquisition process by the fact that I am going to deliver things incrementally to the warfighter, rather than waiting till I have 'the big bang' or everything he ever wanted in a nutshell with a nice ribbon tied around it."

"Spiral development will allow me to take increments of that capability that he wants, based on the available technology. With that," he said, "I go back to: build your collaborative requirements and do your technology transition. I'm going to go look at what technologies will allow me to deliver a piece of the capability today. When I have meaningful capability, I will deliver that to the warfighter promptly, instead of waiting until the full program is done. I will use it. I will test it. I will get feedback. And I will feed that knowledge back into the spiral process, taking a look at the next technology available and down the road. So the product that took me ten years to develop before, and I only made one ultimate delivery, I may deliver in three or four pieces of real capability based on technology as it evolves."

About the argument that spirals effect the competitive base, Franke concludes, "I don't think that's a fair debate."

## *Facing Cost Overrun Issues Head On*

Given Franke's openness and candor, we followed up with a general question about program cost overruns such as the one recently reported by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) for the F/A-22 fighter jet program. In such instances, to what extent do ACE officials remain involved or accountable?

"The ACE would remain involved," said Franke, "to the extent desired by the program office, but given our largely advisory role, the ACE would not likely be considered accountable for the relative health of a given program." Who does? "The program manager has the ultimate authority to make decisions affecting his or her program, and they can accept or reject our advice at their sole discretion. In the case of a substantial overrun, ACE personnel would likely participate with the program office in an integrated process team (IPT) to ascertain what caused the problem, document lessons learned, and disseminate them to other offices, centers, and activities to reduce the likelihood of similar occurrences."

Franke pointed out that ACEs are not consultants, in the most common use of that term. He said, "We do more than merely tell program teams what they should be doing. We actually help make it happen. ACE personnel consistently assist teams in all pre-award and many post-award activities as 'hands on' participants in the process."

## *Rewriting Guidance*

Predictably, changes as broad and sweeping as those being shepherded by Franke and his Air Force colleagues must be accompanied by changes to the guidance and regulatory requirements that are levied on each program. Franke noted that such changes are in process, including rewrites to:

- The Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Supplements
- Air Force Instruction 63-1, Reality Based Acquisition
- Air Force Instruction 63-101, Acquisition System
- DoD Directive 5000.1, Defense Acquisition System and DoD Instruction 5000.2, Operation of the Defense Acquisition System.

## *Champion for Government—Industry Collaboration*

Franke has distinguished himself as a collaboration champion. His initiatives are showing the profit of greater acquisition efficiency as well as good will. We concluded our meeting with questions that relate to Franke's view on the future of effective collaboration in three areas: clarity in RFP interpretations, government-industry educational venues, and work with other services.

The RFP question grew out of the occasional frustration that RFP requirements can still lack clarity and foster disparate interpretations. Would the government support a government-industry team to address and help eliminate these differences?

"We are absolutely committed," said Franke resolutely, "to increasing the quality of the RFPs in any way and shape that we can. We're always interested in inputs from industry and anyone else on how we can do that. That's just a fact. The whole ACE structure is dedicated to building a communications relationship, to better communicating what the requirements are. [It is why we] talk about early industry involvement, how we get you back into the system, how we get you back into the program, how we get you into the program offices, how we bring the warfighters together with the acquirers—all those kinds of things. So, without a doubt, our interest is there."

"We have tried some things on some programs," he continued, "that somebody would call pretty radical, that I think are pretty ingenious. We've got to figure out ways to polish them a little bit. On some programs we've gone out and assigned a program office person to each competing industry team to work with that team, and interpret the RFP and the requirements process as they build their proposal. Now that's really different. And the contractors have to be willing to sign up to that. But if your question is, 'Are we willing to sit down and find ways to break down those barriers?' the answer is: absolutely. Bottom line, I would absolutely, personally support some type of joint government-industry effort to find ways to better communicate these processes. We're working on them every day."

*We're always interested in inputs from industry and anyone else—that's just a fact. The whole ACE structure is dedicated to building a communications relationship.*

Franke also proposes collaborative initiatives on the educational front. His organization, for example, has offered to conduct a source selection workshop for APMP members. "In the source selection workshop," he said, "we would give industry the same workshop given to our government teams, though not program specific but a generic version." It would explain source selection and how the Air Force process works.

One refreshing quality about Franke is his willingness to propose new or otherwise untested ideas. He thrives on creative problem solving and is not afraid to postulate possible solution scenarios, even if some of them later prove impractical or get ruled out. The impression of his ingenuity is a lasting one.

To improve process understanding between government and industry, for example, Franke imagined for us some kind of interchange that would "allow industry folks to participate in source selection teams on source selections unrelated to their own particular industry. And vice versa. Maybe we can have some government people work on a proposal team for something not specifically related to their own source selections." The idea may be radical, but it's noble and practical in its intent. "At least," said Franke, "we'd both have a much better understanding of how our businesses work."

On the question of whether acquisition reform efforts such as those by the Air Force can be extended across service or agency boundaries, Franke is a little more circumspect, but enthusiastic and continually supportive.

"I think the example of corporate council is the perfect opportunity," said Franke. "That's why we've invited the Army and Navy to come in and share what we're doing. On programs like the Joint Strike Fighter [aircraft]," he said, "we are already working side-by-side with our other service counterparts. But we've got to do more on an individual basis in educating each on how we do business, how our requirements are developed, how we evolve our processes. We've worked very hard to develop and distribute tools across the services."

As an example, he cites an interactive, computer-based acquisition simulator called 'Game Board.' It's proven to be both fun and effective. A tool called Con-Connect indexes contracts for the acquisition community, allowing them to identify contracts against which they can write orders. MR Post is a tool that helps acquisition professionals do market research. "We would hope that other services would also share," said Franke. "We're building a great relationship."

As he lists the entities invited to future Corporate Council collaborations including the National Security Agency, Army Material Command, Spectrum Management Center, the Mobility Command, National Reconnaissance Office, and, of course, APMP representatives, it is clear that Franke is moving with alacrity, each foot firmly strapped to acquisition lightning bolts. Running this Acquisition Center of Excellence is a job of sobering magnitude, but Franke faces it and his Agile Acquisition mandate with a confident resolve. "It's a slow process, but we're getting there," he said. "Cultures don't change overnight."

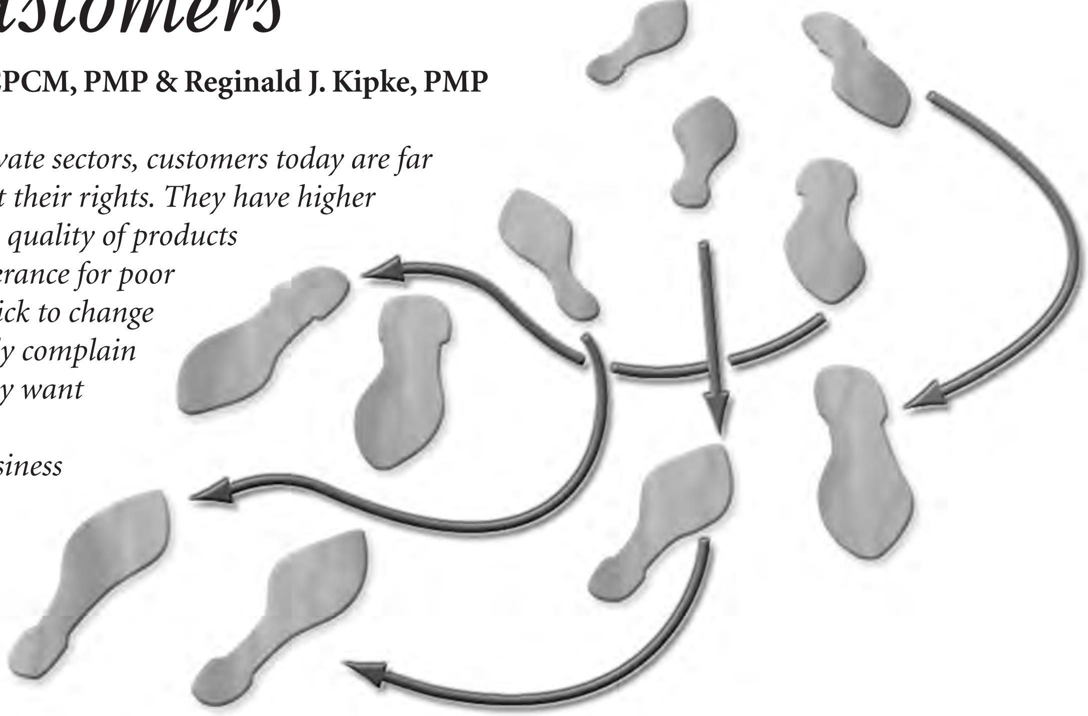
PM acknowledges the assistance of Al Helm, Dan Fulmer and Steve Clark in the preparation of this article.

*R. Dennis Green is a management consultant, writer, and proposal practitioner with more than 20 years experience. He has been Managing Editor of Proposal Management since its founding in 1999. He was founder and first president of the APMP National Capital Area chapter (1992-1994). Phone (301) 469-2777; e-mail rdengreen@aol.com.*

*John Meehan is APMP's Government Liaison Co-Chair and Chair of the APMP Acquisition Reform Task Force. He is a Senior Proposal Specialist for Rockwell Collins, former regional sales manager of computer services for Banks of Iowa, and holds several Pilot Certificates (over 11,000 total flying hours). He enjoys his family, flying and working with customers. Phone (319) 295-3470; e-mail jjmeehan@rockwellcollins.com.*

# A Capture Management Life Cycle Primer: Learning to Dance with Customers

**By Gregory A. Garrett, CPCM, PMP & Reginald J. Kipke, PMP**



*In both the public and private sectors, customers today are far more knowledgeable about their rights. They have higher expectations regarding the quality of products and services, and little tolerance for poor performance. They are quick to change their minds, and frequently complain if they do not get what they want when they want it. Thus, capturing a customer's business and achieving customer loyalty is like learning to dance with a partner who keeps setting a faster pace, changing the music, and varying the dance steps at the same time.*

Learning to dance with customers is vital in today's new supply environment. Suppliers must listen to their customers' and end-customers' music to ensure they truly understand what is needed, and respond proactively with products, services, or business solutions that meet or exceed those expectations. Customer intimacy is important. However, like dancing, you need to establish appropriate boundaries with your partners so that you do not step on their feet.

Just like dancing, customer/partner feedback is critical. Know the difference between a partner's needs versus their desires. Know how to treat your partner, so you do not start out or end up on the wrong foot. Business partners, like dance partners, must work together to achieve success, otherwise, one or both will stumble and fall.

Because the music, like technologies, keeps changing, suppliers must adapt quickly to changes. Product innovation is essential to help suppliers keep pace with the music of business and the beat of each industry in our global economy.

Despite these major challenges, some companies and organizations are successfully learning to dance with their customers, thus improving execution and achieving customer loyalty. One of the key ingredients to becoming a successful customer dance partner is the use of capture management.

Increasingly, the dance required to win strategic new business has become complex, lengthy and dynamic. With the widespread application of advanced technology in nearly every industry and the pressure to maximize returns, commercial customers have increasingly become more sophisticated in their source selection practices. This same availability of technology has also reduced the barriers to market entry in many industries. As a result, new competitors are springing up on an almost daily basis. Traditional companies are finding they must cut costs at every turn to compete with newer, smaller and more nimble competitors. The convergence of all these trends makes it essential for every company, regardless of size or type, to establish a structured approach to prioritize and focus scarce resources and thus maximize their win rate for new business.

The Capture Management Life Cycle is just such a structured approach. It can be used in the commercial and government marketplace for domestic, international or global opportunities. It can be used to respond in a reactive mode to a customer solicitation, such as a Request for Information (RFI), Request for Quotation (RFQ) or Request for Proposal (RFP). It can equally be used in a proactive mode to generate an unsolicited offer to a customer. The Capture Management Life Cycle also provides an opportunity to sell the RFI, RFP or RFQ to your internal stakeholders.

Whether we work in a small start-up company or a global corporation, we are all part of a virtual workplace that is no longer bordered by geography or time zones. Traditional face-to-face communication and interaction have been largely replaced by teleconference, e-mail, intranets and the Web. The Capture Management Life Cycle provides a framework that is independent of geography and time zones. It can be used effectively both in single-location companies and in global corporations where some employees never meet each other in person, and may not even have "live" conversations.

Commercial customers are driven by a profit motivation. They procure products and services to either increase revenues or reduce expenses. Government customers are focused on the delivery of an acceptable program or service at the minimum cost or best value. Even if you have the best technology or service in the world, you will not win new business unless you can show your customer *how* to apply that technology or service to increase their revenues or reduce their expenses. To beat your competitors, you need to show how you can do it cheaper, faster or better.

The foundation of the Capture Management Life Cycle is the focus on the customer's business problems or objectives. Simply stated, this process is all about winning new business by creating mutually beneficial offers that solve the customer's business problems or objectives and meet your corporate requirements for profitability and risk. When you focus on the customer's business problems or objectives, you are looking at your bid from the customer's perspective. This orientation will drive you to bid the best solution you have to offer, and also allow you to identify alternatives which are superior to those envisioned by your customer. Bids that achieve this balance are holistic and address a solution's technical, delivery, pricing and contractual dimensions.

## Capture Management Life Cycle

The Capture Management Life Cycle, as depicted in Exhibit 1, is separated into three phases and ten stages. The Pre-Bid Phase is the period before development of the customer bid, when all preparatory work is done. The Bid Phase is when the customer proposal is developed. The Post-Bid Phase is the period after the bid has been submitted to the customer.

For strategic offers where the customer opts to start with an RFI, you will move through the process, then cycle back, and repeat phases when the customer issues an RFP. You may once again cycle back and repeat phases if the customer down selects a short list of suppliers and then provides updated requirements on which to base your final offer. This same pattern of cycling back and repeating phases may also occur when generating an unsolicited offer to a customer that involves increasing layers of detail.

## Pre-Bid Phase

The Pre-Bid Phase lays the foundation for success by focusing on understanding the opportunity, getting support in your company to win and deliver the opportunity, and developing a plan to win. You should complete all the stages and steps contained in the Pre-Bid Phase before the release of a solicitation from your customer. If this is not the case, you are playing catch-up with your competitors and may have already lost the opportunity.

### Stage One—Opportunity Profile Stage

The first stage of the Pre-Bid Phase is to develop an opportunity profile. The purpose of the profile is to evaluate and describe the opportunity in terms of what it means to your customer, what it means to your company and what will be required to succeed. It is the basis for your company's decisions about prioritization and allocation of resources. The Opportunity Profile should be viewed as a living document: it will be refined and updated over the life of the opportunity, as information that is more precise is available. Opportunities should be profiled as early as possible with information known at the time. Logical assumptions are fine, but should be identified as assumptions to be validated as the opportunity is pursued. To create the profile, you qualify the opportunity and risks, gather competitive intelligence, develop a win strategy and outline the opportunity.

Before you pursue an opportunity, you first need to analyze its elements and risks to understand if is a worthwhile opportunity (i.e., the potential benefits outweigh the potential costs). No company has infinite resources, so it is essential for your company to employ a standardized methodology used by all sales personnel to assess and prioritize opportunities. Once your understanding of the opportunity is developed, you next focus on understanding your competitors. You should identify each competitor or competitive team, what they plan to offer, and how your customer views them and their solution.

*The Capture Management Life Cycle provides a framework that is independent of geography and time zones.*

To be effective, you will need to develop a win strategy that answers two simple questions from the customer's perspective: (1) why us? And, (2) why not our competitor? Part of this win strategy includes a Customer Positioning and Contact Plan with specifics on who, when, and how to convey this message to the key executives and decision makers in the customer's organization. The win strategy later serves as a basis for developing the proposal win theme. To develop your win strategy, listen to your customers first. They will usually provide you with the information you need to convey your messages.

Finally, you outline the opportunity. While the specifics will vary based on the products and services your company provides, the basic information should include the following:

- The customer's business problem or objective
- Potential solutions
- Potential competitors
- Likely risks
- A strategy for your company to win the business.

To standardize and simplify this process, develop a common set of information to be collected at every opportunity as a guide for your sales representatives.

### Stage Two—Stakeholder Buy-In

The second stage of the Pre-Bid Phase is to obtain buy-in by your stakeholders. Stakeholders are the individuals who control the resources in your company needed to pursue the opportunity or deliver the solution to the customer. The purposes of Stakeholder Buy-in are to:

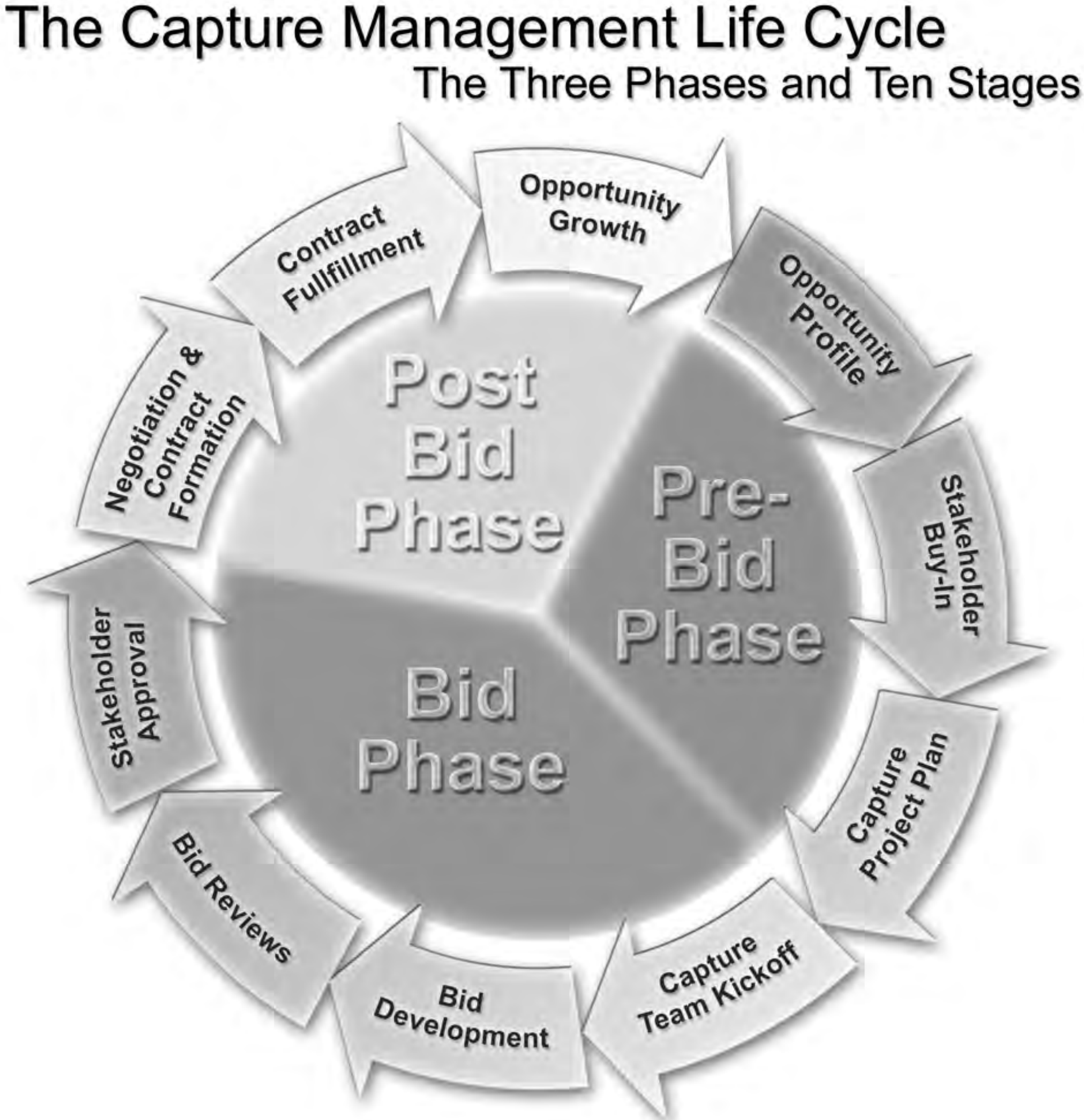



***Exhibit 1.*** *The Capture Management Life Cycle can be broken down into three distinct phases and ten key stages.*

Review the information gathered in the Opportunity Profile with key constituents in your company:

1. Make a Bid/No Bid decision
2. Get support to move forward.

An effective Bid decision must be predicated on all stakeholders being in alignment with the win strategy, getting a commitment to assign resources, and ensuring there is support to identify problems and resolve roadblocks.

Even if you have a mandate from an executive in your company to pursue an opportunity, you still need to get Stakeholder Buy-in on the strategy and what is required to win. Include stakeholders from all key organizations in your company, especially those who are likely to have objections or issues (get an early start on resolving these). Typically, stakeholders include representatives from your company's technical, delivery, financial and contractual support groups. To identify the right level of stakeholders, look at factors such as the scope of the opportunity, the resource commitment required and the issues that require resolution.

Review the opportunity with all the stakeholders at the same time by conducting a stakeholder Opportunity Review. This ensures a common delivery of the information and allows everyone to hear the same questions, answers and debate. Due to schedule conflicts, some stakeholders may need to authorize a delegate to represent them at the review. You also want to formally poll stakeholders to confirm their support or voice any reservations and document their responses. This roll call format has the combined benefit of bonding the Stakeholders together as a team, and ensuring there are no silent objectors.

*Stakeholders include your company's technical, delivery, financial, and contractual support.*

On opportunities with a long Life Cycle, plan periodic Status Reviews with the stakeholders to keep them apprised.

Depending upon the scope of the opportunity and significance of any changes, stakeholder Status Reviews may range from reassembling the stakeholders for a formal review to writing a Stakeholder Status Report.

### Stage Three—Capture Project Plan

The third stage in the Pre-Bid Phase is to develop the Capture Project Plan. The purpose of the Capture Project Plan is to document who needs to do what, when, where, how often, and how much to win. To do this efficiently and effectively, assemble a small core team of individuals who represent the key groups in your company that provide technical, delivery, financial, and contractual support.

*Develop plans for how to address common communication issues.*

The Capture Project Plan identifies the deliverables, work tasks, timeline and resources required to pursue and win the opportunity. The plan should draw upon data from similar projects and strive to be a fair estimate of the resource commitment required. The plan should highlight any resource gaps or shortages and required dates for resolution. At this point in the opportunity's Life Cycle, some open issues or concerns have yet to be resolved. These should be documented in an initial Risk Plan for mitigation during the Bid Phase. Examples of these include technical/product gaps, service/delivery gaps, financial gaps, contractual gaps and competitive gaps.

The Capture Project Plan should also include how the team will be structured and communicate. For projects involving large teams, this is critical for ensuring task completion, collecting status information and communicating changes to the team. Establish team leaders and possibly even sub-team leaders with accountability for multiple team members and work tasks. While the team structure needs to be based on the specifics of your opportunity, a typical team structure would have separate Technical, Delivery, Pricing and Contractual teams. Develop plans for how to address common communication issues, such as Status Meetings, sharing of information, Change Requests and Jeopardy-Escalations.

## Bid Phase

Having obtained support from the stakeholders and developed a Capture Project Plan, you can now assemble the capture team and pursue the bid. The Bid Phase develops an on-time bid that solves the customer's business problem and meets your company's requirements for profitability and risk. For simplicity, one can think of the Bid Phase as beginning with receipt of the customer solicitation and ending with submission of the proposal to the customer.

### Stage One—Capture Team Kickoff

The first stage in the Bid Phase is to assemble and hold a kickoff to assemble the resources required to pursue the bid, review the outputs of the Pre-Bid Phase, and get the team organized and energized to win the bid. You should complete this as soon as practical after the Stakeholder Buy-in and Capture Project Plan are complete, and it should not be predicated on receipt of the customer's solicitation. Once the customer solicitation is received, the clock will be ticking, so you want to pre-assemble the team and review the game plan.

The Capture Team Kickoff should include all of the individuals involved in developing the bid for the customer, including individuals with accountability for technical/product support, product/service delivery support, financial support and contractual support. Depending on the dispersion of the team, this meeting may be held face-to-face or via a teleconference. The most important objective is to include all team members in the kickoff in some fashion, so everyone understands the game plan.

During the kickoff, review the same information that was the basis for Stakeholder Buy-in at the Stakeholder Opportunity Review. Review and validate the Capture Project Plan details to ensure everyone understands the deliverables, their work task assignments and due dates, and team structures, and then make any needed changes to the plan. Review planned communications and the methodology and systems the team will operate and use to develop and review the proposal during the Bid Development and Bid Review stages. Agenda topics to review at the Capture Team Kickoff include:

- The opportunity
- Deliverables, work tasks, resource assigned, and timelines
- Plans for status meetings and information sharing/distribution
- Change control and alert-jeopardy-escalation plans
- Methodology and/or systems used for proposal development, including version control and Bid Reviews.

### Stage Two—Bid Development

The second stage of the Bid Phase is bid development. This stage begins with the execution of the Capture Project Plan. It includes all work activities required to design and price the product and service solution, and to accurately articulate this in a proposal for the customer that accentuates the points of the win strategy. Before one can articulate the offer in a proposal for the customer, one must understand the specifics of what to offer and their price. The Capture Team must first develop the solution and document it in a Solution Architecture document. This document identifies key products and services and describes how they combine to solve the customer's business problem.

The Solution Architecture document is the basis for writing the customer proposal and, in parallel, designing the products and services required to provide a price for the bid. This document can also be used quite effectively to control and communicate changes needed in the offer as it is constructed.

As you develop the solution in more detail, ensure it is compliant with the customer's technical,

*Two executives discuss the kickoff meeting.*

delivery, financial and contractual requirements. Ensure that the design is consistent with the description in the proposal and the developed pricing. Finally, develop a delivery plan that addresses the fundamentals of who, what, when, where, and how the solution will be delivered.

