



Qualities of a Successful Career Path in Proposals

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Conference Guidance to Speakers

“...presentations that will appeal to attendees working in commercial and/or government environments. We are soliciting creative presentations that focus on topics surrounding the past ten years, and perhaps where things may go as we look to the next ten years.”



Welcome!

- Not about me or my accomplishments
- *Rather, characteristics* of proposal professionals who have demonstrated high levels of proposal professional success



...and *you!*



- Observations based on 25+ years in proposals
- Personal experience-based tips/insight provided
- Look for “aha!” moments; take-aways



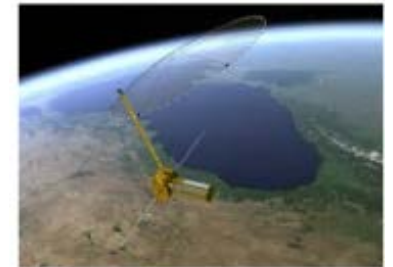
Orientation

- We are a very *tactical* bunch
- Harsh realities!



proposal execution, demanding processes, strict compliance, high quality, unforgiving deadlines

- Leave that mindset behind and take a few steps back!
- Look at the bigger picture of our profession and where you are at in your career
- First look externally...then I want you to do some very introspective analysis into your professional selves



**Getting to a More Advanced Level,
*Whatever That Means for You***



Characteristics In-common

- Driven
- Adaptable/Flexible
- Proactive
- Resourceful
- Ability to "reset"
- Self-Motivated
- Solution-oriented
- Self-energizing
- Tenacious
- Force Multiplier
- Persuasive
- Eff. Communicators
- *NOT* Quitters
- Goal-oriented
- Hate to Lose
- Schedule-driven
- Challenge takers
- Adrenalin "Junkies"
- Excellence
- "Can do" Attitude
- Perfectionists



Let Me Ask a Question

At prior APMP Bid & Proposal Con's, which speakers seem to be “firing on all cylinders” professionally?

Tom Sant, Dick Eassom, Mike Parkinson, BJ Lownie, Eric Gregory, Randy Richter, David Bol...others?

- Very accomplished proposal practitioners/consultants/
tool-software developers
- Industry and profession-respected authorities
- Knowing what proposals *are*, or what the process *is*...
...is a required baseline

**Puts You on the Same Playing Field,
*Professionally Speaking***



Final Thought, Then Let's Spool Up!

There is *no...*



... that will lead you to career success,

Yet most of us know it when we see it!



#1 Most Important – *PASSION!*



...for what they do





#1 - Passion (Cont'd)

- If you are *not* passionate about what you do, or where you are at in your career, *do yourself a favor...*



and think hard about either what needs to change, or what it is that you are passionate about...



... then, “vote” with your mind, hands or feet

- Find what you love and what you are good at, and combine them both
- Whatever you do, do it with passion and to the best of your ability¹

¹ 7 Amazing Ways to Perceive Your Passion, Shivam Abrol, Inspiration Unlimited eMagazine



#1 - Passion (Cont'd)

- Do not be afraid of change...

...rather, *be very afraid* of being professionally stagnant, bored and unsatisfied



- Develop an inner confidence that nothing, and no one, can keep you from achieving the success that you seek
- We all deserve the right to seek personal and professional excellence
- No one is in charge of your career, your success or your happiness, but *you!*





#2- Never Stop Learning & Improving

- 1980's *Bally* Staff T-shirt...

You are either striving to improve and strengthen your body and your mind, or allowing yourself to atrophy. There is no in-between (paraphrased)

Same with professional development and career success!

- The more you put into it, the more you get out of it
- Envision professionalism to be like stair steps

**If You Fail to Take the Next Step,
Then the End Result is Intuitive**





#2 – Never Stop...Improving (Cont'd)

- How?...*nearly endless*

APMP Membership, APMP Board, Bid & Proposal Con, Committees, Professional Certification, Body of Knowledge, Journal, Chapter Leadership, Events, Mentoring

- Learn and implement best practices at your company
- Network with your proposal colleagues
- Improve your leadership skills with proposal professional best practices

Mindset

As long as I am alive and mentally coherent,
I want to learn and challenge myself



#3 - Give More Than They Take

- Some people *take, bury and hide*

I have something of value that you don't have!

