



# Qualities of a Successful Career Path in Proposals

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Steve Koger, CPP APMP Fellow  
California Chapter, Vice Chair





# Conference Guidance to Speakers

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“...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!

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- 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



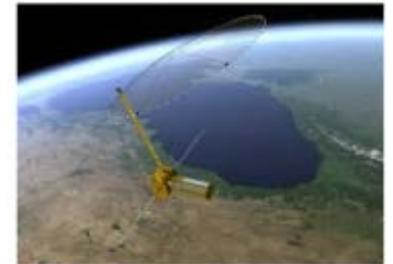
# Orientation

- 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

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- 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***

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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!

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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)

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- 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 ability<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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)

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- 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

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- 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

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

*Confucius*

- Do What You Love, the Money Will Follow<sup>2</sup>

*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

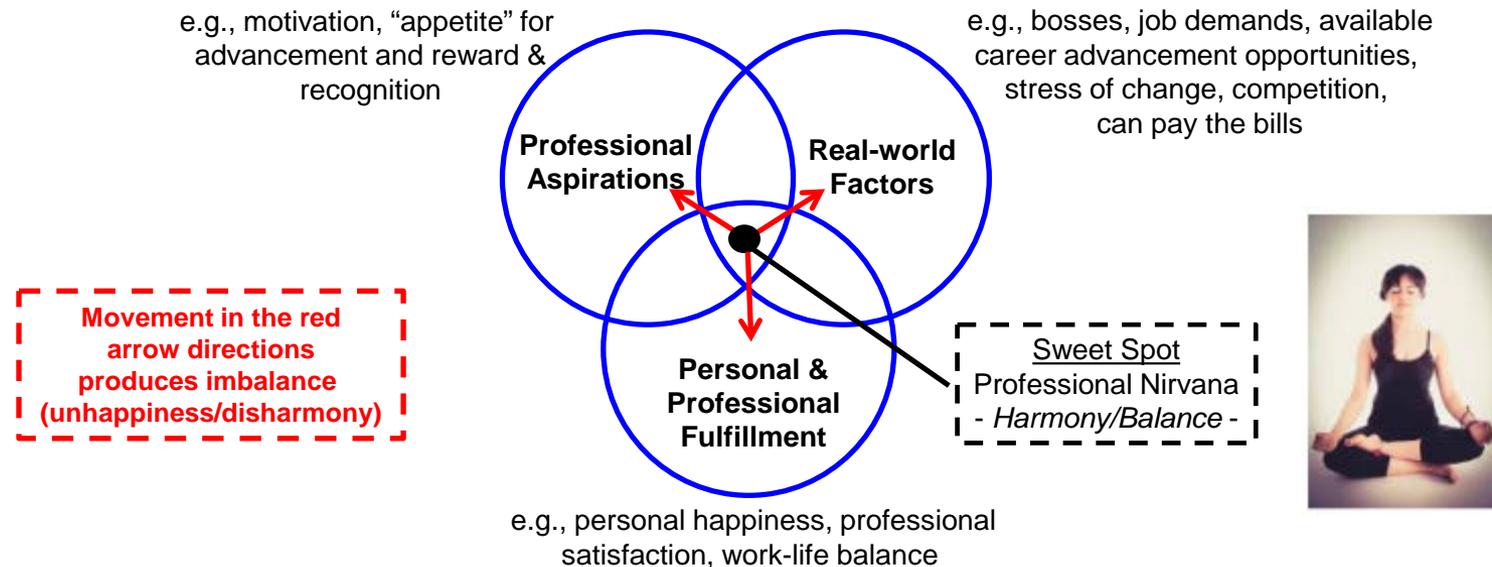
*Bruce Lee*

<sup>2</sup>Book 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

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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,

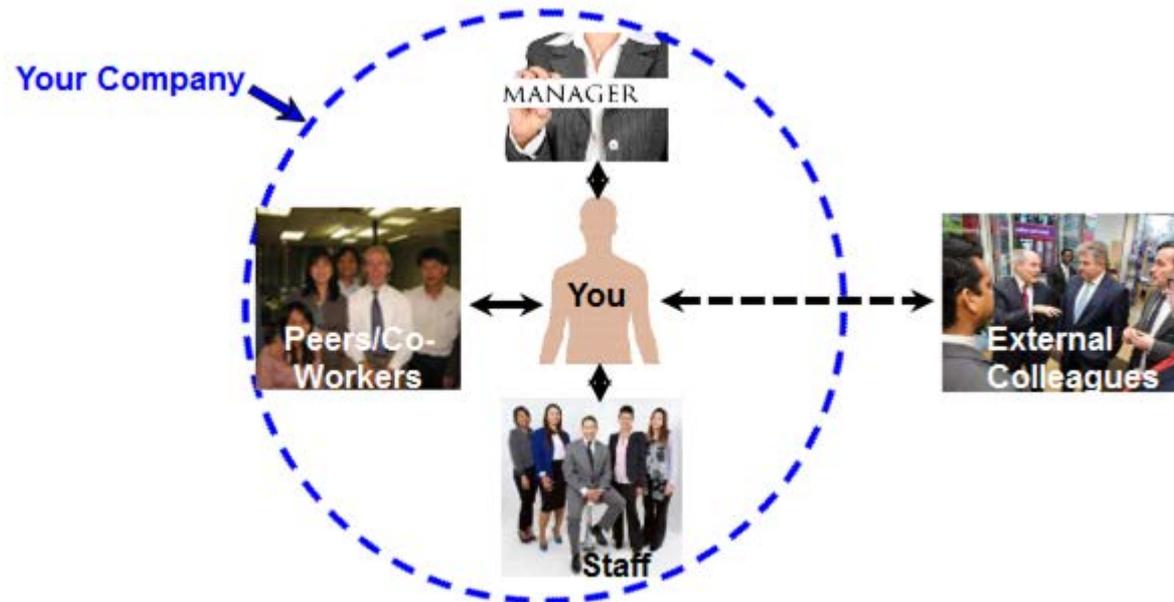
How well you can motivate others to *want* to do what you ask them...

...*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)

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- 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

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**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

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“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

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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...

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**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

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- 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



**Steve Koger, CPP APMP Fellow**  
Sr. Manager, Proposal Development  
Aerojet Rocketdyne  
W: (818) 586-5499  
Steven.koger@rocket.com

***Thank You***  
**Questions?**