As you develop the solution, identify all gaps or potential adverse situations as risks. For each risk, develop a Risk Mitigation Plan using one or more strategies designed to avoid, transfer, share or reserve the risk. These plans will become an important part of the review with stakeholders, and will help you obtain their authority to bid.

As the solution takes shape, develop one or more business cases. Ideally, develop a customer business case that shows the costs and benefits of the solution in the customer's financial terms. At a minimum for review with the stakeholders, you must develop an internal business case on the profitability of the opportunity.

Finally, develop the proposal or customer deliverables. Although the actual format will vary, major components of a customer proposal typically include an Executive Summary, Technical Response, Delivery Response, Pricing Response and Contractual Response.

The Executive Summary provides an overview of the offer and is targeted to executive decision makers in the customer's organization. The win strategy and solution architecture serve as the skeleton for the Executive Summary, which is augmented with key details from the Technical Response, Delivery Response, Contractual Response, and Pricing Response.

The Technical Response describes the products and services being offered and explains how they solve the customer's business problem. The Delivery Response specifies how, when, and who will deliver and support the offer, and may include an Implementation Plan, Delivery Schedule, Transition Plan, Maintenance Plan, and Support Plan. Even if the Delivery Response is not delivered to the customer, a well thought out and realistic Implementation Plan should be developed to support internal understanding of how the project will be delivered. Depending on the scope and complexity of what is being offered, you may find it appropriate to view the Technical and Delivery Response as a single deliverable for proposal development and review purposes.

The Pricing Response describes how the offer is priced and prices terms. The Contractual Response describes the terms and conditions under which the offer is being made, and typically describes internal commitments, warranty, payment terms, and liabilities. Any financing being offered to the customer is typically described in the Pricing Response, but may alternatively appear in the Contractual Response. Depending on the scope and complexity of the offer, you may find it appropriate to view the Pricing and Contractual Responses as a single deliverable for proposal development and review purposes.

*Develop a well thought out and realistic implementation plan to support internal understanding of how the project will be delivered.*

## Stage Three—Bid Reviews

The third stage of the Bid Phase is to conduct reviews. The type and number of Bid Reviews will be based on the scope and complexity of the opportunity and the time available. Bid Reviews can be classified into two types: (1) internally focused reviews; and (2) externally focused reviews.

An internally focused review is typically referred to as a Pink Team Review. It is usually conducted by members of the Capture Team reading what others on the team have written. The chief focus of an internal Pink Team review is to examine the organization of the proposal, responsiveness to solicitation requirements, major holes and inconsistencies. Depending on the complexity and scope of the offer and the time available, there may be multiple Pink Team Reviews. Due to specialization of resources, there will frequently be different review team members for each major section of the proposal (e.g., Executive Summary, Technical, Delivery, Pricing, and Contractual).

Individuals who are not members of the Capture Team conduct externally focused reviews, typically referred to as a Red Team Review. These unbiased and impartial individuals read what has been written from the customer's perspective. The chief focus of an external Red Team review is to ensure the proposal is complete, compliant, technically sound, compelling, believable, and professionally written and presented. Depending on the scope and complexity of the offer and time available, there may be multiple Red Team reviews. Due to specialization of resources and proposal complexity, there will frequently be different review team members for each major section of the proposal.

You should document all reviews and the completeness of the bid. This provides a record of the review, and creates a sense of formality that will motivate the reviewers to take the sessions more seriously. The documentation can take many forms, but is typically done by some type of Offer Certification

*The goal of the Red Team Review is to ensure the proposal's completeness, compliance, and believability.*

by team leaders or reviewers that the bid is compliant with all technical, delivery, financial, and contractual requirements. Areas of non-compliance need to be identified as either exceptions that will be highlighted to the customer or risks your company is assuming in the bid.

### *Stage Four—Stakeholder Approval*

The fourth stage of the Bid Phase is to obtain the approval of the stakeholders. The purpose of this stage is to reassemble the same Stakeholders from the Pre-Bid Phase Stakeholder Buy-in and go through a review of any changes in the opportunity profile, the solution, the risks and the business case, to solicit their approval to submit the bid to the customer.

During Stakeholder Approval, review key information from the Stakeholder Buy-in review and any Stakeholder Status Reviews. Gauge the level of review required based on factors such as scope of the opportunity, time since the Stakeholder Buy-in Review or last Stakeholder Status Review, and changes in individual stakeholders. Additional key information that should be reviewed includes:

- Changes in opportunity profile
- Developed solution
- Risk mitigation plans
- Business case on profitability of the offer.

As during the Stakeholder Buy-In review, conduct this review with all the stakeholders, or authorized delegates, at one time. Hold a "roll call" to confirm their approval. Depending on the scope of the opportunity and your corporate Schedule of Authorizations or Approvals, obtain approval of senior executives in your company or potentially even the Board of Directors of your company.

## Post-Bid Phase

After you have submitted your bid to the customer, the real dancing begins. The Post-Bid Phase includes all the key actions required to close the sale, deliver the solution, look for process improvements and identify follow-on opportunities.

*Additional problems and objectives become opportunities for future bids.*

### *Stage One—Negotiation and Contract Formation*

The first stage of the Post-Bid Phase is to negotiate and form a solid contract. The Post-Bid Phase actually represents a series of activities that can occur in sequence or in parallel with the customer. The purpose of the Negotiation and Contract Formation stage is to ensure that the customer understands your bid and how it is superior to your competitors. It also includes conducting negotiations and developing the contract.

For most strategic bids, you will make an oral presentation of your bid to a select group of customers. If the customer does not offer this opportunity, you should request permission to provide it. This will give you a chance to review the bid and reinforce the win strategy with the key influencers and decision makers. Depending on the scope of the bid, this may involve multiple presentations to multiple audiences. In fact, presentations frequently mirror the general structure of the proposal, with one presentation for executive customer representatives, one for technical and delivery customer representatives, and one for financial and contractual customer representatives.

Your customer usually will have questions as they review your proposal and those of your competitors. These will vary from simple yes/no questions that confirm minor items to open ended questions with what appear to be new requirements. Although you may be asked to respond verbally with an answer, you will typically also be asked to document your answer in writing. Depending on the scope of the opportunity and the questions, developing answers may be like preparing a small proposal. If this is the case, use the same steps and activities described in the Bid Phase to develop the proposal to manage your Questions & Answer (Q&A) response.

If the customer has issued a Request for Information (RFI), it is typically followed by a Request for Proposal (RFP) to only those providers deemed to be qualified based on the RFI. After an RFP cycle, most customers typically narrow the source selection down to a short list of providers with whom they attempt to negotiate a final price along with terms and conditions. Most customers find they can maximize their negotiating position by narrowing the field to a short list of technically acceptable providers. For strategic opportunities, it is not uncommon to see an updated RFP with an updated set of requirements issued to this short list of providers. Regardless of whether you are moving from RFI to RFP or developing a better price or an updated proposal, you may need to cycle back to repeat phases and steps from earlier in the Capture Management Life Cycle.

### *Stage Two—Contract Fulfillment*

The second major stage of the Post-Bid Phase is contract fulfillment. Contract Fulfillment includes the smooth and complete transition to the organizations and individuals within your company who are accountable for delivering the solution and for effectively administering the contract and managing changes.

If you have followed the Capture Management Life Cycle during the Pre-Bid and Bid Phases by involving individuals from the delivery organizations within your company on the Capture Team, the transition should be straightforward. The creation and maintenance of bid documentation in an organized and accessible format is essential to making this handoff complete. If both activities have occurred, this transition can be achieved at a single meeting to review and explain the bid and relevant documentation.

The purpose of contract fulfillment is to ensure that all appropriate products, services, and/or solutions are successfully delivered on-time; ensure that all contract terms and conditions are met by both parties; and ensure the proper management of changes, timely payments, and timely contract closeout. The three biggest supplier impacts to avoid during contract fulfillment are:

1. Loss of customer loyalty
2. Loss of revenues
3. Reduced profit margins.

These occur due to failure to deliver on time, failure to effectively administer the contract and/or failure to effectively manage growth opportunities. When properly managed, contract fulfillment activities result in increased revenues, higher profit margins and higher levels of customer satisfaction.

**The Capture Management Life Cycle (Phases and Stages)**

| Pre-Bid Phase | Bid Phase | Post-Bid Phase |
|---|---|---|
| **Opportunity Profile** | **Capture Team Kickoff** | **Negotiation and Contract Formulation** |
| Qualify Opportunity and Risks | Review Bid | Conduct Oral Presentations |
| Gather Competitive Intelligence | Validate Capture Project Plan | Plan Negotiations |
| Develop Win Strategy | Review Communication Plans | Develop Contract |
| Outline Opportunity | Review Proposal Development Plan | **Contract Fulfillment** |
| **Stakeholder Buy-In** | **Bid Development** | Manage Project |
| Conduct Bid/No Bid Review | Execute Capture Project Plan | Administer Contract |
| Obtain Strategy Alignment | Develop Solution | Manage Changes |
| Get Resource Commitment | Develop Risk Mitigation Plans | Closeout Contract |
| Ensure Escalation Support | Develop Business Case(s) | **Opportunity Growth** |
| **Capture Project Plan** | Develop Proposal | Conduct Bid Win/Loss Reviews |
| Identify Deliverables | **Bid Reviews Stage** | Gather Customer Feedback |
| Identify Work Tasks | Conduct Pink Team Reviews | Document Lesson Learned |
| Identify Timeline | Conduct Red Team Reviews | Develop Opportunity/ |
| Identify Resources | Obtain Offer Certifications | Lead Referral Program |
| Develop Communication Plans | **Stakeholder Approval** | Build Trust |
| | Review Changes, Solutions, Risks | |
| | Obtain Authority to Bid | |

***Exhibit 2.*** *Summarization of the three stages, ten phases and key steps within the Capture Management Life Cycle.*

## *Stage Three—Opportunity Growth*

The third stage in the Post-Bid Phase is to grow the opportunity. Opportunity Growth, actions that may occur in sequence or in parallel, includes collecting and documenting Lessons Learned, conducting a Win/Loss Review, soliciting feedback from the customer on delivery performance, and identifying future bid opportunities.

The essential purpose of Lessons Learned is to identify ways to be more efficient. Lessons Learned are typically gathered from individuals within your company who were members of the Capture Team, but can also be garnered from your customer. Perhaps the biggest challenge with Lessons Learned is to document and share these lessons in ways that help your organization actually learn, and thus not repeat the same mistakes. To this end, develop a structured methodology that regularly evaluates feedback and implements process improvements.

*The essential purpose of Lessons Learned is to identify ways to be more efficient. Lessons Learned are typically gathered from individuals within your company who were members of the Capture Team.*

The essential purpose of a Win/Loss Review is to identify how to be more effective. To be meaningful, a Win/Loss Review must involve direct feedback from your customer on why you were either selected or not selected. Attempts to conduct a Win/Loss Review with individuals in your company only, no matter how well intentioned, will at best be based on second-hand information, and at worst be skewed by internal politics and individual biases.

Routinely solicit feedback from the customer on delivery performance. This kind of feedback provides insight on what to do and not to do to be more responsive to your customer, and frequently provides a forum for your customer to identify additional business problems and objectives. These additional problems and objectives become opportunities for future bids. You will also learn more about your customer and their problems when delivering the solution. This insight needs to be leveraged into additional new business opportunities whose requirements you have heavily influenced to maximize your competitive position and disadvantage your competitors.

# Conclusion

The table above provides a summary of the three phases, the ten stages and the key steps within each phase and stage of the Capture Management Life Cycle. Each phase, stage and key step can be appropriately tailored depending upon the size, complexity, level of risk and other factors to the respective opportunity. The Capture Management Life Cycle Model is based on the premise that winning more business is a vital and ongoing process in both the public and private sectors, which involves nearly everyone in the buying and selling communities.

**Note:**

This article is based on *The Capture Management Life Cycle: Winning More Business,* by Gregory A. Garrett and Reginald J. Kipke, published by CCH Incorporated, 2003.

*Gregory A. Garrett, CPCM, PMP, is an international educator, author, consultant, and industry executive. He is the co-author of the new book,* The Capture Management Life Cycle: Winning More Business *(CCH Incorporated, 2003), and author of World Class Contracting (CCH Incorporated 2001). He is a member of the APMP National Capital Area chapter. He can be reached at VAgarrett@earthlink.net.*

*Reginald J. Kipke, PMP, is an industry executive, author and consultant with over 20 years of bid and proposal experience in both the government and business sectors. He was most recently Capture Management Director of one of the world's largest communications technology companies. He is the co-author of the new book,* The Capture Management Life Cycle: Winning More Business *(CCH Incorporated, 2003). He is a member of the APMP National Capital Area chapter. He can be reached at kipke@cox.net.*

# Alan Goldberg

## *An Inquiry Into Effective Acquisition—and Standing the Test of Time*

**By R. Dennis Green**
**Interview by John Meehan**

*As Director of the Source Selection Office at the U.S. Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), Alan Goldberg is pursuing a vision: How to get better contractor proposals so that, ultimately, better products and services get into the warfighter's hands. That quest has made him an inquisitive friend and ally to APMP members.*

Alan Goldberg's career with NAVAIR began in 1977 as an engineering trainee after he graduated from the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn. Although he has since spent more than 25 years at NAVAIR headquarters in Northern Virginia and then Southern Maryland, he still has an accent belying his New York roots.

His rise to the position of Source Selection Office Director two-and-a-half years ago put him in charge of the small but critical six-person staff that manages all major NAVAIR competitive negotiated acquisitions in support of Program Executive Offices (PEOs)[1]. The office's mandate includes acquisition category I and II procurements and other complex programs. The procurements are usually more than $150 million in value, or more than $30 million in value for research, development, test and evaluation. His office is involved with an average of about eight such procurement programs a year, with a completion rate of about four a year.

The office provides extensive pre-solicitation planning support for these programs. It leads the source selection planning and evaluation as the Source Selection Evaluation Board Chair through contract award. It also supports the Command in the development of source selection policy and procedures and in its drive towards continuous process improvement.

Goldberg's involvement with APMP began when he started his current position. By happenstance, he was passing by and intercepted a call in his predecessor's vacant office. APMP government liaison Mary Mills was on the line; she invited Goldberg to that year's APMP annual conference. Goldberg accepted. He participated in industry-government discussion forums and a mutually helpful alliance was born. Knowing that his viewpoints as a customer and as a proposal evaluator would be instructive to our industry membership, Proposal Management took the opportunity to interview Goldberg. We were pleased to discover a methodical, self-effacing leader with a personal commitment to excellence on the job. This interview took place in January 2003.

"I've been trying to get offerors to give me good proposals for years," said Goldberg, as if that goal has presented a struggle.

"On our source selection programs we have been taking every opportunity to communicate with industry to help us build a better RFP and ensure a common understanding. We have pre-solicitation conferences, pre-proposal conferences, and now we've been having a lot of one-on-one conferences with potential contractors, as well as other early acquisition industry days. My colleagues and I are taking every opportunity to talk with industry. We are also making sure that our proposal instructions help offerors organize the proposal response. Sometimes our instructions are longer than you might expect because we're telling you, 'This is what we want, and this is the way we want it packaged. Why? So we can understand what you're offering.' My goal is to have everyone from a proposal writing standpoint on a level playing field. Then we can concentrate on the content without distraction because everyone will give us the same stuff."

What Goldberg regards as 'the same stuff' in this context is proposals detailing facts, approaches, and capability peculiar to the offeror, but presented in a consistent and uniform manner. This way, he says, "I can do my job efficiently." Yet invariably, he adds, "someone comes in, and their proposal is all over the place. So, we spend, perhaps, 20 percent of our time on four proposals and 80 percent on that other one."

Is he happy with the circumstance? "There's got to be a better way," he insists. "Proposals have made a lot of improvement over the years, but we can do better."

Goldberg's quest for a better way began when he took his present job. He conceived a vision and wrote it down. Who owns the proposal writing process? he remembers thinking. "I don't. Industry does. So right away I need to make an impact there. I need to work closer with industry, outside of the competitive environment, to improve my process." He wrote that down, then received Mill's phone call. "I just sort of fell into APMP," he said.

*The environment that needs to be nurtured is one that breeds a common understanding of the process and a mutual trust. You've heard me say that a million times.*

## Doing More With Less

Some of Goldberg's challenges are shaped by industry economics and a shrinking defense industry base. Contributing factors are a tight economy, industry consolidation through mergers and acquisitions, and industry's ever more conservative use of bid and proposal funds. When asked how NAVAIR is encouraging industry participation against this backdrop, Goldberg cited three incentives:

- Reduced proposal preparation costs
- Reduced acquisition process time
- Improved communication.

The concept of reduced proposal preparation costs got our attention. So how might NAVAIR actions produce such a benefit? It begins, according to Goldberg, with NAVAIR asking for less information and by being very particular about the information sought.

*Communication triggers interest within industry. Meaningful dialogue between the government and industry during program formulation stages is important to developing a good acquisition strategy.*

"One of the keys," he explained, "resides with our ability to identify the discriminators and reducing the number of areas that we evaluate. Hence, we've reduced proposal information and reduced evaluation time, all of which relates to reduced costs and a better process. Of course, care must be taken to make sure that we do capture all of the essential discriminators."

Communications are no less important. As Goldberg explains, "Communication triggers interest within industry. Meaningful dialogue between the government and industry during program formulation stages is important to developing a

*"My colleagues and I are taking every opportunity to talk with industry."*

## *Alan Goldberg ... At Glance*

***Title:*** Director, Source Selection Office, Naval Air Systems Command

***Previous Positions:***

- Program Analyst, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)
- Head, NAVAIR Airframes Quality Assurance Section
- Lead NAVAIR engineer for fuel systems installation and fire/explosion suppression systems
- Project engineer for the F-14 Assistant Project Manager for Systems and Engineering, NAVAIR
- Cognizant Engineer for Habitability Systems, NAVAIR

***Education:***

- Master in Systems Management, University of Southern California
- B.S., Aerospace Engineering, Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn
- Graduate, Senior Executive Management Development Program
- Graduate, Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) Advanced Program Manager's Course

***Born:*** November 1, 1954

***Hobbies:*** Family first. Also, science fiction, astronomy, and chess

***Family:*** Wife, two boys (19 and 16), one girl (13)

***Last Book Read:*** *3001, The Final Odyssey* by Arthur C. Clarke

***Favorite Quote:*** "Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, the mind can achieve." Dr. Napoleon Hill

good acquisition strategy. In this spirit, NAVAIR now discusses its new and emerging programs openly in solicitation conferences and follows-up those conferences with one-on-one clarification meetings with offeror representatives. The approach and synergy that evolve produce many recommendations from industry that help NAVAIR mold and enhance its acquisitions."

"At the same time," said Goldberg, "this approach provides industry the time and the opportunity to assess its competitive position in a very methodical way. It also provides industry with an early understanding of true requirements, allowing them to make more sensible bid and support decisions early on."

Goldberg's confidence in this strategy is bolstered by positive industry feedback. "The environment that needs to be nurtured," he said, "is one that breeds a common understanding of the process and a mutual trust. You've heard me say that a million times. Meaningful dialogue within the confines of a source selection program obviously is the only time that common understanding of the *program* needs can be developed."

That said, Goldberg also appreciates the limitations imposed on communication when Requests for Proposal (RFPs) are on the street. It is part of what attracted him to APMP. He said, "An understanding of the process and a mutual trust can best be developed outside those competitive environments. Professional groups such as APMP and other government/industry cooperative ventures play an essential role."

As an example, he cites as a possible future endeavor a project to develop a generic proposal instructions set for each program or product type. Generic instruction templates can increase the predictability of proposal information type. Such instruction sets may apply to both technical data and past performance. Being aware of them, contractors can begin to prepare their proposal responses in areas such as capability and experience in advance. Then, when the government RFP is issued, the contractor can focus his time and energies on the program-specific approach and design. "The potential," said Goldberg, "for producing process efficiencies is limitless once government/industry teams start working together towards a common goal."

> On the government side, we must ensure that we are fair, consistent and follow our procedures. On the industry side, there is competition and a goal for the best competitive position.

## The Misinterpretation Thorn

Even so, there are members of industry who see a history of RFPs with ample room for misinterpretation. How does one fight it?

"It is absolutely important that everyone understand what the requirements are," said Goldberg. "Those requirements are the basis for what you propose and what we evaluate. So we support any action that would reduce differences in interpretation."

As evidence, he cites extensive internal efforts to ensure RFP clarity and external communication. Examples of the latter include releasing draft RFPs for industry comment, conducting contractor group conferences and one-on-one follow-up meetings to solicit ideas and articulate needs, and sharing information. One sometimes overlooked piece of intelligence, according to Goldberg, is the program budget. "The program budget is a clear indication of the scope of effort the government is intending to put on contract, and it helps us validate that the requirements are not being misinterpreted or are too extensive for the funding available." Goldberg's intent is to make this information frequently available, though some circumstances may preclude its release.

On the question of allowing a government-industry team to address and resolve differences in RFP interpretation, Goldberg is circumspect. "I am not sure you can establish a true team in this program-specific, competitive environment," he said. "On the government side, we must ensure that we are fair, consistent and follow our procedures. On the industry side, there is competition and a goal for the best competitive position." So caution becomes the operative word. "We would support government-industry teams to address differences in interpretation as long as we can establish ground rules that assure fairness, but my real hope is with regard to benefits that come more from the teams established outside those program-specific environments."

## Promise of Source Selection Change

The recent cancellations of DoD Directive 5000.1, Defense Acquisition System, and DoD Instruction 5000.2, Operation of the Defense Acquisition System, have raised concerns in the contractor community about how defense acquisition will change. How, for example, will the use of past performance and the integrated management plan (IMP)/integrated management schedule (IMS) in proposals be affected?

Goldberg claimed not to know, but offered some practical advice. "I do not believe that there will be any fundamental changes," he said, "except perhaps to further emphasize affordability and risk reducing approaches. Whatever the changes are from 5000.1/5000.2, whatever the new documents may be, there should not be an impact to the source selection process in itself since that process is predominantly driven by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR). What it can influence is the emphasis that is placed on the Evaluation Criteria and the solicitation requirements. Past performance, I believe, will remain an important factor. The IMP and IMS will also continue to be useful tools."

In a related area, he predicted that "affordability will continue to be a driving force in the years to come. As everyone knows, there are limited amounts of money available for all the emerging requirements. From that fact alone," he said, "I am sure that there will be a continued emphasis on things like Cost as An Independent Variable (CAIV) and Total Ownership Costs, as well as risk reducing approaches."

"The development of competitive acquisition strategies will continue to emphasize performance-based requirements," he said, "and, where appropriate, identify the allowable trade-off spaces within the requirement. This will allow the government to evaluate various approaches that balance cost with performance. Affordability and program risk will also dictate the acquisition strategies that may lead to various approaches such as spiral development. Evaluation criteria will be developed based on these kinds of program needs."

Goldberg also acknowledged NAVAIR's use of the Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS) and predicted its continued use.

Another constant for NAVAIR will probably be their approach to grading proposals. As detailed in the NAVAIR procedures for competitive source selection (reference NAVAIR Instruction 4200.39A), risk is assessed and rated in the context of solicitation compliance, past performance and contractor experience as well as the proposal focusing on schedule, performance and costs.

*Affordability will continue to be a driving force in the years to come...there will be a continued emphasis on things like CAIV and Total Ownership Costs.*

## Preoccupation with Minimum Risk

When discussing risks, it was noteworthy to us that Goldberg's choice of words was more teamwork oriented than adversarial. "We are all part of the process," he said.

That teamwork extends throughout the NAVAIR acquisition community. His office leads the process improvement efforts and source selection evaluations, but leverages the resources available throughout the Command. "Success can not be achieved without teamwork with our partners in Contracts, Legal, and Cost Analysis, as well as the various subject matter experts from the Program Management, Engineering and Logistics competencies. The success of the process also lies in the value added from fair-minded senior acquisition officials on the Source Selection Advisory Council (SSAC) and the Source Selection Authority (SSA). But success, defined as getting the warfighter the best possible capability in the shortest amount of time, cannot take place without a balanced approach to taking risk. And therein lays the challenge, integrating these various perspectives in a way that balances the risks with appropriate actions taken."

Goldberg believes that better proposals help to ameliorate such concerns and delays. He may fine tune government-defined acquisition processes but, as he says, proposals are "the only part of the process that we – the Command – do not own. So we need to better understand that part of the process. We're working – essentially – with half of the process. How can we make real improvements without understanding the other part?"

## Insights Gained Through APMP

Goldberg has harvested a better understanding through his recent involvement with APMP. One of many insights was discovering the industry-to-government parallels related to structured processes and management tools. He was most intrigued with industry's systems engineering approach to developing proposals. "There are," he said, "many similarities to the systems engineering approach we use in developing the evaluation criteria and proposal instructions." He has also taken note of the computer programs used to assist proposal development. They mimic or parallel in many ways the approaches used by NAVAIR to manage evaluations.

Such parallels allow Goldberg to imagine uniform processes and programs more integrated than they are today. To build on these parallels, he recommends that more educational venues be jointly sponsored through APMP. "By becoming more enlightened about each other's processes, we help to dispel any myths," he said. "I also believe that these educational benefits will lead to real process improvements that will benefit our customer. In NAVAIR we are constantly reminded that our customer is the warfighter and that the benefits of our efforts must reach them. Therefore, process improvements must enable us to get the best possible affordable capability to the warfighter in the shortest amount of time. This is a promise of our efforts, and this is a common goal."

*By becoming more enlightened about each other's processes, we help to dispel any myths.*

## Improvements Driven by Lessons Learned

Such improvements are often the offspring of problems. In this regard, government is no different from industry. "As far as sharing lessons learned," said Goldberg, "there have been many over the years. Our process is built on those lessons learned."

Goldberg says that the most important lesson he derived is "that source selection experts must be involved early in the process and be part of the acquisition team. The foundation that is built during the requirements development and the acquisition strategy can predetermine the quality of the evaluation."