Professional survival (competition)



- Someone who hoards knowledge and expertise *is insecure*
- Share your knowledge and expertise; mentor or be mentored
- Far more businesses need “the best,” than there is a supply of “the best”
- The more you share with others, the more comfortable they will feel sharing with you

Highly successful proposal professionals possess *differentiating characteristics* that enable them to achieve extraordinary levels of excellence in their careers and profession



#4 - The Best They Can Be at Their Passion

- Do What You Love and You'll Never Work a Day in Your Life

Confucius

- Do What You Love, the Money Will Follow²

I suggest replacing "Money" with "Success"

Why? You will naturally evolve to higher levels of proficiencies and professional excellence because of your increased happiness and dedication

- If you spend too much time thinking about a thing, you will never get it done. Make at least one definite move daily toward your goal

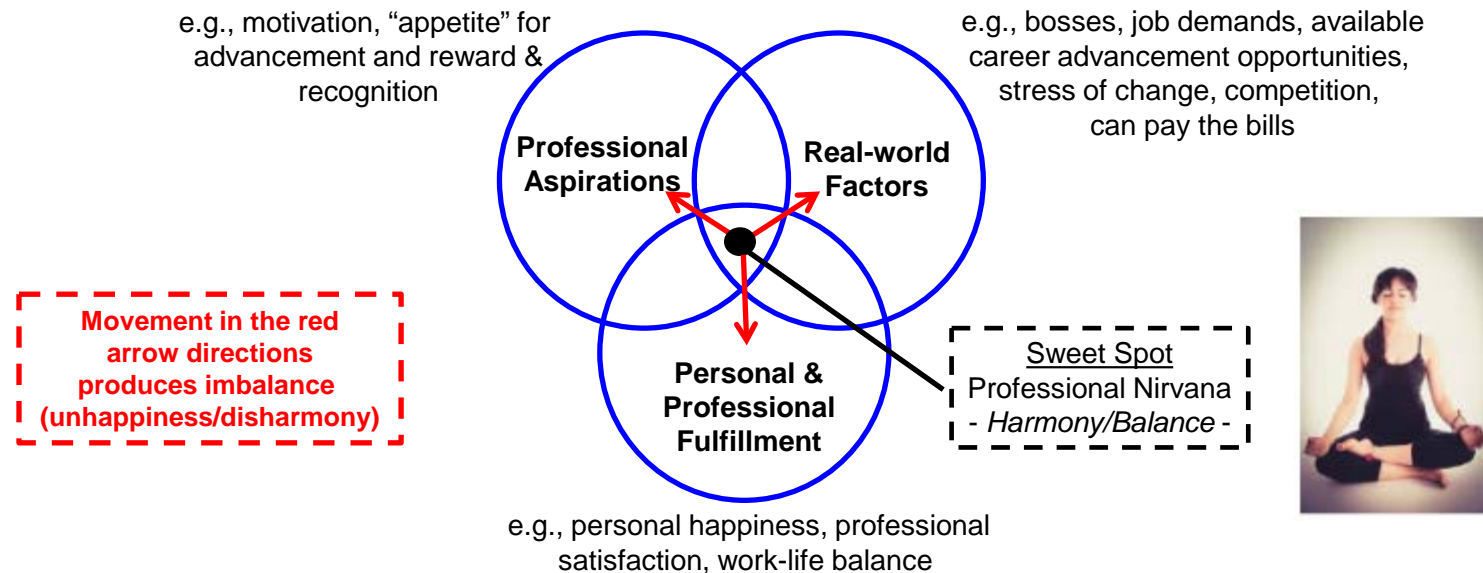
Bruce Lee

²Book of the same title, Marsha Sinetar



#4 - The Best... (Cont'd)

- Heavy workload, long hours and work intensity can either produce burnout and stress, or can be converted to fulfillment if you are in your professional “sweet spot”



- Being the best pulls you away from “the herd”
Personal differentiators that get you noticed
Better = More Confidence = Higher Levels of Professionalism
- APMP professional certification is *really important!*





#5 – Excellent Interpersonal, Leadership, Motivational Skills

Q. How many of you do proposals all by yourself, sort of “in a closet” where you do not work or interface with *anyone*?

Soft Skills Matter...***a Lot!***

Let's face it...