"I have found that there is an integrated relationship between source selection and other acquisition activities. So I've started not making a distinction between what's not part of the source selection process and what is. It's all integrated." He notes the parallel of proposal writing and the other business development activities. "I believe there is a similar realization being made by proposal writers," he said, "as this broader focus on business development was recently debated regarding APMP's vision."

Source selection at NAVAIR, by its nature, is multi-disciplined. "Source selection experts must integrate the needs of engineering, acquisition, contracts, and legal to produce an outcome that will provide an affordable capability to the warfighter in a timely manner. I find that this broader view of source selection provides a much better product and I think that proposal writers will find that that is true for them as well."

Is the acquisition process more streamlined and efficient today than it was several years ago?

"I certainly believe so." said Goldberg. He maintains and points to performance statistics such as – among other factors – process time from final RFP release to source selection. Looking at his chart, this measure has improved from an average of 26 weeks to an average of only 19 weeks in the last seven years.

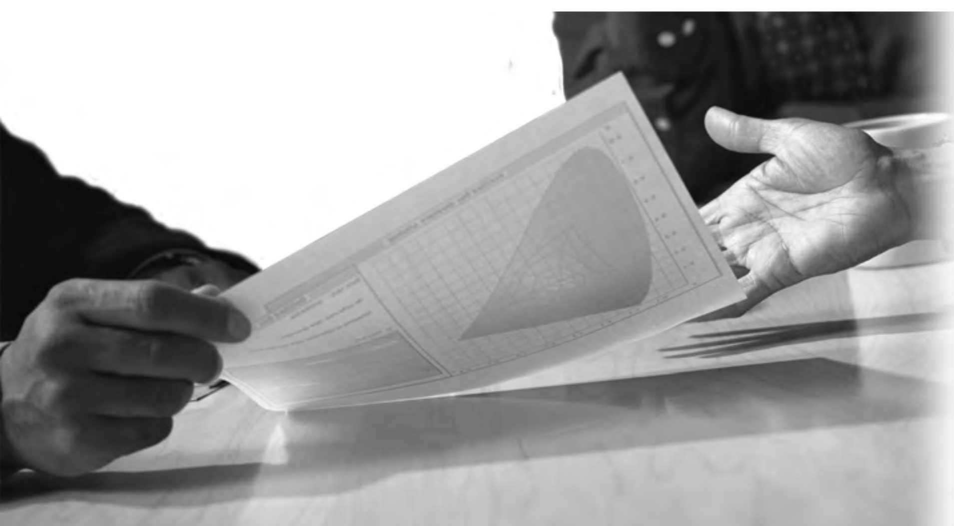
To what does Goldberg attribute the improvement?

His answer is guarded. As he says, "there are a lot of variables in any source selection." The 'possible' reasons he lists for us include: more focused evaluation criteria ("we're better at identifying discriminators"), more awards made against initial offers (avoiding lengthy discussions), improved communication with industry, a very structured – very systems engineering oriented process, use of aids like cross-reference matrixes, and the positive attitudes and impressive credentials afforded by his staff.

*I want to accomplish something that's going to stand the test of time. That's why I wrote the vision.*

Is there a corresponding reduction in the number of protests? No!

"We don't get protests," Goldberg shoots back. He pauses to reflect and allows that he may have seen one or two in this office since 1990 when he first arrived. It is a record that many would envy.



*"By becoming more enlightened about each other's processes, we help to dispel any myths. I also believe that these educational benefits will lead to real process improvements that will benefit our customer."*

## Evolution versus Revolution

We asked him about the probable implications of new acquisition initiatives such as evolutionary acquisition and spiral development. In concept, they permit new war fighting capability to be procured and introduced in phases, as opposed to a one-time full capability implementation at a later date. Some industry representatives are skeptical. Can Goldberg mollify them?

"This is a very difficult question to address," said Goldberg, "without knowing the specifics of the program and the technology involved. There are many variables that drive the acquisition strategy and the resulting evaluation

| | Rating | Definition |
|---|---|---|
| | Outstanding | Proposal significantly exceeds requirements in a way that benefits the Government or meets requirements and contains at least one exceptional enhancing feature which benefits the government. Any weakness is minor. |
| | Highly Satisfactory | Proposal exceeds requirements in a way that benefits the government or meets requirements and contains enhancing features which benefit the Government. Any weakness is minor. |
| | Satisfactory | Proposal meets requirements. Any weaknesses are acceptable to the Government. |
| | Marginal | Proposal contains weaknesses or minor deficiencies which could have some impact if accepted. |
| | Unsatisfactory | Proposal does not comply substantially with requirements |
| PROPOSAL RISK | Low | Has little or no potential to cause disruption of schedule, increase in cost, or degradation of performance. Normal contractor effort will probably be able to overcome difficulties. |
| PROPOSAL RISK | Medium | Can potentially cause some disruption of schedule, increase in cost or degradation of performance. However, special contractor emphasis will probably be able to overcome difficulties. |
| PROPOSAL RISK | High | Likely to cause significant serious disruption of schedule, increase in cost, or degradation of performance even with special emphasis. |
| PAST PERFORMANCE RISK | Very Low | Has little or no potential to cause disruption of schedule, increase in cost, or degradation of performance. Normal contractor effort will probably be able to overcome difficulties. |
| PAST PERFORMANCE RISK | Low | Based on the offeror's performance and systemic improvement record, little doubt exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort. |
| PAST PERFORMANCE RISK | Moderate | Based on the offeror's performance and systemic improvement record, some doubt exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort. |
| PAST PERFORMANCE RISK | High | Based on the offeror's performance and systemic improvement record, substantial doubt exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort. |
| PAST PERFORMANCE RISK | Very High | Based on the offeror's performance record and systemic improvement record, extreme doubt exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort. |
| PAST PERFORMANCE RISK | Unknown | No performance record identifiable. |
| EXPERIENCE RISK | Very Low | Based on the offeror's experience record, essentially no doubt exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort. |
| EXPERIENCE RISK | Low | Based on the offeror's experience record, little doubt exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort. |
| EXPERIENCE RISK | Moderate | Based on the offeror's experience record, some doubt exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort. |
| EXPERIENCE RISK | High | Based on the offeror' s experience record, substantial doubt exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort. |
| EXPERIENCE RISK | Very High | Based on the offeror's experience record, extreme doubt exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort |

***Rating and Risk Definitions Per NAVAIR Instruction 4200.39A**—Qualitative Factors Evaluation Ratings. The ratings reflect the government's assessment of solicitation compliance and the expected results, based on the offeror's proposed approach.*

strategy. The bottom line is that the strategy developed will be the one that makes the most sense based on the program constraints and needs. The decisions made regarding competition or sole source for follow-on efforts will involve questions such as access to technical data, performance of the current contractor, cost and other things like that. Also, I do not expect that evolutionary acquisition or spiral development will affect our approach to the evaluation criteria. Typically, even if the additional phases are not part of the contract, we consider for award as a minimum the capability to perform those future phases. I would expect that we would use the same approach."

To the extent that he can auger the future, what changes–or kind of change–does he see ahead?

"I don't believe that you make, or should make, revolutionary changes," said Goldberg. "It causes a lot of disruption. Change," he said, "is an evolution. Our source selection process has been evolutionary – it was built from lessons learned."

*Change is an evolution. Our source selection process has been evolutionary—it was built from lessons learned.*

In managing his programs, he must consider policy. But practical considerations are those that drive most work. "We need to be practitioners to understand the policy. So every time we are the Source Selection Evaluation Board Chair on a program, we learn something new and we put it back in the process. Because we're a small group and we control our process, we can quickly put our lessons learned back in the process. Additionally, we try to give back to the rest of the Command the benefits of our lessons through supporting the development of policies and procedures and by advising other programs when requested."

## *Surviving the Test of Time*

Working hard is a habit for Goldberg, a devoted family man and father of three. On the positive side, he welcomes the technology that now allows him to work evenings at home, when needed. Then he recalls a night he was working at 2 a.m. He sent an e-mail. Right away, a response! "I'm surprised," he says. "So now we're having a dialogue."

What drives this level of dedication?

"It's more like you want to do a good job," he said. "It's more for my own personal satisfaction, credibility, to get things done right, and to make a difference. You see that mentality throughout NAVAIR."

He compares his mindset to that of a chess player. "You have to think of moves several steps ahead and think out the whole process." Continuing, he says, "In chess if you do the proper thing, developing your pieces and keeping all pieces protected, great opportunities will arise and a strategy will materialize. I believe it is the same way in life. If you go the extra mile, helping others, doing things the way you should with respect to all, good things will happen. "

In probing, we hear the kind of story that always gives one pause. Goldberg tells of a time, after leaving an earlier position, when the bulk of his effort, his methodology, was discarded.

"I left," he said, "and it died. No one knows it was even there. And many people could look at what was done in the past – all these boxes of work that you've done, and now it's sitting on the shelf. At the time, it was important. At the time, it was great, but it didn't stand the test of time. And maybe for no other reason than the new guy came in and wanted a clean slate and started all over himself." It gave Goldberg a certain clarity.

So when he started as office director, he felt it important to make a more lasting contribution. "When I leave," he said, "they may not know who Alan Goldberg is, but a piece of me is going to be in that process. I want to accomplish something that's going to stand the test of time. I'm tired of doing things that are there for the moment. That's why I wrote the vision," he said. "But the truth is that the source selection process has lived on for a long time. A piece of me is already in there and I'm in good company. A piece of everyone in my office, past and present, and many people who have participated in our programs are already in there."

In addition to setting up repeatable, systematized processes, there are other important things. "I want to enjoy doing what I'm doing," he said. "And I do. But part of that enjoyment has to be working with people who want to work towards a common goal. I don't want someone to do something because I say do it. I want someone to do something because we both agree that's the right thing to do."

Goldberg concedes that he is sometimes overzealous about his profession. But at APMP, as beneficiaries of Goldberg's participation, we can only welcome his zeal.

The meaning of his life is clearly charted. "I hope and it's really important to me to create an office environment where people I work with can laugh and enjoy each other, while doing our work and making a difference. In that," he said, "there is a real joy."

*In chess if you do the proper thing, developing your pieces and keeping all pieces protected, great opportunities will arise and a strategy will materialize. I believe it is the same way in life. If you go the extra mile, helping others, doing things the way you should with respect to all, good things will happen.*

**Note:**

(1) NAVAIR's source selection procedures are fully detailed in NAVAIR Instruction 4200.39A, Principles and Procedures for Competitive Source Selection. It applies to all competitive negotiated acquisitions, except those utilizing simplified acquisition procedures (FAR 13) or broad agency announcement procedures (FAR 35.016), executed by the Naval Aviation Systems Team (TEAM) (i.e., NAVAIR, its Naval Air Warfare Centers, its field activities, and the Naval Aviation Program Executive Officers).

*R. Dennis Green is a management consultant, writer, and proposal practitioner with more than 20 years experience. He has been Managing Editor of Proposal Management since its founding in 1999. He was founder and first president of the APMP National Capital Area chapter (1992-1994). Phone (301) 469-2777; e-mail rdengreen@aol.com.*

*John Meehan is APMP's Government Liaison Co-Chair and Chair of the APMP Acquisition Reform Task Force. He is a Senior Proposal Specialist for Rockwell Collins, former regional sales manager of computer services for Banks of Iowa, and holds several Pilot Certificates (over 11,000 total flying hours). He enjoys his family, flying, and working with customers. Phone (319) 295-3470; e-mail jjmeehan@rockwellcollins.com.*

# Successful Proposal Translation Strategies

## *Proven Guidance for Approaching Multi-Language Bids*

**By Theodora Landgren**

*An increasing number of US-based companies are focusing on international business and many of them are seeking outside translation services to enhance their global proposals. Consequently, it is very important to carefully plan and develop a translation strategy that can produce a successful multilingual proposal. Although it is a challenging process, developing such a strategy is critical to winning international contracts.*

## Requirements Analysis

To begin the process, you should first identify your proposal's translation needs. Uncovering the translating issues is the starting point to finding a viable solution to your multilingual bid. Whether you are using an in-country agent or your own subsidiary in the targeted country, find out whether the Request for Proposals (RFP) will be in English, the foreign language, or both. Will you need to have the RFP translated just to understand the requirements? If so, then a rapid turnaround time is often necessary before the proposal team can start work developing the solution and articulating the content.

A 600-page requirements document might need to be translated accurately within a matter of days. Finding a good company with an experienced team of professional translators, who are available and who have expertise in the subject matter, is not an easy task. Start finding a translation company as early as possible!

### How Many Languages?

The next issue is determining whether the proposal must be in one or multiple languages. Do you need to prepare the proposal in English, in a foreign language, or in both languages? One language will most likely take precedence, and the other, while required, is not the legally binding version. Ask your in-country agent which language takes precedence.

Of course, this issue will affect further decisions. What is the exact timeline for final submission? Will proposals in both languages be delivered simultaneously, or will you get an extension for submitting the non-priority language? Your timeline will determine how many translators and editors will be needed to maintain quality. The golden rule is "as few as possible but as many as necessary" to maintain integrity and meet the deadline.

Doing a proposal in more than one language means that the translation team will have to work in tandem with your proposal development team. You can use software tools, such as Translation Memory (TM), to maintain the formats and data as they are continuously updated, and to reference pre-verified terminology during the translation. Tool selection is determined by the source formats, the availability of translators who can use the software tools, and the language itself.

## *Writing for International Audiences*

When writing for international proposal evaluators, you should follow some basic principles. Remember that translators are your most avid readers. They will scrutinize your document thoroughly, digesting every word and phrase and composing a version in their native language that conveys the proper meaning and nuance of your original. To help them, be clear and succinct in writing. Avoid the passive voice and ambivalent dependent clauses that might be misconstrued. Use a direct, simple writing style and short sentences. In preparing proposal text for translation, I recommend the following:

- List all acronyms, abbreviations, technical terms, product terms, industry terms, corporate terms, and words that are not to be translated.
- Avoid ambiguous writing by listing and explaining everything in detail.
- Do not use upper case letters to emphasize a particular action, especially in noun phrases (e.g., in the German language *all* nouns are capitalized).
- Be consistent in spacing and punctuation as this allows the software tool to reuse phrases and sentences that have already been translated. The software tools often detect punctuation as a change.
- Choose the design template for your proposal. Every desktop publishing software application offers templates, and, whatever your design, it should be used consistently by all writers. Otherwise, the software translation tool may not easily identify similar text strings and reuse the legacy translation, which will minimize the effective use of the software tool and make the process longer, more inefficient, and more inconsistent. Excessive editing, reformatting and proofreading might be necessary, thus increasing the Bid & Proposal expense for translation.
- Leave white space. A general rule of thumb is to leave 30 percent white space per page, with consideration also given to the matching of text and graphics on certain pages. This recommendation is tied to the natural expansion of language of approximately 30 percent during translation.
- Avoid graphics with hand gestures, animals, symbols, and people.
- Research the appropriate colors for all your target markets.
- Cull all logistics information that is not applicable outside the US, such as 800 telephone numbers, hours of operation for support services, lists of your US local offices, US-specific warranties, and US regulatory information. Each country will have its own corresponding replacements. Your local representatives and legal advisors should provide you with the specific data for each country.
- Remember the principle for clarity is "ONE WORD = ONE MEANING." Since words can have several meanings, try to simplify your text by keeping the words with one meaning isolated and use this term consistently throughout the text.
- Decide whether or not to translate product nomenclature and service terminology. This is often determined by the corporate culture. International companies frequently keep product names in the source language. Marketing personnel may decide whether the product name is acceptable in the target country. Remember the story when Chevrolet tried to sell the Chevy Nova in a Spanish-speaking country. They found, to their horror, that Nova means "Doesn't go."
- While planning format and layout, consider whether each page will adapt to eventual reproduction in international sizes and is not locked into 8-1/2" x 11" format. The majority of international markets uses the A4 size, which is a little longer and more narrow than the US format. Also, international ring binders differ in the number of holes and hole spacing than US binders.
- When using icons, be aware that while these differ across borders, there are many international symbols that are universally acceptable. However, remember a mailbox in the US looks very different from a mailbox in the United Kingdom.
- Be aware that date and address formats differ from locale to locale. Many countries use the 24-hour clock, and the day/month/year order is the internationally accepted date format outside the US.
- Be aware that numerical values are presented differently in various languages, e.g. $1,222,333.00 in English, $1.222.333,00 in German or Spanish, and $1 222 333,00 in French.
- Avoid constrictive framed, boxed, or columnar copy (in tabular column headings, include extra vertical space).
- Design as much extra character spacing as possible in the graphics. Otherwise, the translator may have to resort to awkward abbreviations and stylistic acrobatics, sacrificing the readability and user friendliness of the original.
- If you plan to open the translated desktop published electronic file that you received from your translator on *your* computer, use a desktop publishing program that incorporates international dictionaries so that your hyphenation will not be distorted. If you have made any changes to the final translated document, let your translator proofread it before printing.

Following these basic principles results in an additional benefit to good translations: a good portion of initial translations, already available when you are updating the document, can be easily recycled.

*A good portion of initial translations, already available when you are updating the document, can be easily recycled.*

## *Translation Memory Software Tools*

Translation Memory (TM) tools help to maintain consistency, enhance productivity, and facilitate the reuse of previously translated similar texts. The two most common and very useful software tools used by all reputable agencies are *transla-*

*tion memory databases* and *terminology databases*. These tools have improved a great deal since the early 1990s. They can now align or match parallel texts sentence for sentence in multiple languages.

Unlike machine translation, human interaction is incurred at every step. Most of the formatting codes are locked and can be hidden so that the translator and editor only see and translate the text presented in a split screen mode. As revisions are made, the location of each text piece can easily be located and translated to continuously update the target language text. Because redundancies are automatically identified and displayed, the translators can see how the text was previously translated in the same document and determine whether or not to use the same translation.

Online glossaries and term lists are attached to the TM where they are given hierarchical preference to supply available terms to the translator. These may be glossaries that were developed over time from other translation projects, or a client-specific glossary that is continually updated during the translation itself. This enhances translator productivity and gives the translation a better chance at consistency.

When working with large texts, translators work on translator workstations, and the entire project is organized and compiled on the manager's workstation. Each person works on his or her part of the text, but the entire document can only be modified by the manager. This seems like a bonus when translating large texts, but it has some limitations. Ideally, the original text should already be in final format in order to retain the formatting. Once the translation is complete and compiled, the manager exports it back into the original format, and, with the format codes preserved, you have a foreign language document closely approximating the original.

Since TM is not exact, adjustments must be made to fix the formatting. Some key points to remember are: (1) determine in the original what format you will have (i.e., A4 or other); (2) leave 30 percent white space on every page if you require a page-for-page identical document because the text might well expand when converted into the target language; (3) format using an appropriate design template; and (4) do not forget that space for expanding graphics needs to be considered. This brings us to graphics considerations.

# Graphics Issues

Some advice regarding graphics:

- All icons and graphics, other than technical specifications and product drawings, should be preliminarily reviewed in the target country.
- Avoid placing text within your graphics. I cannot emphasize this enough. Editing graphics that are bitmaps can be tedious and very time-consuming. It is virtually impossible to estimate the time it might take to edit some complex graphics. If you have strict deadlines, this might cause delays. You should make every effort to supply original graphics, whether in Corel, PhotoShop, or CADCAM. If you want to vary image-editing changes across frames, you can hide or show the layer with the image-editing changes separately in each frame.

There are four general categories of imagery that can introduce cultural conflict:

1. People: areas of particular sensitivity include gender, gender relationship, ethnic dress, and hand gestures.
2. Animals: many cultures revere particular animals for religious reasons, have domesticated them as pets, or simply consider particular animals to be dirty creatures.
3. Everyday objects: many everyday objects have different shapes in different countries. Two examples are mailboxes and trash cans.
4. Religious symbols: this category can vary from religious icons to particular numbers to specific animals that have religious significance.

Colors run the risk of being interpreted inappropriately by your target audience. The reasons for this may be cultural, regional, or ethnic. The table in Exhibit 1 is from Nancy Hoft's International Technical Communication (1995). She states that this table "maps colors to their possible cultural interpretations."

| Color | Target Country/Audience and Response/Interpretation |
| --- | --- |
| Red | Thailand: most popular color<br>China: prosperity, rebirth<br>Malaysia: valor and might<br>Ivory Coast: mourning (dark red)<br>France and the United Kingdom: masculinity<br>U.S.A.: power, danger, "stop"<br>India: procreation, life<br>Many African countries: blasphemy; death |
| Blue | Thailand: no meaning<br>Malaysia: beauty and liberty<br>Malaysians of Indian and Chinese descent: grief and sadness<br>Ghana: joy<br>Iran: negative connotation<br>Egypt: truth<br>U.S.A.: equipment that reduces the possibility of injury; first place, excellence<br>Many European countries: calm, sleep<br>Hopi Indians: of sacred religious significance |
| Yellow | China: joy and wealth, rank and authority<br>Malaysia: royalty<br>U.S.A.: caution, possibility of physical danger<br>Many countries worldwide: femininity<br>Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand: happiness and generally happy connotations |
| Green | Many countries: environmentally sound or safe<br>Thailand: least popular color<br>Muslims: favorite color of the prophet Mohammed<br>U.S.A.: proceeds, capitalism, envy<br>Republic of Ireland: patriotism<br>Countries with dense and green jungles: disease<br>France, the Netherlands, and Sweden: cosmetics |
| Purple | Latin America: death<br>Europe and the Middle East: royalty<br>China: barbarian |
| Black | Thailand: old age and death<br>Malaysians of Malaysia: courage<br>Malaysian Indians: evil<br>Malaysians of Chinese descent: death<br>U.S.A. and many European countries: death |
| Pink | U.S.A.: femininity |
| White | Thailand: purity<br>Muslims and Hindus: purity and peace<br>Japan and many Asian countries: death and mourning<br>Christians: purity, faith, innocence, virginity |
| Orange | Thailand: religion<br>Northern Ireland: patriotism |

***Exhibit 1.*** Source: Nancy L. Hoft, *International Technical Communication: How to Export Information About High Technology* (NY: John Wiley, 1995).

## How to Find a Vendor

Try your Procurement Department. It usually has a list of vendors that you will be able to interview and test prior to signing a contract. Another good idea is to ask other proposal shops for references. Perhaps a competitor could be enticed to provide the name of a good vendor. Questions to ask the possible vendor include:

- Who were your contacts?
- How large was your project and how long did it take?
- Were they easy to work with?
- Do they have experience in our industry?
- What is their basic process for translation?
- Do they use native-speaking professional translators?
- Does their process provide for review?
- Do they use independent native-speaking topic experts to review and edit?
- Did they incorporate your changes efficiently?
- How did they maintain configuration control?
- Were their prices competitive and reasonable?
- Did they have hidden charges?
- How did they transfer files and data?
- Was there any problem with the agency being located a distance from your site?
- Did they meet the deadlines?
- What did they do to make your project easier?
- How did they translate text within graphics?
- How did they protect your data?
- Were they responsive?
- Did you always know whom to contact for questions or concerns?

## On-site Versus Remote Translation Services

During the Requirements Phase you can choose two scenarios: on-site translation or remote translation at the agency location. By the Development Phase, one of these scenarios must be chosen. Whether you have a simultaneous language delivery requirement or consecutive delivery, flexibility will determine your decision.

Remote, off-site translation is the most common. To use it, your organization should provide the agency with a list of questions and a bill of materials. Define the approximate number of pages and graphics (words, if possible); the desktop publishing software you are using (such as Word or FrameMaker); the original graphics format (e.g., Corel, Adobe Illustrator); glossaries in the source language; list of acronyms and definitions; product information; and the target audience. Your organization should also provide a single contact for status information and routine updates, usually the Project Manager.

Ideally, you will have an in-country contact or agent available to review the initial translation and verify that the work is acceptable. This person should be introduced to the translation agency so that they can develop a good rapport. He or she may routinely answer questions and review ad hoc samples, if not all of the translation, to enforce quality standards. Be sure the in-country agent is aware of your requirements and schedules, because the amount of material to be translated usually depends on the amount of time available.

A simplified version of the translation process at the agency will include:

- Preparing materials.
- Assigning a professional experienced team to the project. A good professional technical translator is one who has excellent writing skills, is native-speaking in the target language, and knows the source language well enough to understand the often sophisticated concepts of the source material.
- Preparing target language glossaries, including terminology and acronyms.
- Translating and editing a chapter or representative text sample, and submitting this text to the client for approval and comment. This is when the translation team can make changes or adapt a general style going forward.
- Translating, in parallel if required, the entire proposal and text in graphics.
- Editing all materials for technical accuracy, grammar and consistency as time permits.
- Publishing according to original, proofreading, and delivery to the client.

If the translation process begins very late and the proposal due date is close, the on-site alternative may be needed. This option may also required if classified government information is included. If translation service on-site at your work location is possible, ask the translation agency to send over a team to begin translating while your team starts to mull through the mass of information.

There are advantages to both remote and on-site translation services. An on-site team builds relationships and it becomes more familiar with your product. However, I recommend the off-site translation when possible, especially for large volumes of text. Translators work best in their own environment, where all their legacy information is readily available to them, including glossaries, research, and colleagues. In addition, they can work an incredible number of hours when necessary to meet stringent deadlines.

So only choose on-site translation when tight schedules or classified information requirements demand it. Classified information is normally relevant only for some government contracts. Under these circumstances, working on-site is more appropriate and you must request translators who have security clearances. Do not forget to specify if the translators must be permanent US residents or citizens, and if the materials must remain inside US borders. In military contracts this is usually a requirement, even when the material is unclassified.

## Development Phase

The Development Phase poses many challenges. Because there are likely to be significant changes, the more complete the base proposal is prior to translation, the better the translation (and cheaper), because changes cost time and money. This brings me back to the TM tools used in today's translation world. Whenever they can be used, they should be. The TM allows for easy updates, but the source text must be matched and then integrated. It is not an exact science, but it does improve time to market, adds consistency, and provides modest cost savings in many instances. If you are able to submit the proposal in two languages with a time delay between them, you have a real advantage. You gain in quality, consistency, and fewer sleepless nights.

If your translation team works on-site, many of the processes described above will be integrated into your environment. Because the team will be working at your side, you need to have computer systems that can handle the various software in the foreign languages. This will likely mean higher costs, including *per diem* for contract workers. Once again, I do not recommend the on-site approach unless it is absolutely necessary due to time or security constraints.

## Production Phase

At this point you almost have a bilingual proposal ready. It should be published according to the original requirements. Remember, the rest of the world uses A4 size as its standard format, not 8 1/2 x 11. This affects pagination, graphics formats, and binding. If the proposal is to be delivered in hard copy, you will need A4 binders, tabular dividers, and paper. If the paper is to specification, then it should ideally be provided to the translation agency so that the match is exact. If your agency can provide both full color publishing and binding, you are ahead of the game.

Many companies do not realize that printing a foreign language — especially Asian languages, Hebrew, and Arabic — might require an upgrade of your computer system to print the final document. Without such an upgrade, you could inadvertently alter the text so that no one could proofread the final output. Don't risk it; get your translation agency to publish the final proposal, if required. They can then provide the electronic copy on CDs, print the CD covers, label the CDs, and professionally package the entire volume sets.

Electronic communication is the obvious means of transferring files, and thus a high-speed Internet connection is necessary. Because you are transferring corporate knowledge and your competitive edge across the Internet, be sure that both your and the translation organization's locations are secure.

During the production phase, e-mail communication will take place on a daily basis. Be aware that there will be many questions that need answering. You have hired an outside agent to recreate your proposal in another language. To meet this goal and satisfy you as a customer, the agent needs to understand your product, business culture, and professional expectations. There is little time to get the corporate training and experience you already have with your product or service.

Help your partner! Think no question too frivolous or worthless. Respond to every question and concern, and you will have a partner you can depend on when you capture the market and need someone of proven value to help you with all of your translation needs.

*Respond to every question and concern, and you will have a partner you can depend on when you capture the market.*

## Europe Versus Asia

Proposals may differ slightly from other translated documents regarding cultural issues, although they typically are so specific that one is obliged to respond exactly in the same format and style as the RFP. Some of the considerations that may apply are covered in the color-sensitive chart (Exhibit 1), but other general cultural issues should be addressed.

The Europeans, Canadians, and Latin Americans are the most similar to the US in their formal business proposals; Asian countries are most different. When writing a proposal to a European organization, you should not get too personal. Our American aggressiveness is frowned upon. Europeans tend to be a bit more formal. The defined style of the RFP should prevail. When presenting the proposal to prospects in the Western world, be sensitive to the fact that while they have a desire to forge good business relationships with American companies, they dislike having our ideas forced upon them. Be patient and polite, but persistent.

In Asia, cultural differences vary widely among countries. The Chinese are more cosmopolitan in their business approach, while the Japanese have a very different and more formal approach.

In Japan, one is expected to look at the long term (and I mean very long term) relationship-building partnership. From the first meeting where business cards, exchanged with two hands, are admired and titles acknowledged, to the closing of the sale, formality is king. The Japanese are collective thinkers, while Americans are sequential thinkers. The Japanese see the entire long-term picture on a single page. The proposal's Executive Summary with a master chart must correspond to that long-term plan. The Japanese are very pictorial in their conceptual thinking processes, and thus you often see Japanese reading what we refer to as comic style books.

Many software companies have adapted this style. You will find their manuals depicting actions as cute graphic icons rather than as lengthy textual descriptions. Keep this in mind when creating a proposal that is different from the standard proposal format. With each topic, be sure to include a summary of the entire process, and then break it down following the summary.

| ACTION | ACTOR | TIME | AVERAGE COST |
|---|---|---|---|
| Start Up Meeting to discuss plans and steps | Both Translators and Client | Initial—1 hour approx. | N/A |
| Glossary of Terms and Acronyms to translate | Translators | Several days depending on length | $2.00 per term approximately |
| Glossary review | Client | Determined by client | ——— |
| Text units submitted for translation | Client | ftp or email | ——— |
| Translation of sample text | Translators | 1-2 days | See below |
| Client review of sample text translation | Client reviewer | 1-2 days as available | ——— |
| Incorporate suggestions of reviewer | Translators | 1 day | See below |
| Translation of texts | Translators—topic experts | 2000 words per day per person. Rule: use as many translators as necessary and as few as possible to meet deadline and not risk quality. | $.18 - $.30 per word depending on language and timeframe |
| Editing of graphics | Translators/desktop publishing experts | Hourly—depends on graphic difficulty<br><br>Concurrent with translation of text | $45 – $60 per hour |
| Editing of text | Foreign language editors | 3-4,000 words. per day | Typically included in translation rate OR hourly @ $45-55 per hour |
| Desktop publishing of units | Agency | 4-6 pages per hour | $15-25 per page average |
| Proofreading of dtp | Agency | 20-25 pages per hour | Included in dtp rate |
| Submission of published units | Agency | ftp | ——— |
| Review of final dtp | Client | | ——— |
| Incorporate Changes | Agency | As needed | Included in translation rate unless "new" text is added, then additional per word rate applies |
| Print and bind | Agency or other | Depends on size and number of copies | Color = $.80 - $1.25 per page |
| Binder cover inserts | Agency | 1-2 days | $25-50 each |
| CD Cover inserts | Agency | 1-2 days | $10-15 each |
| CD duplication | Agency | Same Day | $5-15 each |

**General Steps to the Process of Translation —** *The above table summarizes the steps that will occur after you have selected a translation vendor. This assumes that you have defined the approximate size of the project and the need for translation services, have decided to contract the job to an outside service that works remotely, selected a qualified vendor, agreed on mode of communication and file transfer, and know the required turnaround time.*

Once the proposal is prepared and presented to a prospective Japanese client, you will likely hear a repetitive "yes" as the proposal is presented. Beware that the "yes" only means "yes, we acknowledge what you are presenting," but not necessarily that there is agreement to all the terms. When the contract is formally signed only the basic terms are agreed upon, and the remainder of the contract is then negotiated.

You must be flexible when making adjustments and committed to the long-term prospect with a lot of patience. The effort is worth it, because the Japanese client is a venerable partner once you have made the initial bilateral commitment to one another. My advice is to have an agent experienced in Japanese culture as your guiding light.

It can be very exciting to see the results when you have successfully created and delivered a major international bilingual proposal. Equipped with the information summarized in this article, you are now ready to go!

*Theodora Landgren is Director of Business Development for A2Z Global Language Network in Pensauken, NJ, a company that provides translations and consulting for multilingual business solutions. She has been actively involved in global language solutions for 22 years. Ms. Landgren can be contacted at tlangren@a2zglobal.com or (856) 910-0300.*

*Article*

# Information Design: Strategies to Make Your Proposal Reader Friendly

*Faced with too much information and too little time, proposal evaluators skim proposals and read in a nonlinear order. Using strategies and principles from the field of information design, proposal developers can help evaluators quickly navigate a proposal and find the information they seek. When you present evaluators with a reader-friendly proposal, you substantially increase your competitive advantage.*

**By Roger Munger, Ph.D.**

*"Many documents fail because they are so ugly that no one will read them or so confusing that no one can understand them."*
–Karen Shriver, *Dynamics in Document Design*

Some proposals are ugly. These proposals are so ugly and so confusing that evaluators are turned off before reading begins and are baffled when they must make funding decisions. Often, these proposals fail not because of faulty arguments, technical solutions, or budgets, but because information within them is poorly structured. They fail simply because the structure of the proposal does not clearly and quickly communicate the message. Strategies and concepts from the field of information design can help in these cases.

Information design has its roots in such fields as anthropology, graphic design, ergonomics, instructional design, rhetoric and cognitive psychology. Research from these and other fields provides information designers with persuasive evidence on how readers notice, read, understand and use documents. To people in this field, *information design* has both a broad meaning and a narrower definition:

- The overall process of developing a successful document
- The way the information is presented on the page or screen (Redish, 2000, 163).

As proposal managers, you are probably most familiar with the first meaning. RFP analysis, strategy development, storyboarding, proposal production, red teams and performance evaluations are all part of the process of developing a winning proposal. Planning the production, for example, of "multiple printed sets of a several hundred page color proposal and accompanying hyperlinked files on CD-ROM" (Kelman, 2002, 22) is part of the overall information design process. However, in this article, I focus on the narrower sense of the term. Information design also focuses on how elements such as layout, typography, text and graphics interact to help readers find, understand and use information. Designing a reader-friendly proposal does not require that you know how to use sophisticated software. In most cases, you can quickly learn how to use your word processor to create effectively designed proposals.

*People in the workplace today operate under a regular condition of information overload.*

## *Why Design Matters*

The design of your proposal is important because proposals are "2.5 times more likely to win when they [proposal developers] designed and delivered key messages directly to decision makers" (Pugh, 2002, 35). That is the bottom line: good design helps you win by enabling evaluators to grasp your key messages. To understand why design has become critical to the success of proposals, you need to understand how people in the workplace process information.

When information was scarce, people had the time and motivation to read business documents from beginning to end. As a writer, you could assume that you had your readers' undivided attention and could use a linear information structure that encouraged them to read cover to cover without interruption. This was possible because documents were fewer in number and relatively short in length. Consider, for instance, when the Army Signal Corps purchased an aircraft from the Wright Brothers. Augustine (1986) reports that the government's RFP was a single page and the entire contract was two pages.

Times have changed. People in the workplace today operate under a regular condition of *information overload*. The average worker, according to a Pitney Bowes study (2001), is inundated with 204 messages a day, including e-mail, postal mail, fax, pager, and USPS Express Mail. Project managers face an even more staggering load of 363 messages a day. North American businesses sent more than 1.4 trillion e-mail messages in 2001 (ePolicy Institute, 2002). Charles Schwab & Co. receives about 15,000 resumes in a normal month (Corsini, 2001). A U.S. government order on pricing cabbage ran 26,911 words (Horton, 1997).

The proposal community is not immune to this avalanche of information. Augustine (1986) describes the case of the C-5A transport aircraft:

> Just one of the three bidders submitted—1,466,346 pages—weighing in at 24,927 pounds. The Request for Proposal issued to industry by the government itself occupied 1,200 pages — and was later supplemented by a "Clarification Document" of more than 1,600 pages. More than 500 evaluators spent months wading through the material provided by the three bidders. (248)

This is not the only case of information overload. One contractor's proposal for the Advanced Helicopter Improvement Program exceeded the takeoff weight of the helicopter (Augustine, 1986). Although these examples represent extreme cases, even proposals running a few hundred pages represent a formidable undertaking for evaluators. Faced with this glut of information, evaluators no longer read proposals from beginning to end, cover to cover. Pugh (2002) reports, "Most, if not all, evaluators will not read a competing proposal word for word" (35-36). In fact, Baldwin (1999) states, "Research proves that managers don't read (cover to cover) 80 percent of their business documents" (8). Readers in the workplace, including proposal evaluators, do not start at the beginning of a document and work through each successive point to the conclusion. For example, Charney's (1993) study of the reading behaviors of scientists revealed that they read selectively and read "parts out of order, reading the results before experimental methods and conclusions before either of those" (212).

Information designers have learned that people read in a nonlinear manner as they search a document to find answers to specific questions. A nonlinear order also means that readers start reading at different places in a document. A busy executive, for instance, may start by reading a proposal's executive summary. Another evaluator may flip directly to the budget. Still another may be most interested in the project's objectives. Pugh (2002) describes how some evaluators read a proposal:

> They read the theme; they consider the visual, they read the caption; they turn the page. (36)

When you are a proposal developer, it is often difficult to precisely predict what piece of information will interest individual evaluators. However, it is possible to structure a proposal to make it easy for evaluators to quickly find and understand the information that interests them. The following sections explore how proposal developers can structure their proposals to make them more reader friendly.

2.1.1.3.5 WorkForce Selection

BRS has pre-qualified a general contracting firm for the RFP phase of this Project—TAC. This firm is based in Cairo and has extensive operations throughout Egypt.

TAC can verify that our construction plan is in compliance with applicable codes and regulations in Egypt.

2.1.1.3.6 Building Structures

***Exhibit 1.*** *Common rectangular design creates a dull and uninviting document.*

## *Create Interest*

First impressions matter since readers will *see* your proposal before they read a single word. In fact, the first act of reading is the reader's decision whether to read in the first place (see, for example, Pinelli, Cordle, & Vondran, 1984). Granted, proposal evaluators do not usually have a choice as to whether they read your proposal. However, an *interested* evaluator is likely to understand your arguments better, notice the elements that distinguish your solution from the competition, and favorably assess your proposal.

Your audience must determine the structure of your proposal. Early in my career, a colleague reminded me, "People give money to people." Until computers begin evaluating proposals (and this technology may be closer than we would like to admit), we need to design proposals with the idea that a real human being is going to read our work — and not some vague entity we call, for example, the Department of Defense. Proposal evaluators, like most of us, have too much to do, have too little time to do it in, and would like to leave the office before sunset. Ask yourself a simple question: "Would I want to read 20 (or 50) proposals that look like mine?" If not, you can probably add some design elements to generate more interest in your proposal.

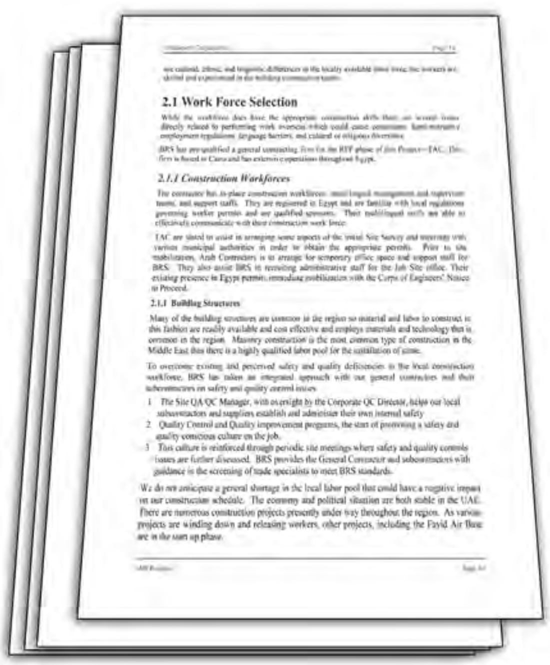
Many readers find pages designed as perfect rectangles to be dull and uninviting. A page with paragraphs piled one on top of another creating a rectangle of full-justified text is not very interesting (see Exhibit 1). By breaking the expected rectangular design, you can create interest and make text easier to read.

*First impressions matter since readers will see your proposal before they read a single word.*

Some strategies for generating an interesting and reader-friendly design include the following:

- Break margins
- Use columns.

Break margins, for instance, by outdenting headings, using a ragged right justification, and indenting subordinate information. In Exhibit 2, headings hanging in the margins are easier to see. A ragged-right justification breaks the rectangular shape of the text and avoids the unequal space between words, hyphenation and "rivers" of white space commonly found in full-justified text. Finally, information such as lists and graphics are indented to break the rectangle.



[illegible]

## 2.1 Work Force Selection

[illegible]

### 2.1.1 Construction Workforces

[illegible]

#### 2.1.1 Building Structures

Many of the building structures are common in the region so material and labor to construct in this fashion are readily available and cost effective and employs materials and technology that is common in the region. Masonry construction is the most common type of construction in the Middle East thus there is a highly qualified labor pool for the installation of same.

To overcome existing and perceived safety and quality deficiencies in the local construction workforce, BRS has taken an integrated approach with our general contractors and their subcontractors on safety and quality control issues.

1. The Site QA/QC Manager, with oversight by the Corporate QC Director, helps our local subcontractors and suppliers establish and administer their own internal safety
2. Quality Control and Quality improvement programs, the start of promoting a safety and quality conscious culture on the job.
3. This culture is reinforced through periodic site meetings where safety and quality controls issues are further discussed. BRS provides the General Contractor and subcontractors with guidance in the screening of trade specialists to meet BRS standards.

We do not anticipate a general shortage in the local labor pool that could have a negative impact on our construction schedule. The economy and political situation are both stable in the UAE. There are numerous construction projects presently under way throughout the region. As various projects are winding down and releasing workers, other projects, including the Fayid Air Base are in the start up phase.

***Exhibit 2.*** *Breaking the expected rectangular design, you can create interest and make text easier to read.*

Using a multicolumn design (see Exhibit 3) for your proposal also creates interest and offers you several advantages over the traditional single-column design to which word processors default:

- You can fit more text on a page
- You have more options in sizing your graphics
- Your text is easier for readers to scan quickly
- Your text appears more interesting (Markel, 2002).

The less you make your proposal look like the first-year English papers you wrote as a student, the more likely you are to generate some interest in evaluators to read your proposal.

# Meet Expectations

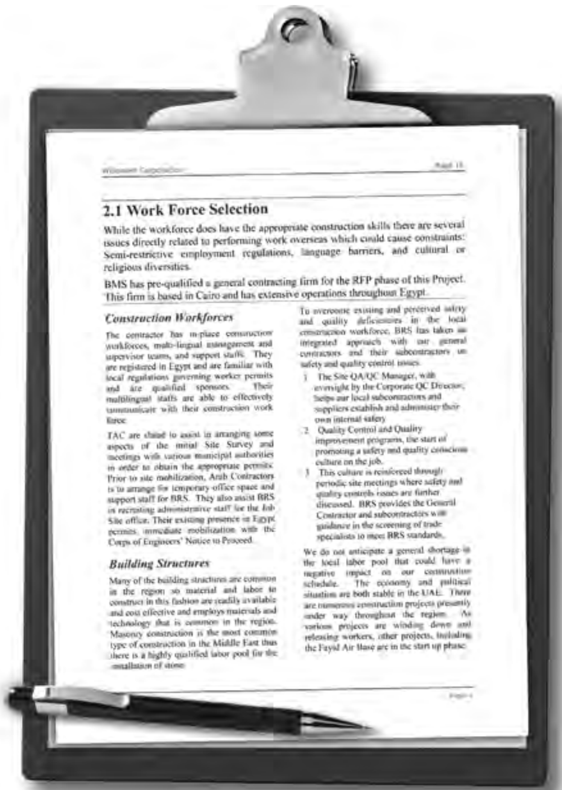
Evaluators expect you to follow directions. They expect you to give them information requested in the RFP — in the order in which it was requested. The evaluators' job is to assess quickly and accurately a stack of proposals. To accomplish this task, they typically use some type of evaluation form. For example, an evaluator may use a form that requires him or her to assess, among other things, "adequacy of resources." However, if you organized your proposal in such a manner that you discussed your adequacy of resources in a different section or decided to label this information with a different term, the evaluator will have to hunt for this information. An evaluator may decide that you failed to include this information, if he or she cannot quickly locate the information. You do not want evaluators saying, "The information was all mixed up in different sections. It took me forever to figure it out." Many evaluators will not devote that much time to trying to find information in your proposal.

*A reader-friendly proposal helps its readers accomplish their goal: accurately assess a stack of proposals and go home before midnight.*

You can help evaluators do their job (and increase your chances of winning in the process) if you organize your proposal so that it reflects the RFP or the evaluation criteria. If, the RFP requires you to address topics A, B, C, and D, then meet evaluators' expectations by organizing your proposal so that it addresses these topics in the order suggested. The more evaluators have to flip back and forth between sections while completing their evaluation forms, the greater the chances are that they may miss critical information or just give up and score a "0" for that criterion. Moreover, use the vocabulary used in the RFP or evaluation criteria to label the sections of your proposal. If you are writing a sales proposal and the RFP requests that you include a "seller profile," you invite trouble if you label this section "corporate overview." A reader-friendly proposal helps its readers accomplish their goal: accurately assess a stack of proposals and go home before midnight.

# Reveal Structure

Evaluators should be able to quickly understand the overall structure of your proposal. Markel (2002, 186) in *Technical Communication* suggests three main steps to follow to reveal the structure your document:



2.1 Work Force Selection

While the workforce does have the appropriate construction skills there are several issues directly related to performing work overseas which could cause constraints: Semi-restrictive employment regulations, language barriers, and cultural or religious diversities.

BMS has pre-qualified a general contracting firm for the RFP phase of this Project. This firm is based in Cairo and has extensive operations throughout Egypt.

*Construction Workforces*

The contractor has in-place construction workforces, multi-lingual management and supervisor teams, and support staffs. They are registered in Egypt and are familiar with local regulations governing worker permits and are qualified sponsors. Their multilingual staffs are able to effectively communicate with their construction work force.

TAC are slated to assist in arranging some aspects of the initial Site Survey and meetings with various municipal authorities in order to obtain the appropriate permits. Prior to site mobilization, Arab Contractors is to arrange for temporary office space and support staff for BRS. They also assist BRS in recruiting administrative staff for the Job Site office. Their existing presence in Egypt permits immediate mobilization with the Corps of Engineers' Notice to Proceed.

*Building Structures*

Many of the building structures are common in the region so material and labor to construct in this fashion are readily available and cost effective and employs materials and technology that is common in the region. Masonry construction is the most common type of construction in the Middle East thus there is a highly qualified labor pool for the installation of stone.

To overcome existing and perceived safety and quality deficiencies in the local construction workforce, BRS has taken an integrated approach with our general contractors and their subcontractors on safety and quality control issues.

1. The Site QA/QC Manager, with oversight by the Corporate QC Director, helps our local subcontractors and suppliers establish and administer their own internal safety
2. Quality Control and Quality improvement programs, the start of promoting a safety and quality conscious culture on the job.
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***Exhibit 3.*** *Multicolumn design offers several advantages.*

1. Create a detailed table of contents
2. Use headings liberally
3. Use topic sentences at the beginning of your paragraphs.

A table of contents provides evaluators with a concise overview of your content and the structure of your proposal. Providing such a framework will guide evaluators' understanding of your proposal. Ineffective tables of contents feature nonspecific entries— "problem," "solution," and so on—and lack depth (for example, include only first-level headings). In contrast, an effective table of contents provides descriptive entries such as "overview of proposed software" and generally includes at least two levels of headings. Finally, take full advantage of your word processor's ability to automate the process of creating a table of contents.

*Technical communication should be clear and easy to read, not full of suspense.*

To support the skimming of text and to break up long stretches of text, use headings liberally. Descriptive headings reveal structure by reinforcing themes, signaling relationships between major sections, and announcing the content of specific sections. Using headings to divide your proposal into meaningful sections informs readers where one set of ideas ends and a new set begins, allows your proposal's structure to be organized perceptually, and "provides a chance for the reader to collect some thoughts and prepare for the next section" (Oborne, 1995, 100). In short, headings help evaluators understand how the parts of your proposal relate to each other and to your overall argument.

The first thing evaluators want to know about a paragraph is what it is about. Consequently, you should declare the main point of your paragraph at the start of your paragraphs. Markel (2002) cautions, "Technical communication should be clear and easy to read, not full of suspense" (257). Do not bury your point in the middle or end of a paragraph, because an evaluator may never read that far. The first sentence of each paragraph should function as a summary or preview of what follows. If you state your point first, your paragraphs will be much easier to read and evaluators will better follow your argument.

## Facilitate Navigation

Once evaluators become motivated to read your proposal and understand the overall structure, they need to quickly locate answers to their questions. You need to provide navigation aids to help them do this. I suggest the following aids.

- Table of contents
- Page numbers
- Headers and footers (for example, section title and page number)
- Chapter or section titles
- Dividers and tabs
- Cross-reference tables
- Indexes.

Since these aids "involve nitty-gritty 'production' matters, they can easily be dismissed as unimportant or peripheral" (Kostelnick, 1996, 9). However, they are crucial to the success of your proposal. If evaluators cannot easily locate what they want, they often give up. Of course, not every proposal will feature all of these navigation aids. Factors such as budget, paper size, printing process, binding method, and number of copies will often determine which aids you can use effectively.

## Create Manageable Chunks

To make your proposal easier to follow, you need to break your content down into manageable pieces of information. In other words, you need to *chunk* your information. Breaking your proposal into small units and grouping related information is the first step in organizing your information (Keyes, 1993). Think back to the last time you rented a DVD (or video). Most likely, the store did not just have a pile of DVDs for you to sift through. Instead, the DVDs were divided into various categories such as "New Releases," "Drama," and "Action." This structure made it easier for you to find the movie you wanted. You must organize your proposal in a similar manner by organizing information into categories that make sense to the evaluators.

The DVD rental analogy illustrates another important point about chunking: the categories you create are often subjective and depend on your audience. DVDs, for instance, can also be chunked by release date ("Classics"), ratings ("G-Children"), format ("Cartoons") and so on. Lannon (2003) offers the following advice about creating digestible units of information:

> "Chunking requires careful decisions about exactly how much is enough and what constitutes sensible proportions among the parts. Don't overdo it by creating such tiny segments that your document ends up looking fragmented and disconnected." (240)

The key point to remember is that your readers' needs drive your decisions.

You can create chunks of information by using white space. Undifferentiated text requires "more effort from the reader, and the writer loses control over how the reader will make his or her way through the text and interpret and remember it" (Keyes, 1993, 639). (See Exhibit 4.)