How you come across to other people,

How much they want to work with or for you, and,

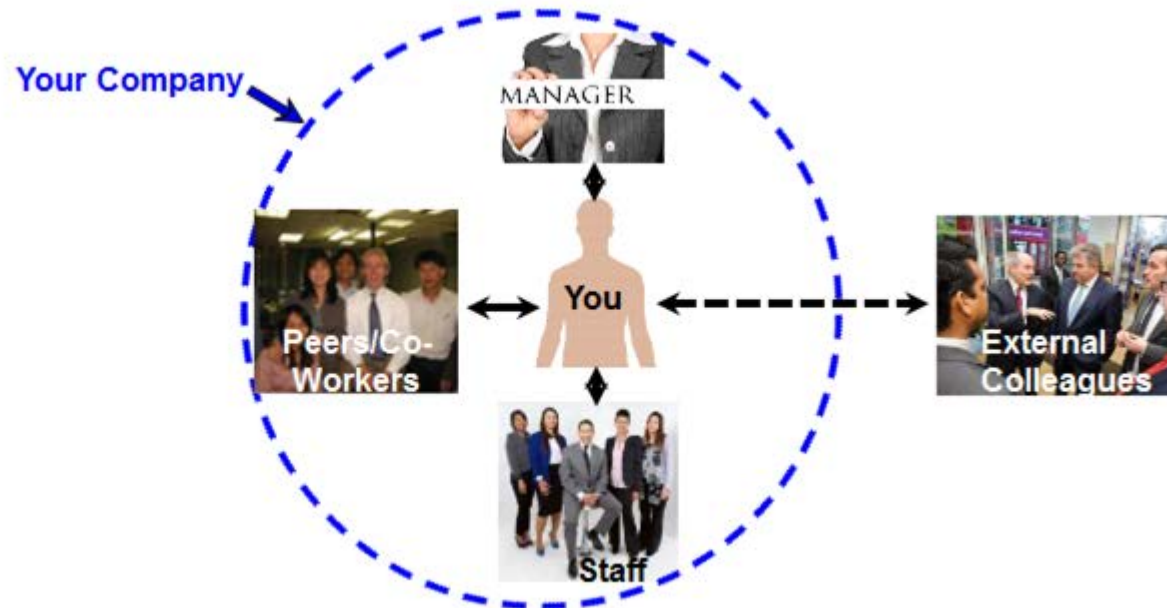
How well you can motivate others to *want* to do what you ask them...

...***IS CRITICAL***



#5 – "Soft" Skills Matter (Cont'd)

- "Soft" skills are paramount to how you are *perceived* by those in a 360 degree environment



...they can make, break or influence your career opportunities for advancement



#5 – “Soft” Skills Matter (Cont’d)



- Positive personal/professional branding is
- Respect is *earned*. Your commitment to professional excellence earns you that respect
- The “best” proposal professionals I know are process/leadership bull dogs when it comes to proposal success
- Granted a wide span of independence to perform because they are acknowledged experts with demonstrated success





#6 – Committed to Success; Attainment of Work and Professional Goals

Q. When did a mediocre job ever impress anyone?

A. Never

- Smart proposal professionals know best practices and benchmarks; in-tune with their personal capabilities and limits
- Good proposal manager has insight into the strengths and limits of their team members; knows how to maximize synergy

“The whole is greater than the sum of its parts”

- *Aristotle*

- “The best” have a hunger for perfection, a healthy mix of OCD 😞, and an almost instinctual compulsion to win



#7 – Have Career Goals...and a Plan

“If You Fail to Plan, You Are Planning to Fail”

- *Benjamin Franklin*

“Success Rarely Occurs by Happenstance” - *Unknown*

“ If You Don’t Know Where You Are Going, Then Any Road Will Get You There”
- *Lewis Carroll*

...but not where you want to be

- *Steve Koger*

- Prepare a Professional Development Roadmap

It is imperative to give serious thought to your area(s) of passion, your personal and professional development goals, and prepare a long-range plan that details the “what,” “how,” “and “when”



Career Advancement Planning

Step 1 - Analyze the attributes of those who are performing *successfully* in the elevated role you seek. Identify the required competencies

Step 2 - Take a personal inventory of the competencies that you currently possess, and those you lack or need to strengthen...be honest!

Step 3 - Develop a plan to obtain or strengthen your missing or weak competencies. Be sure to set milestone dates and exit criteria

Step 4 – Seek and secure a qualified mentor, if one is available

Step 5 - Use resources within APMP, *especially* professional colleagues already at the elevated level you seek (network)

Step 6 – Emulate the characteristics/contributions of the elevated role. You will either get noticed, *or at the very least*, will develop the full suite of competencies that qualify you. If your current employer just doesn't "get it" or the recognition or higher opportunity just isn't there, then consider a change of employers.

Be patient! This all takes time.

--- Steve's Father



So, Steve...

Are You Implying That We All Should Strive for Ever-increasing Levels of Performance and Professionalism?

No!

- We are all different, in terms of skills, capabilities, career aspirations, time, energy and desire for work/life balance
- Professional Advancement and your definition of “Success” is *very personal*
- Use some of the tips I have provided to achieve your own professional “sweet spot”





Indicators of Career Success

- Passionate about what you do; enjoy your work
- Continuously learning exciting new things
- Share your knowledge and expertise
- Strive to be among the best at what you do
- Effective “soft,” leadership and motivational skills
- Committed to success and high standards
- Realistic/achievable career development plan



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Thank You
Questions?