In contrast, by using white space and headings to visually emphasize chunks of information, you can help evaluators to

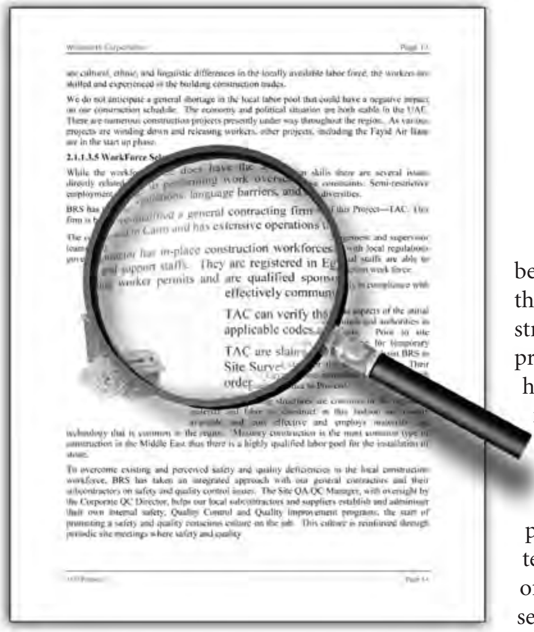


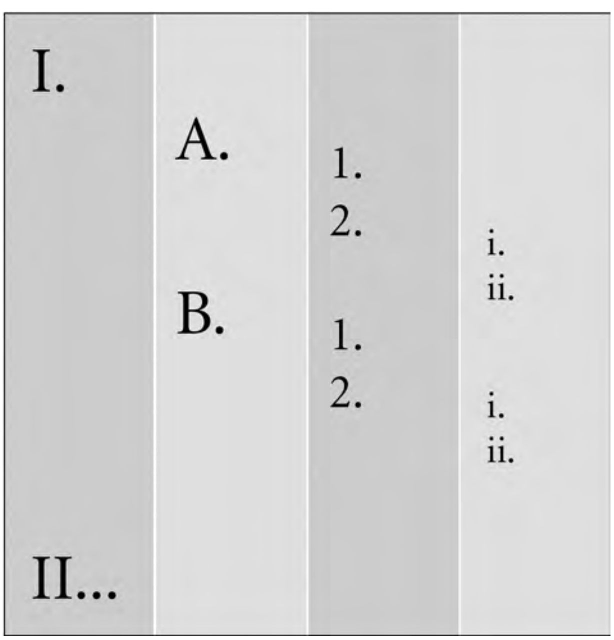
***Exhibit 4.*** *Undifferentiated text fails to reveal the structure and organization of content.*

better understand the underlying structure of your proposal (see Exhibit 5). Notice in Exhibit 5 that the headings are closer to their related paragraphs of text than the end of the previous section. This helps to emphasize each section as a cohesive group.

## Prioritize Information

After you have broken your information into manageable chunks, you need to prioritize your information and visually communicate this hierarchy. In a traditional outline, you can quickly see how higher-level content relates to lower-level content.

For instance, the Roman numerals represent major sections of a proposal. “A” and “B” are lower-level content that is related to the Roman numeral section in which they are embedded. Lowercase “a” and “b” signal even lower levels. The deeper you embed content in an outline, the less important it is perceived. As a proposal developer, you must quickly communicate your proposal hierarchy on each page. However, using tags (for example, II. B. 1. a. Network Management or 2.2.1.1 Network Management) from your outline is not very effective.




For instance, some proposals use a decimal numbering scheme and retain this outline numbering in the final proposal. However, most readers have a difficult time keeping straight where in the information hierarchy they are if they are reading a section labeled 3.2.2.1.3. Decimal numbering in a proposal is more effective as a method of communicating the structure of your proposal when it is combined with other design features.

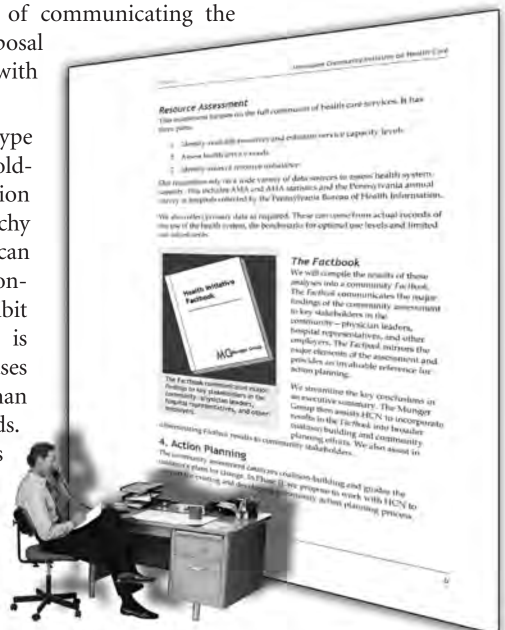



***Exhibit 5.*** *Chunking emphasizes manageable units of information.*

Use type size, type weight (for example, boldface type) and indentation to create a visual hierarchy (Keyes, 1993). Readers can quickly process visual contrasts on a page. In Exhibit 6, the first-level head is outdented, bold, and uses a bigger type size than the second-level heads. The second-level heads are aligned with the left margin, bold, and use a type size smaller than the first-level. The third-level head is indented, not bold, and uses the smallest type size. The accompanying text under the third-level head is also indented to emphasize the subordinate nature of the information. The further you place information from the left side of the page, the less visual emphasis (priority) you give it.

Of course, Exhibit 6 represents just one possible page payout. Third-level heads and accompanying text do not have to be indented. If your proposal features six levels of information, then you would likely end up with text columns only an inch wide if you further indented each subsequent section. Your goal should be to create clear visual contrasts. Keyes (1993) reports that a document’s visual structure is “more effective when it uses large, contrasting changes in position on the page and surrounding white space — in addition to type features such as boldness or change in size” (641). The key concept to remember is that you can use position on the page, type size and type weight to visually show your reader how information is related.

## Differentiate Information Types

Finally, evaluators need to be able to quickly distinguish between various types of information. To help your readers accomplish this task, you can use the design strategy called *filtering*. Keyes (1993) describes *filtering* in the following manner:

Filtering creates layers of information within the visual hierarchy. Filtering visually identifies and differentiates various types of information, so that readers can find what they need. Conversely, less relevant information can be filtered out. (641)

Different types of information in your proposal such as themes, section summaries, body text, lists, captions and notes need to be visually distinct. That is, evaluators need to be able to tell in a glance the type of information at which they are looking. This visual structure supports the evaluators’ task of skimming information.

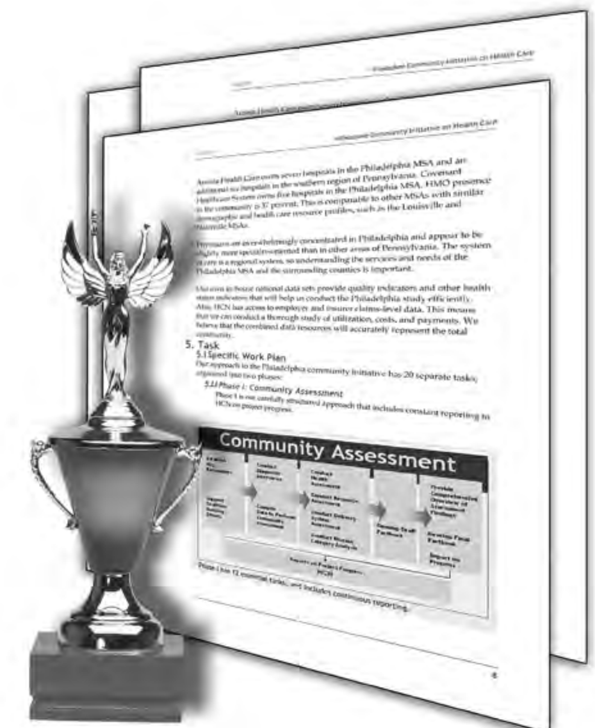



***Exhibit 6.*** *Create visual distinctions to quickly show the hierarchy of your information.*

The STOP technique (see, for example, Starkey's retrospective article, 2000) is a time-tested example of how proposal developers can structure a proposal so that various types of information are visually distinct. Following the STOP technique, proposal developers would display thesis sentences in bold type or underlining. Starkey (2000) reports that by emphasizing text in such a manner "an evaluator could gain a fair grasp of the thrust of the proposal just by reading them [thesis sentences] before delving into the details" (44). Furthermore, the two-page spread consistently structured information types: phrase-structured title, thesis sentence, text argument, figure and two-part caption.

You can achieve a consistent visual structure in your own proposal by using changes in the weight of type, in the size of type, in the case of the type (for example, all capital letters), in the style of type (for example, using sans serif typeface such as Arial), and in position of text on the page. Graphical elements such as icons, text boxes, screens (for example, background shading) and rules (for example, vertical and horizontal rules that divide a page into sections) can also be used to differentiate information types. (See Exhibit 7.)

*For some proposal developers paper is already dead—they publish proposal materials on CD-ROM, deliver information using e-mail and submit proposals via the web.*

Although some of the research literature on typography is contradictory or inconclusive, when differentiating information types keep in mind the following:

Typographic cues are most effective when *both* changes in type weight and position (for example, outdented or indented information) are used (Keyes, 1993).

Less is more when using typographic cues (Williams & Spyridakis, 1992).

Text composed of both uppercase and lowercase letters is superior to text set in all capital letters both for reading speed and accuracy (Oborne, 1995).

Your goal when differentiating types of information in your proposal is to use just enough typographic and spatial cues to make information visually distinct without overwhelming evaluators with a dozen design elements all screaming for their attention.

## Future Challenges

How evaluators read and interact with proposals will certainly change in the future as new delivery methods are developed. Grice and Krull (2001) report that paper may become outmoded:

> "Despite evidence to the contrary over, under, and in our desks, offices and filing cabinets, paper delivery of information is nearing the end of its usefulness." (137)

For some proposal developers paper is already dead. For example, they publish proposal materials on CD-ROM, deliver information using e-mail and submit proposals via the Web. The Internet clearly offers proposal developers powerful new design options for communicating proposal ideas.

However, do not make the same mistake early Web-content developers made. You cannot just *dump* online a print proposal and expect evaluators to be able to read these electronic texts

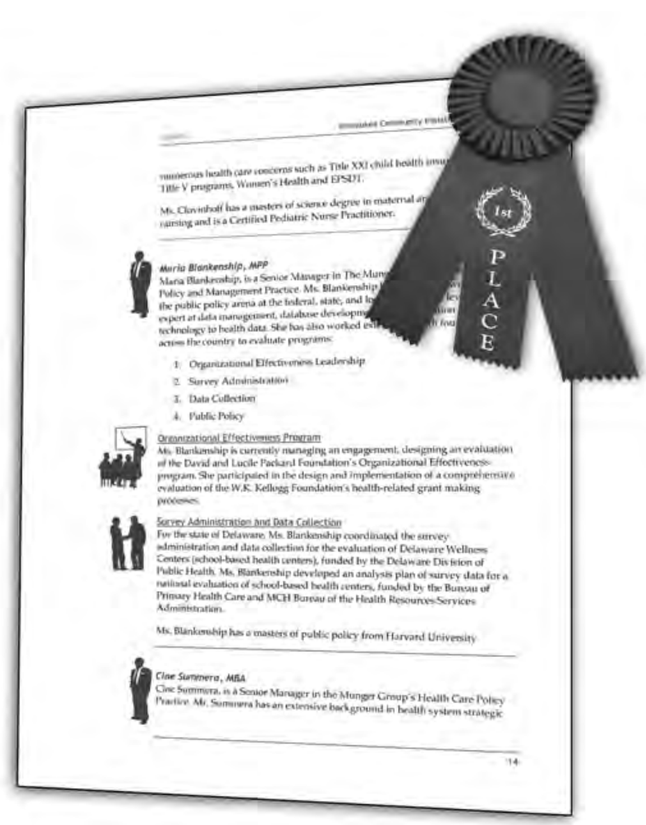



***Exhibit 7.*** *Filtering using horizontal rules and changes in type and position.*

*Although your tools and delivery method may change, your focus should remain on meeting the needs of your readers.*

as if they were printed. Online information creates its own set of challenges for readers. For example, Nielsen (2000) reports, "Reading from computer screens is tiring for the eyes and about 25 percent slower than reading from paper" (106). Consequently, pages must feature concise text and an easy to skim layout.

Many of the strategies for print documents apply to the design of electronic documents as well. With online documents, you still need to display, organize and connect content. However, online documents offer you new design elements such as hyperlinks, navigation bars, search engines, animation, audio and video. Although your tools and delivery method may change, your focus should remain on meeting the needs of your readers.

## Conclusion

Whether your evaluators will read your proposal in hard copy or as an electronic document, you still must make it easy for evaluators to quickly find and understand information. As you strive to effectively communicate your message, include the organization and presentation of your proposal in your overall proposal development and review process (see Freeman & Freeman 2000). Using the strategies I have discussed will make your proposal evaluators' jobs easier and more productive. As a result, your reader-friendly proposal will have a competitive advantage.

***Proposal evaluators, like you, are busy and overloaded with information. Make sure your proposal doesn't get lost in the crowd.***

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*Roger Munger, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of technical communication at Boise State University where he teaches courses in information design, print document production, workplace communication, and proposal development. He is a senior member of the Society for Technical Communication (STC). He can be reached by e-mail at rmunger@boisestate.edu.*

# PUBLISH AND BE Damned?

## THE POWERS AND PERILS OF PRE-WRITTEN CONTENT

by Jon Williams

*Many organizations deploy software tools to manage pre-written proposal content information that can be researched once and adapted for use many times over. However, successful knowledge bases of pre-written content depend less on the tool that is selected, than on the processes and skills needed to develop first-class proposal content for inclusion in the system. Getting these processes and skills wrong when implementing content management tools merely enables many proposal centers to produce poor proposals faster; getting them right adds real value and significantly increases proposal development efficiency.*

As Tom Sant commented in *Persuasive Business Proposals*: "In truth, the system isn't as important as the files of information you are accessing when you build the proposals."[1]

Great pre-written content increases the impact of a proposal and reduces the time required to produce it. Effective pre-written content:

- Ensures the information in your proposals will be of the highest quality possible
- Ensures consistency within and across proposals
- Reduces the time required to develop a proposal
- Reduces duplication of effort (frees up time for selling)
- Provides more time for customization to the needs of the specific customer and opportunity
- Helps to win more business.

## An Important Yet Neglected Area

Despite its importance to the overall proposal creation process and the fact that so many organizations attempt to maintain content libraries effective pre-written content is rarely covered in the proposal profession's literature. A recent survey of 10 leading proposal management books found that only three even touched on the topic and none of these explored content management in any significant depth. It is as if we all assume that this is easy and straightforward, when, in fact, truly first-class content management requires real thought and care.

This article challenges you to assess your current approach to managing pre-written content. You will be provoked, teased, and tested. You will be able to benchmark your capabilities, scoring yourself against best practices extracted from PMMS Consulting Group's Strategic Proposal Management Benchmarking Model. By the end of the article, you will have a clearer understanding of the importance of getting pre-written content right, and you will be able to pull together a plan for improvement.

### Meet Sam the Salesperson

Meet Sam. Sam is in sales. And lucky old Sam is about to write a proposal. There are questions to be answered about the organization and its capabilities (Just how many offices do you have in Outer Mongolia? Provide copies of your accounts for the past three years, and your senior management organization chart. What is your market share in Ukraine?). There are questions about the proposed solution (and what is your project management methodology and all the other oh-so familiar queries). And there are mountains of questions covering that boring stuff that purchasers always seem to ask, but which never seem to be hugely relevant (Question 369: List the Industry Associations to which your organization is affiliated).

*Now Sam's life is easy. These questions have been asked before, many times. Hey, there are even folks in the organization who are paid to know this stuff! So Sam clicks on a link on the screen, loads up the pre-written content Knowledge Base, searches for the relevant information and the core of a proposal is ready and waiting within a matter of minutes. Sam can relax, knowing that there is plenty of time left to tailor the content to the specific strategy that will impress the customer and win the business and to continue to influence the client's key decision makers!*

But back in the real world…

It is getting late. Poor Sam looks around the empty office, envious of those co-workers who do not have to write proposals; the ones at home, watching TV, eating dinner and relaxing over a glass of wine. Sam *should* have more time to work on the response, but life is so busy in sales that it never seems possible to write these documents until a couple of days before they are due. And so what if a few of them are submitted late from time-to-time, and the client never seems *that* impressed?

Searching for inspiration, Sam turns first to the company Intranet – there surely must be some information there. Fortunately, there are some standard solution descriptions, even if the layout looks atrocious when it is cut and pasted into the word processor.

But sadly, the Outer Mongolian subsidiary's Intranet pages are down and there are differing project management methodologies galore, so Sam picks one that looks reasonable and moves on. Sam rifles through the desk drawers, and pulls out a dusty copy of the handouts from the sales conference two years ago with some financial data. OK, that will have to do, despite it being out-of-date. And there was an e-mail a while back when the CEO got fired. Yes, that has some organization stuff, even if it is not quite what they need!

Some of the other questions are tough, though. Reluctantly, Sam gives up for the night, leaving papers scattered across the desk and heads for a sleepless night worrying about the Ukrainian market share data. Next morning, as the office fills with the chatter of salespeople going about their usual routine (moaning about their commission payments, checking their expense claims, contacting customers, rehearsing their bid presentations, etc.), Sam can be seen wandering from desk to desk, clutching the customer's RFP, uttering the familiar cry of the proposal-writing-salesperson: "Help! Has anyone written a proposal recently?" (Interestingly, not "Has anyone written a <u>winning</u> proposal recently?"!)

## *Is it any wonder that many customer evaluation teams despair when asked about the quality of the proposals they receive?*

And so, slowly and painfully, Sam's proposal comes together: a document part fact, part fiction; some content well-written, some missing altogether The document may not be great; it may not be inspired; Sam might not have any time left to tailor the content to the specific opportunity; but hey, they asked for a proposal, and they are getting a proposal. What more could they want? (And, you know, there is a small chance, a very small chance, that Sam might win the business. Although that would inevitably have to be in spite of the proposal, not thanks to it.)

## *The Need for Pre-Written Content*

Would you complain if you were in Sam's shoes? Indeed, <u>do</u> you complain if you are working on a proposal team, and Sam's experiences are not too dissimilar to your own when it comes to finding proposal content?

Many teams working on proposals face an uphill challenge when it comes to generating content. Significant time is wasted scurrying around the organization trying to dig out basic information to use in the proposal. That is time that could have been spent ensuring you have a clear and compelling strategy, and fine-tuning your messages to maximize your win probability. Or even time you could have spent with the customer, influencing their evaluation team.

Proposals become a continuing cycle of re-inventing the wheel. Customers are sent documents containing content that is out-of-date, poorly written and lacking real strategic focus and differentiation. Worst case, the content is exceptionally risky for the potential supplier as salespeople "make it up as they go along," inadvertently including inaccurate or misleading information as they get desperate to produce a complete document, but cannot track down the correct sources of information.

Is it any wonder that many customer evaluation teams despair when asked about the quality of the proposals they receive? Dr. Barry Hankinson of Negotiation Resource International, a PMMS subsidiary, worked with me on a recent research project quizzing purchasing professionals about their view of proposals. He explains that the findings show clearly that from the evaluator's perspective:

> "The proposal must address the needs of the purchasing organization and show creativity by producing innovative solutions. It must be a customized, not an 'off-the-shelf' solution. Respondents were in strong agreement of their dislike of generic, non-tailored, cut and paste solutions."

### *Write Poor Proposals, Faster*

Fortunately, most proposal organizations appear to have grasped the importance of this issue. They recognize that an effective proposal development process depends on an effective library of pre-written content. They have realized the benefits for maintaining an effective Knowledge Base of pre-written content:

- Greater efficiency of your proposal efforts (increasing speed, reducing costs)
- Greater effectiveness your proposals will consistently draw on your organization's best possible answers (with tailoring to the specific customer)
- Reduced risk since proposals will draw from approved content, not best guesses.

Yet how well are you *really* doing? Can you put your hand on your heart and honestly say that your pre-written content library scores 10 out of 10 on the following criteria:

- It is comprehensive
- It is all relevant
- It is all customer-oriented
- It is all strategic and compelling (off-setting the competition)
- It is all accurate
- It is all well-written
- It is all well-presented

- It is all up-to-date
- It is all approved
- It is all easy to extract and adapt for specific proposals.

In my work with proposal organizations in different industries, I have found that much pre-written proposal content is highly supplier- and offer-focused. It is not focused on customer needs and lacks competitive differentiation. (I have a young son, Benedict, whose first words were "Me, me, me." I see lots of proposals that are written in his style, centering on "me, the potential supplier," not on "you, the customer"!).

Keeping content up-to-date is a continual struggle. The staff responsible for maintaining the library are also working on live deals and when it comes to the crunch, and the Sales Director asks the proposal team to help with more bids, it is the live engagements that always take priority. Meanwhile, the relevant subject matter experts are often reluctant to invest the time needed to update the material once it is initially written, and they do not view pre-written proposal content as a priority (or even as a responsibility).

As a result, the database users are likely to be sceptical of its contents and it only takes once piece of content to be wrong for a salesperson to start to lose confidence in the system. Of course, it goes without saying that it only takes one piece of content from the system to be evidently wrong for the customer who is evaluating a proposal to start to lose confidence in your organization's professionalism! (And wouldn't customers be amazed, if they ever saw behind the closed doors of the proposal center, to see the continual re-invention of wheels to answer even the simplest of questions?)

So, implementing a *tool* to manage content is an important nay, critical step towards best practice. But as Brooke Savage, President, CEO, and Co-Founder of Pragmatech Software, Inc., observes:

> "Companies can achieve considerable benefits from implementing automated tools that streamline many of the processes involved with creating sales communications. However, the implementations' success rate is significantly increased when the organization places the same level of importance and attention on the *information* actually stored in the tools as that placed on the tools themselves. We've found that our most successful clients consider the quality and relevance of their content inseparable from the application itself."

P3 Consulting Group's BJ Lownie concurs:

> "All too often the emphasis is on the tool rather than on the quality of the content. The tool provides access, but the content derived is still suspect. It is a bit like having a shiny new hammer when the nails are all rusty and bent."

So, without a parallel emphasis on the software tool and the quality of the content considering processes, people and training, you continue to bring real risk to the quality of your proposals and their chances of success. The danger is that all you are really doing is enabling your organization to write poor proposals, faster.

## Measuring Your Capabilities Against Best Practice

So let's stretch your thinking and really start to test you. How do the organizations best at managing pre-written content use it to generate competitive advantage?

Grab a pencil. Complete the checklist that describes the key elements of best practice based on our extensive research with proposal organizations worldwide and with the buyers who evaluate your proposals. Circle the score (0, 1, or 2) that best describes whether each best practice characteristic is true for your organization and then total up the scores.

How did you do? If you scored 100% or think that the test was too easy, congratulations (and why not offer to speak at an APMP Conference sometime. I am sure people would be fascinated to hear how you did it!). And if you scored 0%, don't despair, keep reading. Help is at hand! Chances are, though, that you are somewhere in between. In particular, the sections on Organization & People and on Data Management often prove challenging.

**To measure your capability, circle the score that describes the practice true for your organization.**

| | Best Practice Characteristic | Yikes! We are just not doing this at all. | Well, we are getting there—but this isn't fully the case. | Yep, this is us. We are doing this (and more!) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **PROCESS - GENERAL** | | | |
| 1 | *PROCESS and MANAGEMENT BUY-IN* - A clear process for managing pre-written content is in place, with the full buy-in and active support of senior management | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 2 | *CAREFULLY SELECTED TOOL* - A dedicated tool for managing and publishing pre-written content has been selected (e.g, Pragmatech, Sant, in-house, or other), following a careful evaluation of the market for this type of specialist software. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | *TOOL DEPLOYMENT* - This tool has been deployed to all those in the organization who are actively involved in proposal content development, allowing them access to the latest approved pre-written content at all times. It is easy for additional, approved users to access the tool—quick and easy processes exist to cover software licensing and installation. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 4 | *FEEDBACK/ITERATIVE REFINEMENT* - Regular measurement is made of the use of the tool and the users' satisfaction with it; a feedback mechanism is in operation to allow suggested improvements. Results show that users find the tool invaluable, both in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, and that they believe it provides them with a clear competitive advantage. | 0 | 1 | 2 |

*Chart continues on the next page.*

| | Best Practice Characteristic | Yikes! We are just not doing this at all. | Well, we are getting there—but this isn't fully the case. | Yep, this is us. We are doing this (and more!) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **PROCESS - GENERAL cont.** | | | |
| 5 | *WRITING QUALITY* - All content in the database is reviewed and rewritten prior to publication in line with a defined Style Guide by professional proposal-writing staff. All information in the database is 'clean' of any previous customer references. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 6 | *DATA SECURITY* - The database is secure—at least two levels of password protection are in place (e.g., network sign on and database-specific). Clear security policies are used to define access rights for any third parties who may be working on proposals. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 7 | *HIGH UTILIZATION* - Targets exist for the amount of content that should be available from the database in each proposal. Typically up to 80% of content may originate in any given proposal from the database, but will then be carefully tailored to the specific customer's needs. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | **ORGANIZATION and PEOPLE** | | | |
| 8 | *STAFF TRAINING* - All relevant staff have been trained to use the tool, and additional support is available to them via Computer Based Training and access to help desk-style support. This support covers both the use of the tool and the content it contains. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 9 | *ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE EXPERTS* - A clear and comprehensive list of Knowledge Experts is published, showing ownership of pre-written content as well as 'where to turn for help' for other proposal information. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 10 | *AGREED RESPONSIBILITIES* - Development of pre-written content and ad hoc support for proposals is written into Job Descriptions and performance objectives for Knowledge Experts. They have adequate time set aside for this. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 11 | *DATABASE MANAGEMENT* - A dedicated team exists to manage and maintain the database. Responsibilities and processes within this team are clearly defined and documented. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | **ORGANIZATION and PEOPLE** | | | |
| 12 | *DATA MANAGEMENT PROCESS* - A clearly defined and documented process is in place to ensure that the content in the database is accurate, timely, sourced, approved, and strategic in nature and customer-focused. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 13 | *CONTENT VARIANTS* - Controlled variants of content may exist to address different customer/market/geographic/business unit needs, including multiple-language versions of content if required. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 14 | *CONTENT OWNERSHIP* - Pre-written content originates from, and is clearly owned by, the relevant knowledge experts in the business. These experts have clear guidelines to determine what information should be contained in the database and regularly, pro-actively put forward new content for inclusion. Knowledge experts have been trained in relevant proposal-related skills, notably strategy/theme development and writing. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 15 | *CAPTURING NEW CONTENT* - A clear closed loop process exists to capture relevant new information from current proposals and to clean this data for inclusion in the database where appropriate. | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 16 | *DATA REVIEWS* - Processes are in place to ensure that regular reviews take place of information in the database (Is each item still up-to-date? Does the database contain the right information?). | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 17 | *PRODUCT UPDATES* - The organization's process for launching any new solutions/offerings includes a requirement to provide new/updated pre-written content | 0 | 1 | 2 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Now total your scores—you will score somewhere between 0 (I hope not!) and 34** | /34 |
| **And triple them to get a (rough) percentage score for your pre-written content processes** | % |

Creating truly effective pre-written content is far from a trivial activity. Take, for example, Robert S. Frey's observation in "Successful Proposal Strategies for Small Business: Using Knowledge Management to Win Government, Private Sector and International Contracts":

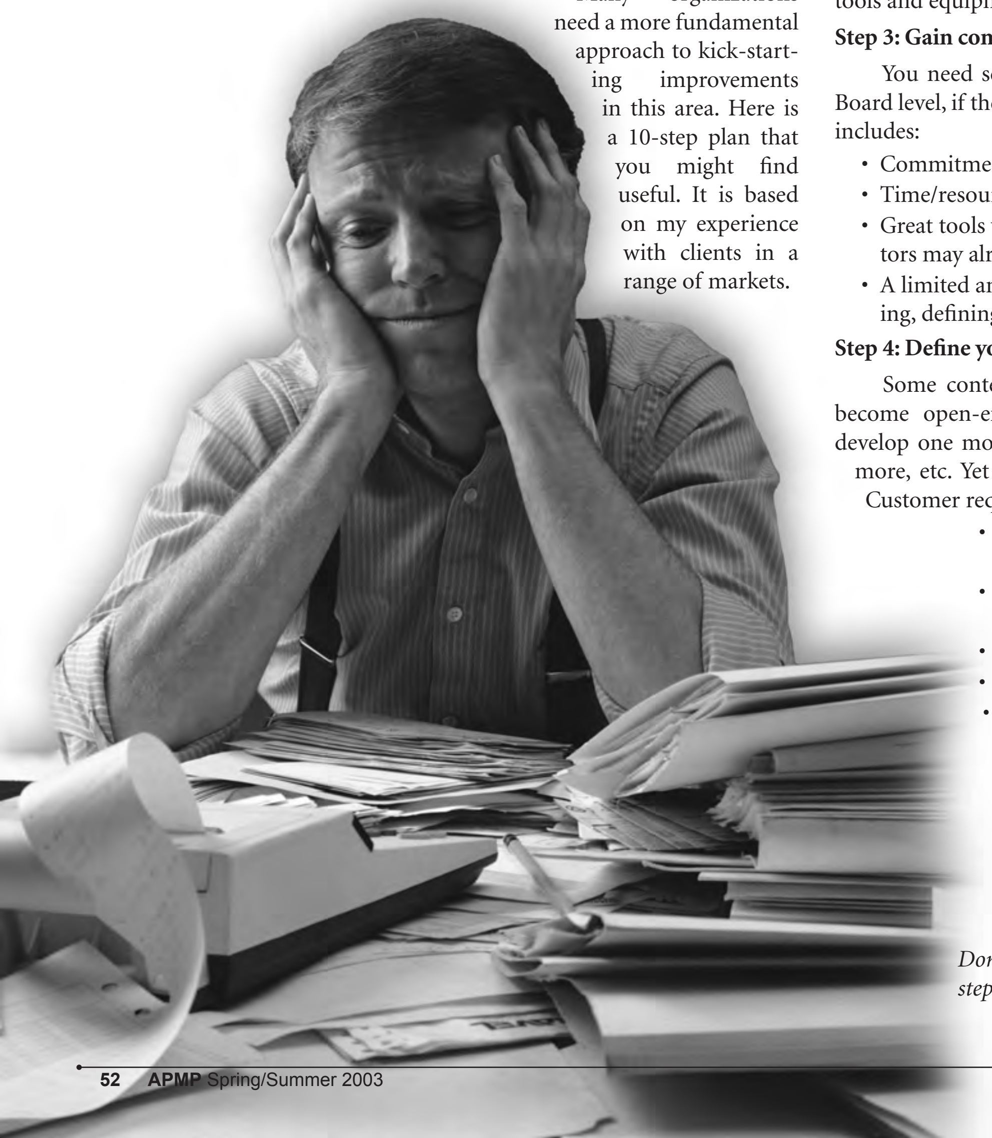
> "Ensuring that proposal managers are provided with the latest company information is an on-going effort in configuration management. For example, a comprehensive written overview about your company that is needed in most every proposal needs to contain the most up-to-date information on contract awards, company recommendations and success stories, annual revenue, staff level, funded contract backlog, and corporate organizational structure and leadership."[2]

*Great content doesn't just happen.*

## Stepping Up To Success

If your findings are like most people's, you will have identified some potential for improvement. If so, a great starting point is to use the best practices checklist you just scored as a guide. Which areas aren't you doing today? Which could you implement most easily? If you rated your organization highly on the quiz or if you are only a few notches away from the top of the tree, this is likely to be your best way forward.

Many organizations need a more fundamental approach to kick-starting improvements in this area. Here is a 10-step plan that you might find useful. It is based on my experience with clients in a range of markets.



**Step 1: Identify your overall improvement objectives**

How near to best practice are you? What will life be like when you have implemented changes you can realistically deliver for your organization? What do you already have that you can re-use and improve or do you need to start again from scratch?

*You need senior management support, most likely up to Board level, if the project is to be a genuine success.*

**Step 2: Build an outline project plan and benefits case**

Before you set out on your improvement crusade, you are going to need to work out your battle plan and justify your proposed approach to the powers-that-be. Some of this will be common sense for Sales Management (who may be surprised that it is not being done already!). You may need to estimate financial benefits, such as:

- Time savings, by removing unnecessary re-work
- Speed to market being able to develop proposals quicker
- Improvements to proposal effectiveness (and hence win rates)
- Reduced risks.

You will also need to think about costs—an estimate of the effort to deliver your content improvement project, the time needed to keep the database up-to-date, and the costs of any tools and equipment.

**Step 3: Gain commitment from your senior management**

You need senior management support, most likely up to Board level, if the project is to be a genuine success. Key support includes:

- Commitment from subject matter experts
- Time/resources dedicated to the proposal team
- Great tools you should be using (and that your competitors may already be exploiting!)
- A limited amount of external support to help with training, defining first class writing styles, and similar matters.

**Step 4: Define your target content and priorities**

Some content development projects have a tendency to become open-ended, everlasting initiatives you can always develop one more piece of content, polish phrasing just once more, etc. Yet you may never actually use the information. Customer requirements are usually a sensible place to start:

- What are the most frequently asked questions?
- What information should be included and to what depth?
- Are there any obvious quick win areas?
- Should you focus on specific business groups?
- What current content could be cleaned and re-used?

*Don't let your score worry you. Follow these easy steps to improve your best practices.*

- Do you launch the new Knowledge Base little-by-little, or with a 'big bang' approach once you have a comprehensive set of content ready to publish?

*Wonderful new content is of little use if it is not actually going to be used effectively in live proposals!*

**Step 5: Define your target processes**

Great content doesn't just happen. It *only* results from having the right structured processes. These processes include:

- Ownership. Ownership of the content needs to rest with clearly-identified subject matter experts. They must be accountable for the material, ensuring that it is accurate, strategically-focused, and up-to-date.
- Articulation. Ensure that the raw material produced by the subject matter experts is polished into superbly articulated proposal text, ready for use.
- Publication. Ensure that all content is checked and signed-off before it is released using your content publication tool (e.g., Pragmatech). You will need to monitor the use of the material, collate feedback, and identify newly-written proposal text that might be passed back to the experts for future use in the knowledge base.

**Step 6: Deploy the right tools**

As you realize by now, this article is <u>not</u> about software. But any major content development process may include some parallel tool selection or roll-out activities. Any product selection or development will need handling with particular care especially if you are rolling out the knowledge base internationally (how well will it be supported?), or if salespeople will be using it themselves (if it takes more than a couple of hours to learn, they will never use it!).

**Step 7: Identify, brief, and train subject matter experts (owners)**

Now you are ready to start bringing the new content to life. You will need to secure the commitment and buy-in of the subject matter experts and train them to develop strategically-focused proposal content, instead of re-issued marketing blurbs. A workshop process where they start to work on live content can be an ideal starting point. You will need to provide on-going coaching and support.

**Step 8: Articulate and publish content**

As they work with the subject matter experts, your proposal writers will need to fine-tune the draft content – polishing it and making sure it all drafts read with one voice, in line with the overall writing styles that you have defined. The content will need to be checked and signed off before you are ready to publish it.

**Step 9: Train users**

Wonderful new content is of little use if it is not actually going to be used effectively in live proposals! You will need to communicate the following to your knowledge base users:

- What information can they expect to find in the tool?
- How do they access the information?
- How can they offer feedback on the content?
- Most critically, how should they tailor the information that they extract from your content library for use in live proposals?

I cannot emphasise the last point enough. There is nothing worse as a purchaser (and yes, I confess, I was one, for many years), than reading a proposal that is obviously a collation of boilerplate text. Worst still, there has been little attempt to tailor the content used to the specific customer's needs. As Bob Kantin observes in the *Sales Proposal Kit for Dummies:*

> "Boilerplate proposals just don't give a buyer any compelling reasons to make a change because they don't contain any buyer-specific information." [3]

*Your sales teams will be delighted when they find that they can create better proposals faster.*

You will need to make sure your users are trained to adapt pre-written content to the specific customer and opportunity. A high-visibility initiative on pre-written content can be used cleverly as a 'good excuse' to get in front of the sales force and initiate a fundamental upgrade of their skills and behaviour during the proposal process.

**Step 10: Manage content on an on-going basis**

So now you have launched a set of new, significantly improved content modules to help with proposals. Is the job done? Well, I would argue that you have really just begun the process. Ever read those animal welfare advertisements that tell you 'A Dog is for Life, Not just for Christmas'? The same is true for your content. It is not about creating some material that is great on day one, but is then fated to degrade over time until it becomes out-of-date, useless, risky and puts you back to square one. Now is the time to really push the subject matter experts to take their content ownership responsibilities seriously and broaden and

*Demons of self-doubt and gnomes of discord plague every effort. Identify your objectives and plan early to avoid pesky problems.*

deepen the content in the knowledge base. It is also time to measure your success, and shout about it from the rooftops!

As Pragmatech's Brooke Savage says:

> "There's a common saying surrounding automated tools—'Garbage in, garbage out.' The value of a tool that creates a proposal in a flash is significantly undercut when the content it utilizes and outputs actually hurts the proposal effort and jeopardizes the sale. Our most successful clients understand this and have taken great strides to ensure their information receives consistent and regular attention and updates."

To complete a win-win scenario, your sales teams will be delighted when they find that they can create better proposals faster, without the time-consuming, frustrating drudgery usually associated with researching content. Nicola Dillon, who recently managed a highly successfully roll-out of a content Knowledge Base for a major computer corporation, notes that:

> "There's a real payback for the subject matter experts too. They can now get the right messages to their customers via proposals, recognizing that they're a key selling tool, and they don't get continually pestered for the same old information."

## *Common Sense? Absolutely!*

Surely this is only common sense? Yes, absolutely. But as Mark Twain reportedly noted, "Common sense isn't all that common." We all appreciate the need for pre-written content; yet we all struggle to maintain it effectively. Delivering improvements in this area via a focused project can really enhance your team's reputation and influence. It is an area that can add real value to your organization's business development processes.

In conclusion, here is the challenge: If you are not currently following best practice for pre-written content management, you are almost certainly operating a proposal process that is unnecessarily expensive, saps energy from proposal participants, and results in proposals that are considerably less powerful than they could be.

I hope this article has sparked off some new ideas and challenged you to raise your proposal teams' profile and success rates by strategically addressing this key area.

**Notes:**


[1] Sant, Tom. "Persuasive Business Proposals", AMACOM, 1992

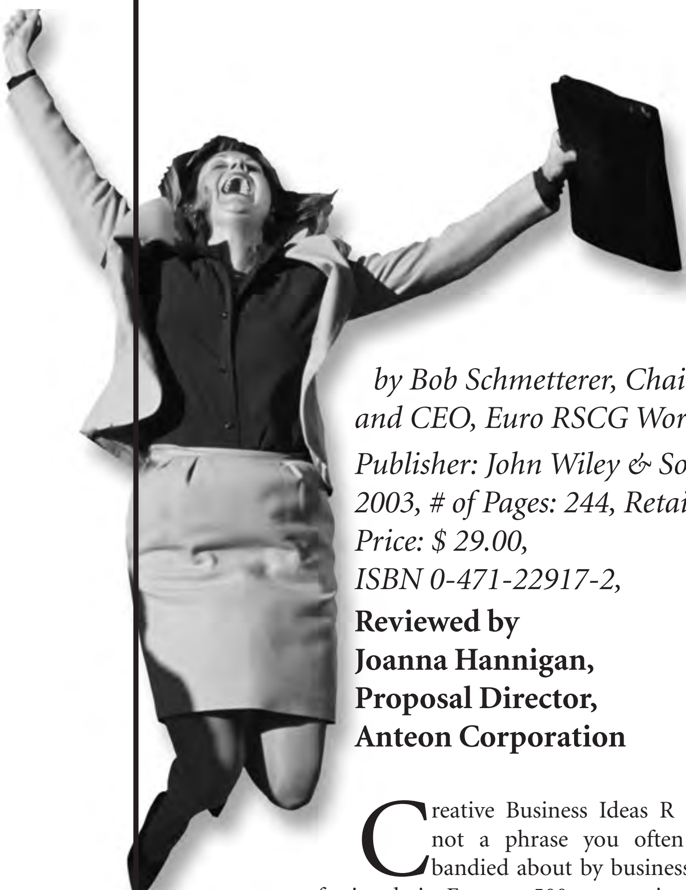
[2] Frey, Robert S. *Successful Proposal Strategies for Small Business: Using Knowledge Management to Win Government, Private Sector and International Contracts*. John Wiley & Sons, 2001.

[3] Kantin, Bob. *Sales Proposals Kit for Dummies*. Artech House Inc., 2002.


*There's a common saying surrounding automated tools—'Garbage in, garbage out.' The value of a tool that creates a proposal in a flash is significantly undercut when the content it utilizes and outputs actually hurts the proposal effort and jeopardizes the sale.*

*Follow these simple steps and your entire business acquisition team will be smiling.*

*Jon Williams is Director of Strategic Proposal Management for PMMS Consulting Group, which helps clients worldwide develop their proposal management capabilities. He also served as Chief Executive Officer of the award-winning UK Association of Proposal Management Professionals in 2001 and 2002. Mr. Williams can be reached on +44 (0)781 333 2294 or by e-mail at jw@strategicproposals.com.*



# LEAP, A Revolution in Creative Business Strategy*

*by Bob Schmetterer, Chairman and CEO, Euro RSCG Worldwide*

*Publisher: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003, # of Pages: 244, Retail Price: $ 29.00, ISBN 0-471-22917-2,*

**Reviewed by Joanna Hannigan, Proposal Director, Anteon Corporation**

Creative Business Ideas R Us' is not a phrase you often hear bandied about by business professionals in Fortune 500 companies. Even our more confident professionals do not usually walk around saying "We think up loads of really great ideas every day. We should star in and direct our own show. There is no telling how far we can go." Interestingly enough, the reason why we do not take 'walks on the wired side' is not because we are just plain uncreative. The reason why we do not create, discuss and share, test, and implement ideas may be because we lack confidence. It could be as simple as that. We cannot imagine ourselves to be modern day, all powerful "Wizards of Oz." Rather, we think if we did such things, we would be labeled "Wizards of Odd," and quickly dismissed as weirdos or know-nothing nobodies. Too often, we avoid the yellow brick byways and join the muddle minded munchkins on the busy, boring, indistinguishable thoroughfares that intersect our comfort zones. Straying 'off the ramp' in search of new scenery and uncluttered views is just not done.

The author did it anyway. He took an Indiana Jones-like 'leap' of faith. He asked "why ***not*** bring creativity into the boardroom?" He dared to find gap-bridging solutions. The seed kernel for his approach grew from personal experiences and expanded to include case studies. Then he let the case studies show, not tell, you what he discovered. For example, Guinness, the Irish brewing company — and pub lover's main stay — needed to find a way to attract the younger generation, who thought Guinness was a drink for old timers from the old country. I won't reveal the details of their creative marketing campaign. You can "witness" a few of their "brand" new ideas at Guinnesses' interactive web site or catch a promotional concert. They had overnight success; robust sales continue more than two years after some fairly strange ideas were first knocked about and implemented.

You will also read about Virgin's money making creator, Richard Branson, and understand why Frank Perdue is no 'chicken little' when it comes to generating sales and ideas.


Bob Schmetterer is the CEO of an internationally acclaimed advertising and communications firm, whose clients include Volvo (reVolvolution), Credit Suisse Group, Intel Corporation, Louis Vuitton and Yahoo. He realized that businesses frequently apply a rational systems engineering approach to strategy development. What is needed, however, are thought processes that go beyond the logical, linear method of progression, ask "what if" questions and seriously consider extraordinary and sometimes irrational and absurd ideas. These then become the building material upon which connections are made and new super creative highways are formed. The Internet is a marvelous example of an idea that many thought was a silly, unobtainable dream.

What the book explains is a kind of "leap thinking." How is this accomplished? One way is by reaching across our left and right brains — mixing logical thinking with the "warmer heart of art," the soul and the sixth sense (instinct). It is about drawing out what the customer values and is passionate to make happen. It is about understanding what can be risked and what outmoded concepts can be sacrificed.

As you might imagine, the book is not a 12-step or less "how to manual." Few creative books are. What a book like *LEAP* does do is scatter some bread crumbs and dab some bright neon paint down vague, rutty trails that could become future shortcuts to success. Though Schmetterer heads a global company, he is not concerned about complying with ISO 9000 standards, bragging about his accomplishments, or worrying about pleasing any stuffy Board of Directors. In the chapter entitled *The End of Advertising . . . the Beginning of Something New*, he is ready to blow the lid off normal — and take you to "unknown zones" that hold tomorrow's breakthrough strategy and next generation technologies.

**The opinions expressed in these reviews are those of the reviewers and do not necessarily represent the views of the APMP. New book reviewers and book review recommendations are always welcome. Please send your recommendations or comments to Books Editor Joanna Hannigan at jhannigan@anteon.com.*

# Execution
# The Discipline of Getting Things Done

*by Larry Bossidy (Chairman, Honeywell International) & Ram Charan*

*Book ID Info: HD31.B626 2002; ISBN 0-609-61057-0, a Wall Street Journal Best Seller.*

*Publisher: Crown Business, NY, NY; © : 2002, # of Pages: 277, Retail Price: $ 27.50*

**Reviewed by Joanna Hannigan**

To paraphrase no-nonsense CEO Jack Welch (who also reviewed this book), "a thinker and a doer got together to write a compelling story about putting pedal to the metal and rubber to the road." The result — more bang for the buck! Does it fulfill its promise and reveal the key to business success for 2003? It depends. If you liked Nike's theme, "Just Do It," you will probably find this book valuable and provocative.

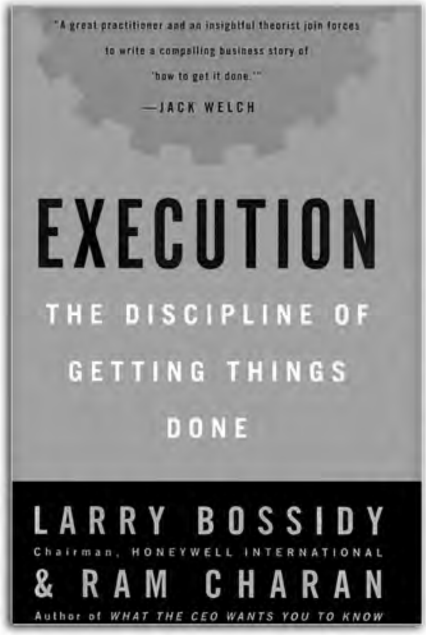
The authors feel that the art of execution has not been well explained. Books abound on strategy and leadership development, innovative approaches, and what business process tools work best. That makes sense in a world where change is not always embraced, and those who want to change do not always know how to make it happen. Authors Bossidy and Charan have put execution in a category of its own, defined behaviors and techniques companies need to master the art of execution, and affirmatively stated that execution is a discipline of its own. The authors assert that "execution-oriented companies change faster because they're closer to the situation."

This book weighs in at just under 300 pages in three parts:

- I Why Execution is Needed
- II The Building Blocks of Execution
- III The Three Core Processes of Execution.

In Part I, the discipline of execution is explored and analyzed. In Part II, the building blocks and skills needed for companies to "just do it" are discussed. Part III is the "how to" part of the book. The authors explain that there are three components to the discipline of execution: "understanding how to link people, strategy and operations." The people process addresses the "who" question. The strategy process defines "how," and the operations process provides the path needed to achieve company objectives, which are broken into short- and long-term targets.


Discussing the question "why bad things happen to good companies" in Part I, Bossidy and Charan don't lay blame at the CEO's mahogany and brass plated door. Like skillful sleuths, they laud the strategies of companies that fail to thrive, put techniques like breakthrough thinking and e-learning under the spy glass, and comb through revolutionary ideas that didn't work. Rather, they suggest that a realistic but visionary approach — applied at all levels and stages of execution of an idea — works better. It must be part of the company culture. Proposal managers have always known that "how" was the trickiest and most important part of preparing a proposal and excelling at answering the requirements.




Execution is then a means for realistically discussing the "hows" and "whats" of beginning, following through, making, and changing assumptions — while ensuring accountability. How many of us were taught to solve a problem in this way, to keep one eye focused on the target, while the other scans tomorrow's horizon? Not many, I suspect.

## Leaders, Followers, and Fall Behinders

The authors tell us that Dell, General Electric, and Wal-Mart are all 'Execution Leaders' while Compac and AT&T are 'Followers.' After last year's publicity, we can all name several well known companies who fit in the 'Fall Behind' category. Great companies develop cultures where execution techniques proliferate. In these cultures, everyone questions and is questioned, analysis and evaluation methods are the norm, and follow-up and solid closure is faithfully performed. Creativity and innovation flourish, and there is a deep and passionate engagement of people, products, and services. Followers are only beginning to grasp the nuances between hands-on management and micromanagement — between tunnel vision and foresight. Those who fall behind cannot even buy a clue.

## *Credentials and Execution Record*

Honeywell International's former CEO and current Chairman, Larry Bossidy, co-author of this book, is no slacker. He does not consider the execution of "detail work" as something best left for underlings. He found that companies who "can't measure productivity growth," do not put a premium on getting work done. Bossidy was named CEO of the year in 1998 by *Chief Executive* magazine. Never a quitter, he retired, and was asked to return to the front lines in 2001.

Ram Charan, a Fortune 500 advisor to CEOs, has taught at both the Harvard Business School and the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. GE, Dupont, and EDS have all recruited Charan to advise them and provide visionary leadership. He is the author of *What the CEO Wants You to Know* and co-author of *Every Business Is a Growth Business*.

Bossidy and Charan collaborated and combined their talents to create this book. A review in Business Week entitled *How-To Book for the Can-Do Boss* in late 2002 suggested that the authors used a "tag team" approach to craft their book. "Bossidy reminisces about his management experiences, then Charan provides analysis and anecdotes" that shape the topic at hand. It is a familiar formula, and it works.

## *Read it and Reap—Results*

The authors clearly focused on how to close the gap between results promised and results delivered. What better word to explore than "results" when we know the government is leaning towards a Performance Based Contracting environment that is centered on results and how to measure them, rather than the means employed to achieve them? It may sound a tad intimidating to read that a great CEO must be "obsessed with the business, and nurture the most capable people to create a truly performance-based culture." I cannot recall any profound quotes, however, that say success is easy to achieve and maintain.

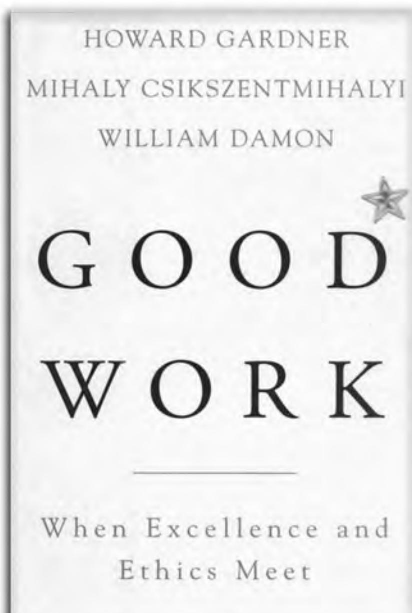
It is not enough to be merely good, competent, and smart. Nor is visionary ability and charm all that is needed to ensure success. Give *Execution, The Discipline of Getting Things Done* a try. It might take a bit of discipline to tackle this hefty work — it is not a beach book or a *Management for Dummies* paperback. It does contain the compiled wisdom and reflection of two solid business pros. Wisdom is not always wrapped in plain language and easy-to-grasp symbols. The bottom line — like the view in a rear view mirror execution is not always easy to carry out either. Then again, things often appear bigger than they really are.

# Good Work
# When Excellence and Ethics Meet

*By Howard Gardner, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and William Damon*

*Publisher: Basic Books, distributed by Harper Collins*
*Publication date: October 2001 Retail Price: $27.50/ hardcover, $17.50/softcover,*
*ISBN: 0-465-02607-9*

**Reviewed by Maggie Smith, Proposal Manager, Verizon**




I was first attracted to this book by its great title, which offers a highly attractive concept in an age of moral relativism. In my experience, the moral relativist loses the ability to judge and the ability to decide — *not the difference between good and bad* — but whether there even *is* a good or a bad. In our current culture, we have little black and white. Instead, we have 256 shades of gray. As a result, ethical standards become moving targets. We react to those who act upon this standard (as shown in news exposés of corrupt behavior) by demonstrating an inherent concept of fairness: "How would you like it if someone did that to you?" We appeal to a standard of behavior we expect the other person to understand.

***Good Work*** does not address the challenge of benchmarking moral standards. Nevertheless, it does take a solid stand. Its research has direct application to those of us in proposal and business development work. According to the authors, "Professions arise when a group of individual practitioners define the specific knowledge, skills, practices, rules and values that differentiate them from the rest of the culture." This made me reflect on APMP and its members. We have created a new institution and embarked upon expanding the functions of proposal management and business development. APMP is currently engaged in defining fundamental skill sets, processes and performance standards. We can all benefit from the authors' research and help APMP reach its objectives by engaging in good work that furthers APMP's causes and objectives.

The authors' collaborative efforts are based on the idea that today's business world, with its mergers and industry consolidations, rapid technological change, and drive for results and profits, are exerting transformational pressure on the way work is accomplished and the standards on which it is judged — where the bottom line becomes the only line. In some ways, what the authors discuss falls under the category of moral philosophy, as much as it falls under scientific treatise. They suggest that over the last 30 years the business world has adopted the concept that standards of right and wrong are culturally based and therefore are a matter of individual choice. "You decide what's right for you—I'll decide what's right for me." Does this work well in our democratic, capitalistic society? The authors offer reasons why they believe it does.

Gardner, Damon and Csikszentmihalyi have based their findings on the examination of two professions—genetics and journalism—that they feel represent textbook cases of professions in flux and environmentally polar opposites. Conducting readable interviews with leaders in their fields and collecting parallel data for each, the authors compared and contrasted the results, looking at each profession's central mission. They also defined standards of performance and the subject's defined sense of personal identity. The participants faced the same pressures, opportunities and decisions we are confronted with every day, and offer us effective strategies for dealing with them.

Defining standards of performance in an ever-changing world takes a bit of skill. I noted interesting similarities between journalistic and proposal professional standards. The authors suggest that it is easier to arrive at performance "value oriented" consensus when all stakeholders are aligned. They believe it is getting harder for journalists to align their intentions and training with expected outcomes. Journalists inform us about what is happening in the world, though sometimes it seems their job is to misinform. This may happen because journalists are not allowed sufficient time to fully investigate a story. Their integrity is compromised when their primary directive is to blend facts with gossip, and they are continually reminded, "If it bleeds, it leads. Don't think—just write." Perhaps some of us are also guilty of that same sort of "misalignment" in preparing proposals — with eyes always focused on the bottom line of making profits.

The authors' consensus, in my opinion, is that as a society, we have moved from an "other" centered society to a "self"centered one. This move to a rationalist conception of political and moral philosophy—where in one way or another we can find rational grounds for evaluating different traditions and thus transcend our own political and moral views, to one of moral relativism—where what is fair and good or unfair and bad is relative to the views found in a particular society. Thus for relativists, what is acceptable behavior in one place and time may be unacceptable in another. This change has had a profound impact on the definition of "good work" and its beneficial effect on society.


## New Directions for Professionals

Much of this negative impact on work is a result of replacing intrinsic rewards (intellectual challenges) with extrinsic rewards (power, money, and status). In a relativist environment, with extrinsic rewards as the lodestone, we frequently lose the ability to make judgments such as deciding between right and wrong, or make the choice to value good work for its own sake (as in the enduring tradition of the "Protestant work ethic"). As a result, too often we end up with newspaper headlines that, while shocking in content, have lost their ability to elicit any strong emotions or opinions, let alone outrage.

In exploring the results of their research, the authors maintain optimism about the future. They go so far as to suggest that we need not dread going to work in the morning. The authors' solution posits that the "five levers for good work" can apply to all professions: creating new institutions, expanding functions of existing institutions, reconfiguring existing institutions' membership, reaffirming their values, and taking personal stands. In order to retain the intrinsic rewards that initially attracts us to our careers, the authors propose that we should continually revisit "the traditions of the domain" to fortify our integrity and commitment to our profession's mission. ***Good Work*** maintains that, "If the fundamentals of good work excellence and ethics are in harmony, we lead a personally fulfilling and socially rewarded life."

***Good Work*** calls on us to set our standards high—to choose and aspire to high ideals. Once most people leave training for the practice of their professions, standards slide. Therefore, it is essential early on (and as often as necessary) to set the bar as high as possible, even though no one may consistently reach the established goal. We can further this objective by taking advantage of APMP's continuing education and mentoring opportunities, reaffirming our personal and professional values, and taking personal stands when necessary. It is heady stuff. *Good Work* is good for what ails us. We can all use a bit of spring tonic.

**HOWARD GARDNER** is Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education, Chairman of the Steering Committee of Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Adjunct Professor of Neurology at the Boston University School of Medicine. The author of 18 books, including *Frames of Mind, Creating Minds, Leading Minds, Multiple Intelligences,* and *Intelligence Reframed,* he has been honored with the MacArthur "Genius" award, the University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award, and 18 honorary doctorates.

**MIHALY CSIKSZENTMIHALYI** is Professor at the Drucker School of Management at Claremont Graduate University. His books include the bestselling *Flow, Being Adolescent, The Evolving Self, Creativity, Finding Flow,* and *Becoming Adult.* He is a member of the National Academy of Education, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Leisure Sciences.

**WILLIAM DAMON** is Professor of Education and Director of the Center on Adolescence at Stanford University. Damon has written widely on moral development at all ages of human life. His books include *Self-Understanding in Childhood and Adolescence, The Moral Child, Some Do Care,* and most recently, *The Youth Charter.* Damon is the recipient of awards from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and The John Templeton Foundation, among others.

# Productivity, Sales Gains Reported By Users of Proposal Automation Software

**Survey Summary Prepared By John Elder and Rick Austin**

*Fortune 1000 companies using proposal automation software experienced higher productivity and higher win rates than non-users, according to a survey conducted in the Fall of 2002. The survey, commissioned by Pragmatech Software, analyzed the proposal production practices of 200 Fortune 1000 companies, averaging 17,000 employees and $9 billion in revenues.*

Respondents in all 200 companies included in the survey were asked to estimate the time spent on four specific aspects of proposal production: Gathering background information, locating old documents and past proposals for boilerplate information, producing supporting documents, and producing the final document. When analyzing the average share of time spent on each step for companies that use proposal automation software, and comparing it to those that do not, significant differences became apparent:

- Companies that use software spent a lot less of their time on gathering background information and locating documents. Many respondents reported that they never have to locate old documents because all that information is available in their software, along with any "boilerplate" information.
- Users spend about one-third less time on gathering background information and about one-fourth less time on locating old documents.
- Users are freed up to concentrate more on the actual proposal creation. Users spend about 15 percent more of their time on creating or assembling supporting documents, and about 20 percent more of their time on producing the final proposal.

During the survey, close attention was also paid to identifying overall efficiency improvements that users can achieve through their proposal automation software. Two different measures were applied to this question. First, respondents were asked to estimate the number of hours or days they spend on creating proposals. Second, they were asked to estimate how much time they save by using proposal automation software. Due to the different direction of the two questions, the responses were not identical, but they both pointed at the same result using proposal automation software did increase efficiency.

In looking at the average number of pages prepared per day (calculated out of respondents' estimates of the typical length of their proposals and the typical time spent on completing these documents), an actual increase of productivity of 10 percent could be observed. However, taking into account the users' own estimate of time saved, the average climbs to about 47 percent. To reconcile this difference, one has to consider what is being compared. Individuals who had experience using proposal automation software compared it to what it was "before," which in many cases was two or more years ago. This led them to estimate time savings of between 20 and 60 percent. However, the average page production per day takes into account the experience of both users and non-users. Clearly over the past several years, even companies not using proposal automation software have made use of their existing computer applications and created specific routines and proposal libraries to aid them in proposal creation. In spite of those steps by non-users, there is still a 10 percent increase in productivity when using specialized proposal automation software.

The survey also demonstrated a significant difference in the "win rate," measuring the share of proposals that actually turn into closed sales contracts. Taken as a straight average, proposal automation software users showed a slight edge over non-users, closing on average 37 percent of their proposals, versus a closing rate of 33 percent for non-users. However, the weighted average showed proposal automation software users to have a significant advantage, closing on 48 percent of their proposals, versus only 26 percent of the proposals in companies not using the software.

Among the other statistics gathered by the survey, there was a high level of satisfaction among users of proposal automation software, with 56 percent of respondents reporting that they were "very satisfied" with their software, and 37 percent reporting that they were "somewhat satisfied." Only four percent reported that they were "somewhat dissatisfied."

Respondents also reported specific benefits and drawbacks to the use of proposal automation software. Among the benefits were:

- The quality and consistency of responses and the standardization of proposals (reported by 35 percent of respondents)
- Improved database management, providing a central repository for all data (reported by 26 percent of respondents).
- Ease of use, accuracy, and a better-finished product.

Among the drawbacks to the use of proposal automation software reported by respondents were:

- The amount of time it takes to update the database on a regular basis (reported by 12 percent of respondents)
- The time it takes to build the initial database (reported by 11 percent of respondents)
- The time it takes to use the system, with a preference for cut-and-paste (reported by 7 percent of the respondents).

This market research project was conducted by InTeleSearch from September 1, 2002 through October 31, 2002. A total of 200 companies were interviewed for the survey, selected randomly from two different lists — a list of 103 Fortune 500 companies and a list of 1,665 Fortune 1000 companies. The final group of 200 was composed of 25 respondents from the Fortune 500 list and 175 respondents from the Fortune 1000 list. One Fortune 500 company surveyed is a Pragmatech customer. Eighty-six of the remaining Fortune 1000 companies polled use Pragmatech. The findings conclude that other vendors have a significant presence in the marketplace, including Sant and Ventaso. Some companies reported using homegrown software, while a few did not reveal what software they were using.

The geographic sample of companies responding to the survey was not evenly distributed throughout the country. More than one half (56 percent) of the sample was from companies located in the eastern United States, including New England, Metropolitan New York/New Jersey, Metropolitan DC, and the southeast, from the Carolinas to Florida. Approximately one quarter (23.6 percent) of the sample was from companies in the central United States, and approximately one fifth (20.5 percent) of the sample was from the western United States.

The companies surveyed represented a wide variety of industries. Forty-two percent of the respondents were from financial services, 12 percent were from business services and consulting, 12 percent were from computer software and services, 10 percent were from health products and services, and the remaining 24 percent were from various manufacturing, wholesale and retail industries.

The statistics and conclusions presented here were not the result of a controlled experiment, but rather a survey based primarily on users' estimation. Factors that may vary among respondents, such as the complexity of the procurement being bid, available resources applied to completing the proposal, and respondents' accuracy in estimating time saved using the software can influence the findings of this survey.

Survey data excerpted/summarized with permission of Pragmatech Software, Inc. (www.pragametch.com)

# Proposal Resources on the Web

**By John Elder and Ali Paskun**

*Need to review a FAR clause referenced in an RFP? Looking for yet another way to say, "Uniquely qualified?" Want some tips from a business development expert? You can find all of this information and more on the Web; you just need to know where to look! Some URLs that can link you to these resources are listed below.*

We compiled these Web sites by listing the ones we frequently use and have found to be helpful, then used the more popular Internet search engines, such as *Google.com*, to locate others using such keywords as "proposal writing" and "federal acquisition." We hope you will find this collection of Web links helpful and will let us know what you think.

This list is not considered all-inclusive. From time to time we will publish additional sites that we think would benefit the APMP membership. You are encouraged to share any favorite sites that you feel your fellow proposal professionals would find interesting.

1. **Acronyms and Abbreviations**
   *http://www.acronymfinder.com/*
   An extensive and easy-to-use searchable database that contains definitions for more than 200,000 acronyms, abbreviations, and initialisms.
2. **Capture Planning**
   *http://www.captureplanning.com/index.cfm/aw*
   This site provides training information on proposal development and business development, as well as links to other sites. There is a fee involved to access tutorials.
3. **Site Map of The Magic of Winning Proposals**
   *http://www.r-3.com/classroom/magic/magic.swf*
   An excellent breakdown of the entire proposal process given in both text and graphic representations.
4. **The Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Home Page**
   *http://www.arnet.gov/far/*
   Contains a searchable copy of the entire FAR including reference materials and other background information.
5. **International Association for Business Communicators (IABC)**
   *http://www.iabc.com/*
   Website for the IABC, a professional organization for those engaged in strategic business communication management.
6. **Society for Technical Communication (STC)**
   *http://www.stc.org/*
   Website for the STC, an individual membership organization dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication that contains information on producing technical matter in a clear and concise manner.
7. **Bidding Basics**
   *http://home3.americanexpress.com/smallbusiness//resources/expanding/bidbasic.shtml*
   Provides guidelines of what the small business owner must consider when deciding to bid on a government solicitation, including getting a DUNS number and determining an SIC code.
8. **Federal Procurement Offices**
   *http://federalcontract.about.com/cs/agencylist/index.htm*
   Contains information on where to find federal business with civilian agencies, including links to specific government agencies to locate information on intelligence, education, agriculture, and other public programs.
9. **Defense Acquisition University**
   *http://www.dau.mil/pubs/glossary/preface.asp*
   Contains The GLOSSARY: Defense Acquisition Acronyms and Terms that has most acronyms, abbreviations, and terms commonly used in the weapon systems acquisition process within the Department of Defense (DoD) and defense industries. Adobe Acrobat is required.

*Continued on next page.*

10 **Merriam-Webster On-line Language Center**
*http://www.m-w.com/home.htm*
Provides a searchable Merriam-Webster dictionary and thesaurus. The unabridged resource can search by definition, crossword clue, etymology, or rhyme and needs a membership subscription login to access.

11 **Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute (SEI)**
*http://www.sei.cmu.edu/*
Website for the SEI containing information on management and engineering practices, including extensive materials on Capability Maturity Models (CMM), software engineering practices, and technology transition practices.

12 **MarketingProfs**
*http://www.marketingprofs.com/intro.asp*
Contains articles, downloads, and ideas from marketing professionals and professors to improve marketing decisions. Membership is free and needed to receive newsletters and articles. Also has Marketing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in such areas as Branding, Marketing Communications, Marketing Metrics, and Pricing.

13 **Great Books Online**
*http://www.bartleby.com*
Unlimited access to literature and reference material. Has the ability to search volumes such as Bartlett's Familiar Quotations, Strunk's Elements of Style, Gray's Anatomy, and World Factfinder.

14 **Project Management Institute (PMI)**
*http://www.pmi.org/info/default.asp*
Website for the PMI, a project management professional association; includes information about the organization, certifications, professional standards, and a bookstore and other reference materials.

15 **Grant Proposals**
*http://www.grantproposal.com/*
Devoted to providing free resources to grant proposal writers. Includes an overview of grant proposals, guidelines and templates for proposal content, and advice from funders.

16 **The Knowledge Management Resource Center**
*http://www.kmresource.com/exp.htm*
Has a full spectrum of information on knowledge management. Offers articles, white papers, and case studies on topics related to knowledge management written for both the novice and expert; conferences and events; and professional organizations.

17 **Proposal Templates**
*http://www.education.umd.edu/grants/page2.html*
Although written for those who write grant proposals, this site contains several checklists and guidelines that can apply to any proposal effort.

18 **GovCon**
*http://www.govcon.com/content/homepage/default.asp?VNETCOOKIE=NO*
Site is devoted to providing information to professionals in the government contracting industry.

19 **United States Copyright Office – Library of Congress**
*http://lcweb.loc.gov/copyright/*
In addition to a complete version of United States Copyright Law, provides copyright basics and FAQs, searchable copyright documents, and guidelines to register a work and record a document.

20 **Encyclopedia Britannica**
*http://www.britannica.com/*
Allows searches of the 32-volume Encyclopedia Britannica, plus Britannica's Student and Concise encyclopedias, thousands of video and audio clips, and hundreds of magazines and journals.

21 **GovSpot**
*http://www.govspot.com/categories/govtdocuments.htm*
Provides a wealth of federal, state, and local government information including links to documents and forms and government news and reports.

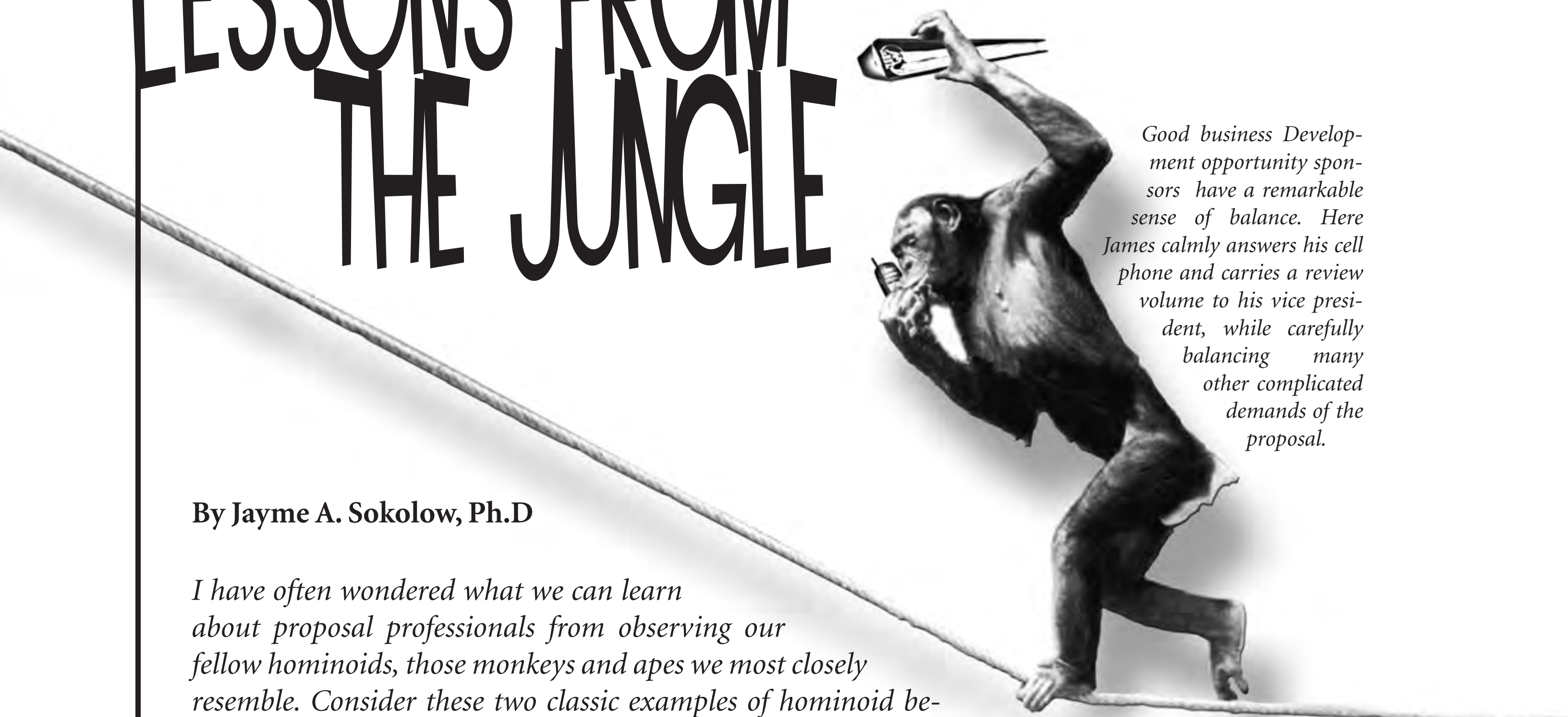
22 **The Chicago Manual of Style**
*http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/cmosfaq/cmosfaq.html*
Although this site does not contain a searchable version of this reference, it does contain a question and answer feature that allows writers to submit questions on style and grammar, as well as search archives of previously submitted questions by topic.

23 **The Commerce Business Daily (CBD)**
*http://cbdnet.access.gpo.gov/*
Provides a single point of access to all government-wide federal procurement opportunities through simple or fielded searches of the CBD.

24 **The Foundation Center The Proposal Writing Short Course**
*http://fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html*
Gives an excellent, but brief, overview of each component of a proposal, as well as writing tips. Great resource for someone new to proposal writing.

# The Proposal Professional as Primate:

# LESSONS FROM THE JUNGLE



*Good business Development opportunity sponsors have a remarkable sense of balance. Here James calmly answers his cell phone and carries a review volume to his vice president, while carefully balancing many other complicated demands of the proposal.*

**By Jayme A. Sokolow, Ph.D**

*I have often wondered what we can learn about proposal professionals from observing our fellow hominoids, those monkeys and apes we most closely resemble. Consider these two classic examples of hominoid behavior. The first comes from an episode of The Honeymooners, the classic television comedy that made Jackie Gleason famous. The second occurred among chimpanzees at the Arnhem Zoo in the Netherlands, which houses the world's largest captive chimpanzee colony living in a natural habitat rather than in cages.*

In a scene from *The Honeymooners*, Ralph Kramden, Ed Norton and their wives are sharing an apartment. A problem immediately arises over the question of food distribution.

Ralph: "When she put two potatoes on the table, one big one and one small one, you immediately took the big one without asking what I wanted."

Ed: "What would you have done?"

Ralph: "I would have taken the small one, of course."

Ed (in disbelief): "You would?"

Ralph: "Yes, I would!"

Ed: "So, what are you complaining about? You *got* the little one!"

In *The Honeymooners*, Ralph and Ed were dealing with a classic problem in all primate populations — sharing. The need for sharing is universal, but its logic must be worked out to everyone's satisfaction or else disputes may arise, even over the size of potatoes.

In the example from the Arnhem Zoo, two mother chimpanzees were sitting in the shade while their two children played around them. Another female, who was powerful and much older than the others, lay asleep nearby. When the children started screaming, hitting each other, and pulling each other's hair, one mother admonished them with a soft but threatening grunt while the other mother became anxious. The children again started quarreling loudly. This time, one of the mothers woke up the older female by poking her in the ribs and then pointed to the two noisy children. The oldest female took one step toward the children, waved an arm in the air and made loud noises. The children stopped quarreling. She then went back to sleep.

Here, the chimpanzees are dealing with another classic primate problem, the question of one's place in the hierarchical order. When the children started quarreling, their mothers found themselves in an awkward situation. In the past, neither one wanted to tell the other's child what to do. One mother solved the problem diplomatically by asking a third party, who was the dominant female, to intervene and stop the fighting.

Ever since the great Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus considered classifying humans with monkeys and apes in 1758, we have gradually learned that we share many traits with our fellow hominoids. Especially in the twentieth century, the science of Ethology — the study of animal behavior — has linked our behavior, culture, and thinking more firmly to our evolutionary ancestors.

With a broad smile and a knowing wink, this author and article pioneer the field of Proposal Ethology — the study of the behavior of proposal professionals in their natural environments (organizations and proposal teams). We will begin by reviewing the evolutionary tree of proposal professionals. Then we will look at three lessons for proposal professionals that we can derive (or contrive) from studying other simians:

- Lesson #1: How to become the proposal team's 800-pound gorilla.
- Lesson #2: Good ethics make good business.
- Lesson #3: Make peace, not war.

In each case, we will first examine simian behavior and then draw appropriate lessons for proposal professionals. We will conclude with an examination of the probable evolutionary origins of our behavior as proposal professionals.

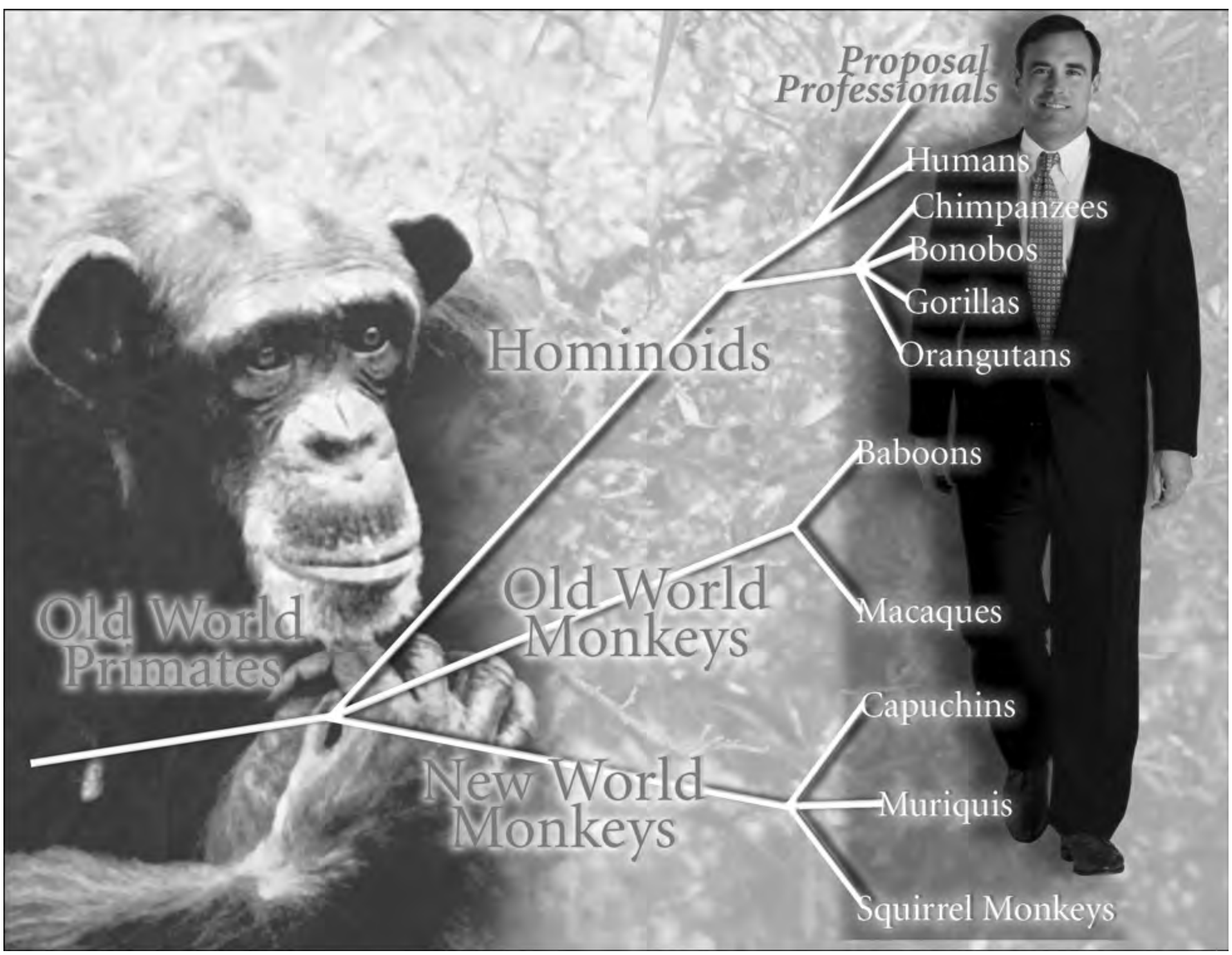
## The Hominoid Family and Proposal Professionals

Today, comparisons between humans and other primates usually take two forms. In the social sciences and humanities, the focus is on the uniqueness of the human species. In contrast, ever since the publication of Charles Darwin's epochal book, *Origins of the Species* (1859), many scientists have argued that evolution by natural selection is the common thread that unites all forms of life. Human and animal behavior can therefore be best explained as the product of evolution.

*We share about 20 million years of evolution with gibbons, gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans, and bonobos.*

All 200 primate species are commonly called monkeys, but hominoids are a distinct group. They have relatively large bodies (especially if they are proposal professionals who have spent too many late evenings at work munching on pizza and chicken wings), flat chests, no tails, and shoulders that they can rotate. Chimpanzees, not gorillas, are our closest relatives because they share about 99 percent of our DNA. In fact, bonobos (found only in Zaire), chimpanzees and humans are more closely related to each other than bonobos and chimpanzees are related to gorillas and orangutans.

Scientists estimate that primates appeared on earth about 30 million years ago. Around 20 million years ago, the hominoid family emerged, and then the common ancestors of humans and African apes appeared about 8 million years ago. As a result, we share about 20 million years of evolution with gibbons, gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans and bonobos.



| Characteristic | Description |
|---|---|
| Formalization | Ranks are formalized. When they become unclear, a struggle for dominance occurs that only ends when a leader's status is formally recognized. |
| Influence | Usually the individuals at the top are most influential, but an individual's influence on the group does not always correspond to his or her rank position. |
| Coalitions | Intervention in conflicts is designed to either help friends or build powerful coalitions. |
| Balance | Males tend to form strong social bonds among themselves. |
| Stability | Relationships among females are less hierarchically organized and more stable than among males. |
| Exchanges | Hierarchies are based on the reciprocal exchange of social favors or goods. For the leader, these exchanges boost prestige and provide security to the group. |
| Manipulation | Individuals use others as social instruments. |
| Rational strategies | Individuals plan their strategies to maintain or improve their position in the hierarchy. |
| Privileges | Those at the top have more privileges than those below them. |

**Common Characteristics of Proposal Professional and Hominoid Hierarchies**—*Proposal professionals and hominoids have similar kinds of hierarchies. Their most important functions are described above.*

*Homo sapiens* may be several million years old, but the subspecies of proposal professionals is of more recent vintage. While proposals are an ancient art, the profession of proposal development only emerged in the twentieth century. Thus, of all hominoids, proposal professionals may be among the most recent and, hence, arguably the most refined. However, proposal professionals should keep in mind that during this same evolutionary period there emerged professional wedding planners, closet organizers and personal fitness coaches.

Although most of us do not consider comparisons to chimpanzees flattering, we cannot deny that they are anatomically and physiologically much closer to humans than to other species. Chimpanzees also are similar to us in their longevity.

Chimpanzees also resemble us in another significant way —they possess a culture. By culture, ethologists such as Frans de Waal mean that chimpanzees and other species can acquire new knowledge and habits from each other. Although they have no language or abstract symbols, chimpanzees can develop new tools to hunt, food preferences, communication gestures and environmental adaptations based on the transmission of accumulated knowledge. This means that groups of chimpanzees may behave differently depending on what they have learned.

## Securing Your Place in the Hominoid Hierarchy

In Aristotle's *Politics*, humans are famously defined as political animals. Political activity may be part of our evolutionary heritage, for chimpanzees also engage in constant political behavior. Like many proposal professionals, they are continually trying to secure, maintain and improve their positions within the group.

For example, every evening at the Arnhem Zoo the chimpanzees are called inside their building for dinner. The chimpanzees have learned that dinner will not be served until all of them have entered their quarters. One day, two obstinate adolescent females refused to enter the building. Two hours later, they relented and finally entered. The zookeeper gave them a separate bedroom because he feared bloody reprisals. The next morning, the chimpanzee colony physically attacked the culprits. That evening, the two chastened chimpanzees were the first to enter the building.

Chimpanzees and other hominoids follow rules and have a strong sense of social regularity. They also attach great significance to relations of dominance and submission. As a result, they group themselves into formal social hierarchies.

Chimpanzees' ability to build and maintain stable hierarchical relationships is based on the fundamental ability to recognize others individually and to remember them. Animals that lack these capacities can forge hierarchical relationships, but they must be rebuilt whenever meetings occur. Chimpanzees have the further ability to form triangular relationships, which means that chimpanzee A not only has a relationship with chimpanzees B and C but also allows chimpanzees B and C to have a relationship with each other.

In chimpanzee societies, sex, size and social characteristics determine the hierarchy. The alpha male is usually older and bigger than his male rivals, and he maintains his leadership position in three ways:

- First, he builds coalitions with other males to support him.
- Second, he tends to be generous with material goods, except to his rivals.
- Third, by giving protection to his group, he receives respect and support in return.

Leadership is not based on mere dominance but on the esteem earned through service to the group.

*A tense pricing confrontation develops between the Business Development lead and the CFO. The BD lead (and future program manager, if there is a win) has job security at stake, while the CFO wants to ensure profitability.*

Male chimpanzees focus on power and winning, and they spend a great deal of time developing strategies to improve their status. Females, in contrast, are more interested in interpersonal contacts and form coalitions only with their friends. In a chimpanzee hierarchy, there will be many male/male conflicts, fewer male/female conflicts and rare female/female conflicts. Because female chimpanzees are not as aggressive as males, their hierarchies are more stable and also less clearly defined. In chimpanzee groups, however, males reconcile more quickly after fighting then females.

## Lesson #1: How to Become the Proposal Team's 800-pound Gorilla

The parallels between simian and proposal professional hierarchies are astonishing. In the office environment, proposal teams occupy a defined position in a company's organization. In some organizations, this defined rank may be very low indeed. Proposal professionals are formally recognized by titles, pay scales, the size and location of offices, access to prestigious colleagues, and invitations to status-enhancing senior staff meetings. They are acutely aware of their place in the hierarchy, everyone else's place in relation to themselves, and as good hominoids spend a considerable amount of time trying to improve their standing.

They may wear clothes and walk erect, but male and female proposal professionals behave much like the chimpanzees at the Arnhem zoo. Proposal teams typically organize themselves into groups and a hierarchy with the Proposal Manager as the leader. Under him or her might be Volume Managers, Volume Writers, Graphic Artists and Administrative Support. These relationships can be represented in a vertical organization chart, just like in chimpanzee groups. This hierarchy is not based on size or age but rather experience, knowledge, skills, and the right connections with senior staff.

Hierarchies are absolutely necessary to both chimpanzees and proposal professionals for the same reasons. Despite the continuing jockeying for positions that occurs in all power structures, they promote cooperation and dampen destructive competition.

Of all the organizational possibilities, hierarchy seems to be the best tool for promoting social integration and teamwork. The major difference between proposal team hierarchies and those of other hominoid groups is that humans tend to be more flexible and creative, although unfortunately there are many examples to the contrary.

*They may wear clothes and walk erect, but male and female proposal professionals behave much like chimpanzees.*

To become the proposal team's 800-pound gorilla, take the following steps:

- Show up for meals and meetings on time.
- Learn the identities of your fellow team members and effusively greet them by name whenever you make eye contact.
- If you are a male, build strong relationships with other males, be generous with your time to all team members except your male rivals, and act bravely by always publicly defending the proposal team to your superiors, regardless of impending deadlines and an alarming rate of progress. Avoid fights with females. Remember, being on the team is not about proposal development; it is about power and winning. If you get into a fight, show how tough you are by magnanimously reconciling.
- If you are a female, focus on strong interpersonal relationships with proposal team members of both sexes. Ignore your enemies, especially if they are males. Avoid fights with them. If you get into a fight, show how tough you are by slowly reconciling.

### Acting Ethically in a Hominoid Environment

Under what conditions can ethical values emerge in a world of self-seeking individuals? How can ethical values develop in an environment that may be predominantly competitive or non-cooperative? What strategies to promote ethical values can thrive in each type of environment? In addition, under what conditions can ethical values, once fully established, successfully resist invasion by less ethical strategies? The answers to these questions are very much the same for hominoid cultures and proposal professionals.

| Characteristic | Description |
|---|---|
| Sympathy-related Traits | Attachment<br>Emotional empathy<br>Cognitive empathy<br>Learned adjustment to individuals with different needs |
| Norm-related Characteristics | Social rules<br>Internalization of social rules<br>Ability and willingness to punish rule violators |
| Reciprocity | Cooperation<br>Giving and trading<br>Aggression against violators of rules |
| Getting Along | Avoidance of conflicts<br>Reconciliation<br>Group concern for harmony<br>Accommodation of disparate interests through compromise |

**Common Ethical Characteristics of Proposal Professionals and Hominoids**—*Proposal professionals and hominoids have similar ethical values because they both must balance individual self-interest with group interests. Their most important characteristics are described in the table above.*

Darwin argued that ethical values evolve because species are better off with them than without them. Until recently, however, many of his followers argued that human ethics was a triumph of morality over brute animal instincts. Over the last few decades, this perspective has been seriously challenged by ethologists' study of hominoid societies, which like human communities are based on clear notions of right and wrong.

There is a profound ethical paradox in evolution: genetic self-advancement, which is the centerpiece of evolution, seems to have helped hominoids develop remarkable capacities for caring, sympathy and understanding. Ethical values are not a unique human cultural construct that defies evolution or that separates us from other primates. They are a product of evolution that widely exists throughout the hominoid world.

*Reciprocal altruism may appear idealistic, but it is actually very pragmatic social behavior.*

Examples of caring, sympathy, cooperation and mutual aid abound among hominoids. For example, in one chimpanzee group there were two females called Gwinnie and Mai. When Gwinnie had food, she would go to an isolated location and share it only with her offspring. Mai, in contrast, consumed her food in a more public location, and thus she had to share it with others. One day when Gwinnie and Mai needed food, their fellow chimpanzees responded to them quite differently. They willingly shared their food with Mai, but Gwinnie encountered threats and stinginess when she extended her open hand. These chimpanzees were telling Gwinnie, "You never share food with us. Why should we share ours with you?"

Perhaps reconciliation gestures are the most obvious and touching examples of hominoid ethics. After threats, fights and bites, golden monkeys make up by holding hands, chimpanzees kiss each other on the mouth, bonobos engage in repeated orgasmic sex, and tonkeana macaques hold each other and smack their lips. Among primates, reconciliation gestures often involve mutual grooming or a subordinate individual presenting himself or herself to the dominant individual, who responds peacefully.

Generally, behavior in stable hominoid groups is based on the concept of reciprocal altruism. Reciprocal altruism differs from cooperation, which is based on immediate rewards such as sharing food found by the group. In contrast, reciprocal altruism costs an individual something before any benefits are delivered. It is composed of three basic elements:

- The acts of exchange are costly to the performer but beneficial to the recipient.
- There is a time lag between giving and receiving.
- Giving is contingent on receiving.

Reciprocal altruism works among individuals that meet each other frequently, that remember each other, and that have the capacity to base their future behaviors on previous acts. For primates, reciprocal altruism starts with families and kin, and spreads outward to encompass larger groups. Behaviorally, it means that primates seek the company of others with whom they can form mutually profitable relationships, ones that will provide them with the food, protection and emotional support they need to survive.

## Lesson #2: Good Ethics Make Good Business

Proposal professionals face the same ethical challenges in the workplace as hominoids face in the jungle. Over time, most proposal professionals learn to work effectively with each other through trial-and-error learning about the possibilities for mutual rewards. On the most basic level, this involves cooperation. On the highest level, however, a more demanding form of behavior is necessary — reciprocal altruism. Once individuals realize that reciprocity works, it can become a norm that withstands the defections and betrayals that are an everyday part of primate life.

When members of a proposal team find ways to agree on narrative protocols for a Technical Proposal, when they publicly thank each other for good suggestions, and when they all agree to work together over a weekend to finish a task, they are engaging in the same kinds of reciprocal behavior as other hominoids. These behaviors enhance an individual's status, privileges and access to resources. Reciprocal altruism may appear idealistic, but it is actually very pragmatic social behavior.

Like the chimpanzee Mai, most proposal professionals learn to cooperate and share resources. They also have developed a wide repertoire of reconciliation gestures. Some hold hands, others kiss, and many individuals frequently smack their lips. Bouts of orgasmic sex seem questionable, but more systematic research needs to be done on this subject.

To act ethically as a proposal professional, take the following steps:

- Share your food with fellow team members. Some day, you may forget your lunch or be short of cash.
- Offer to groom others but never do so without their permission. For example, you can inform a same-sex colleague that there are specks of salad in his or her teeth, but do not try to remove them yourself.
- Engage in cooperation and reciprocal altruism. It is the best way to enhance your status, privileges, and access to paper supplies.
- After an argument with your colleagues, hold hands, kiss on the mouth or engage in repeated orgasmic sex if they are willing but never do so without their consent. You may find that your teammates consider these behaviors inappropriate reconciliation gestures.

*Here is a row of huddled, grooming engineers working at writing the technical volume, where they must propose a quality solution that may be too expensive. Social cohesiveness may be of vital importance for this species in the wilds of proposal development.*

| Aggressive Behavior | Problems Caused |
|---|---|
| Harm to Specific Relationships | You cannot fight without losing a colleague, friend or a coalition partner. |
| Harm to Group Unity | Members who disrupt group life usually damage their own interests along with everybody else's. |
| Bodily and Psychological Harm to Others | Group members who are injured or disaffected compromise the quality of the social environment upon which the group's success depends. |

**Common Dangers of Aggressive Behavior in Hominoid Groups and Proposal Teams**—*Like hominoid groups, proposal teams are based on a strong sense of hierarchy and a shared sense of values (cooperation and reciprocal altruism). As a result, they usually devise ways to lessen aggressive behavior and promote reconciliation, as illustrated in the table below.*

## Learning Hominoid Peacemaking Strategies

In 1963, the famous Austrian ethologist Konrad Lorenz wrote the best seller, *On Aggression*. Lorenz argued that humans possess a killer instinct and have few inhibitions to using it. Lorenz's book is part of a long scientific tradition that describes evolution as a ruthless and often violent struggle for existence leading to the survival of the fittest.

Unfortunately, humans have supplied ample evidence to support Lorenz's argument. The murderous 20th century should make us all ashamed of our species. Primates fare no better in the ethological literature. We have learned that gorillas and chimpanzees kill each other and that chimpanzees in their natural environments will occasionally hunt for meat and even eat each other. The aggressive and often violent nature of hominoids cannot be denied.

However, as Frans de Waal has argued, even though aggressive behavior is a fundamental characteristic of hominoid life, "this trait cannot be understood in isolation from the powerful checks and balances that evolved to mitigate its effects." In the hominoid world, groups find ways to reduce destructive competition, reconcile differences, and repair the damage caused by fighting. Making peace is just as natural as fighting.

Examples of peacemaking among primates vary, but the process follows predictable paths. For example, Frans de Waal once observed a chimpanzee fight at the Arnhem Zoo. As a dominant male attacked a female, other chimpanzees rushed to her defense. Soon they all calmed down, then suddenly they began hooting and one male chimpanzee began banging on large metal drums. What caused the excitement? The male who had attacked the female was now kissing and embracing her.

According to de Waal, when disputes occur, both the dominant and the subordinate chimpanzees may serve as peacemakers. Among males, the process may take several months and includes frequent displays of intimidation, aggressive exchanges, and perhaps even physical attacks. Once the subordinate chimpanzee formally recognizes his rival's superior status, however, both chimpanzees can begin relaxing around each other. The key to reconciliation is the formal acknowledgment of inferior status, which is signified by grunting, bowing low, and the holding out of hands in a begging position.

As one might expect, the situation is different among female chimpanzees. Their coalitions are based less on dominance and more on personal preferences and kinship bonds. When females fight, they are less likely to make up than their male counterparts. Perhaps because bonding and solidarity are stronger among females than males, it is more difficult for them to reconcile. Coalition politics are also different. Male chimpanzees resist making enemies because they need the support of as many other males as possible.

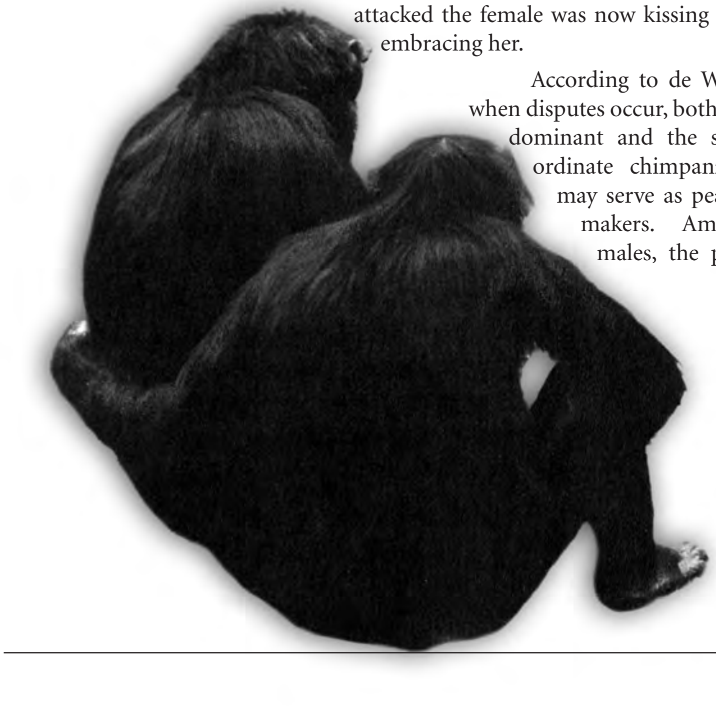
Aggression is common among other hominoid species too. At the Yerkes Regional Primate Center, researchers observed a group of rhesus monkeys. For every ten hours of observation, they counted an average of eighteen aggressive acts for each monkey. In the wild, many of these monkeys have scratches, missing limbs, and permanent scars from fighting.

Yet, stump-tailed monkeys reconcile very quickly, usually within one or two minutes after a tense confrontation. Bonobos frequently use sexual relations as a form of reconciliation. One monkey named Sam had sexual intercourse 59 times in just six hours.

Bonobos are the original "make love, not war" hominoids. Females are sexually receptive throughout their cycles, so sex is not simply for reproduction. However, neither is it merely for fun, as with other primates. For bonobos, sexual relations are usually an alternative to hostile behavior and a way to reduce tensions over competition for food. Unlike other monkeys, they copulate face-to-face and in so many unusual positions that they put the *Kama Sutra* to shame. Sexual intercourse, however, is very brief. Sam's athletic performance only lasted a total of about 15 minutes.

# Lesson #3: Make Peace, Not War

Unfortunately, conflict resolution does not seem to be a highly developed trait among humans in this country. The huge number of lawyers (Washington, DC has 26 lawyers per 100 residents!), the willingness of Americans to litigate and sue each other for trivial reasons, and our high murder rate suggest that



*An adolescent proposal coordinator (right) seeks reassurance from her mentor, the proposal manager, while watching a tense conflict in the community.*

our peacemaking skills could use some improvement. Nonetheless, even in such a contentious society as ours, proposal professionals usually find ways to discourage overt conflict.

Among hominoids and proposal professionals, aggression is only one form of conflict resolution. Tolerance, compromise and peacemaking are also considered honorable steps because we must take into account how much we need our opponents. In interdependent groups such as chimpanzee colonies and proposal teams, winning is rarely absolute. Group behavior need not be a zero-sum game where your loss is my gain.

On most proposal teams, physically incapacitating fights are not the norm. When disputes arise, most proposal professionals find ways to resolve them without too much loss of blood. Like chimpanzees, dominant and subordinate team members may act as peacemakers. Among males, the process may take several months and includes frequent displays of intimidation, aggressive exchanges and perhaps even not returning a stapler. Once the subordinate proposal professional formally recognizes his rival's superior status, however, both of them can relax around each other again and the stapler will be miraculously found.

*In interdependent groups such as chimpanzee colonies and proposal teams, winning is rarely absolute.*

To make peace, not war, on proposal teams, take the following steps:

- Keep in mind that a sizable minority of proposal professionals avoid spending their days fighting or bickering with colleagues.
- When making peace with someone lower or at the same level as you in the hierarchy, smile, shake hands and share food.
- When making peace with someone higher than you in the hierarchy, always remember to grovel in these appealing ways: grunt, bow low and hold out your hands in a begging position.
- If you are a male, fight hard but make peace quickly. If you are a female, take your time and keep 'em guessing. It is your evolutionary right.
- While daydreaming on the job, undertake a dispassionate cost/benefit analysis of bonobos' sexual behavior as a means to develop proposal team camaraderie.
- When a colleague raises your ire, try one of two proven calming techniques from the genetic grab bag of your evolutionary heritage: indifference and *ennui*.
- Keep repeating to yourself, "If it took humans millions of years to evolve, I can learn to tolerate my colleagues until the proposal is packaged for delivery."

## Conclusion

When did man emerge from the primates? The question is really irrelevant. He was there from the beginning," wrote one sage scientist. Much of our behavior as proposal professionals, as the term suggests, apes our hominoid colleagues. This is not surprising, nor should it be a cause for alarm. Over millions of years, hominoids have devised hierarchies, ethical systems and peacekeeping strategies to ensure their survival.

Proposal professionals could probably learn a great deal about themselves by closely observing chimpanzees, or more wistfully, bonobos. Conversely, hominoids might learn a great deal about themselves if they could closely observe the readers of this journal. I find this a bracing, rather than a depressing, idea. It is comforting to know that some of our best traits as proposal professionals are shared by other species, and that they are the result of billions of social encounters, both friendly and hostile.

Clearly, our fellow primates can teach us many lessons about what it means to be a proposal professional. After all, life is all about proposals — written or otherwise.

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The author would like to thank two hominoids — Laura Savely and BJ Lownie — for their assistance on this article.

All pictures taken from: Wall, Frans de. *Peacemaking Among Primates*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1989. Each photo has credits to individual photographers, museums, etc. within the book. Photo captions by Rich Freeman.

*Jayme A. Sokolow, Ph.D., is founder and president of The Development Source, Inc., a proposal services company located in Silver Spring, MD, that works with businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. He is also Assistant Managing Editor and Chair of the Editorial Advisory Board of Proposal Management.*

*He can be reached at JSoko12481@aol.com.*

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Proposal Management invites authors to submit their best research for peer review. Manuscripts may be of practical or scholarly importance to APMP's audience of proposal development, acquisition, procurement, business development, sales and program management professionals.

## Content

Proposal Management publishes the following types of peer-reviewed articles:

- Results of original research on proposal-related topics.
- Original contributions to proposal-related theory.
- Case studies of solutions to proposal-related problems.
- Tutorials on proposal-related processes or procedures that respond to new laws, standards, requirements, techniques or technologies.
- Reviews of proposal-related research, products, books, bibliographies and bibliographic essays.
- Views and commentary.

The journal promotes APMP and its goals through the timely publication of articles, reviews and references. The journal is a medium for promoting constructive, intelligent discussion and debate about business development acquisition and proposal management. Because the primary audience of the APMP professional journal is informed practitioners in the private, government, and nonprofit sectors, manuscripts reporting the results of research or proposing theories about topics should include descriptions of or suggestions for practical applications.

## Submissions

The following are requirements for articles/manuscripts submitted:

- Not more than 30 pages (15 pages single-spaced) including exhibits, printed on 8 1/2" by 11" paper.
- 12-point font and at least one-inch margins on all four sides.
- Double-spaced throughout, including references.
- Submit an electronic file of your article via e-mail or on a 3 1/2 -inch disk (high density format). Microsoft Word is the preferred electronic format; Corel WordPerfect, Rich Text Format (RTF) or ASCII file format is also acceptable. Alternatively, you may submit four hard copies of your article via regular mail.
- In addition to the text file, submit one electronic file for each exhibit in TIFF or JPG format. Screenshots are preferred to be captured and output should be 6 inches (width) by 4.5 inches (height) for full screens.
- Submit your article to Proposal Management's Managing Editor or the Chair of the Editorial Advisory Board. (General inquiries can be made to the APMP Executive Director at 909-659-0789.)

**Note:** We also solicit guest commentators for contributions to Trends and Views.

## Manuscript Preparation

The following guidelines should be followed in preparing manuscripts for submission:

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- Use up to four levels of heading.
- Place all exhibits in the text with a descriptive caption.
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## Review

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