



THE PROPOSAL DEBRIEF

MARCH 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Greetings, GMC members!

Happy 2020, and a BIG thank you to all of you for making GMC the wonderful chapter it is today! Every new year is a cause for celebration, but there's something about a new decade that sparks a little extra pep in our step. And at GMC, we have so much to celebrate! Our chapter has continued to grow at phenomenal rates. ***We now have more than 670 members and were recently recognized in APMP's Annual Report as the 4th largest chapter worldwide! That's amazing!***

Our chapter membership numbers aren't the only numbers climbing. To bring extra value to you, our members, we have added eight new board positions to increase our programming. While we will continue providing value-added programs and resources like our [Mentorship Program](#), our [Quarterly Newsletter](#) (password: GMC=Value!), our [Monthly Webinar Series](#), and our [Annual Symposium](#), we also are offering some excellent new professional development and networking opportunities as well as additional resources that include: the [Certification Study Group](#), the [GMC Book Club](#), a dedicated resource to help you plan [Local Meetups](#), the [Consultant's Virtual Networking Group](#), and more.

You can get information on each of these initiatives on the [GMC website](#). While you are there, check out all the great [blogs](#) we have added from GMC member guest contributors and consider adding your voice and writing a blog for us to share with our fellow members!

Our Board is truly dedicated to our mission to provide value to each of YOU through impactful content, professional development, and networking opportunities. It's an honor to serve with such a dedicated group of individuals who volunteer their time and energy to ensure we are engaging you with valuable education, tools, and resources that not only advance your professional knowledge and experience in the proposal industry but also increase your engagement with APMP and our membership overall. We hope you find lots of ways to engage with us and each other throughout the year, and we welcome your thoughts, contributions, and feedback at any time.

Here's to a great year of connections, development, and engagement!

Stacey Duwe, CP APMP | Chapter President

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UPCOMING EVENTS <<

- » Milwaukee Area Spring Meetup | March 18th, RSVP by March 11th
- » **Register** for the March 25th Webinar Panel | 10:30 - 11:30 CST



Understanding “WHY”

Putting the Client First with Theme Statements

By Kati Stutsman, CF APMP

Start With Why

If you’ve never heard of Simon Sinek, he’s an author and motivational speaker who advocates client-centric strategy and humble leadership.

He gave a TED Talk in 2009 called “How Great Leaders Inspire Action” that encouraged business leaders to start with WHY. Using a “Golden Circle” metaphor, he talked about how it’s easy for companies to describe WHAT they do and much more difficult to describe WHY they do it. According to Simon, WHY is the reason customers will buy what we’re selling and that is where businesses should start.

Simon uses the Golden Circle to help companies look inward. In the world of proposal management, we can look outward and apply the same principle to our customer – it can be easy to explain WHAT we do and much harder to articulate WHY a customer should choose our firm. As proposal professionals, it is our job to make the WHY message as clear and easy to retain as possible.

Theme statements can help you bundle that message in a tidy package and can be one of the most powerful tools at your disposal.

Theme Statements

What Are They?

Simply put, a theme statement calls attention to the benefits offered by a vendor to its customer. When written and placed effectively, these statements serve as mini summaries and make it easy for client evaluators to identify the main reasons WHY they should choose your firm.

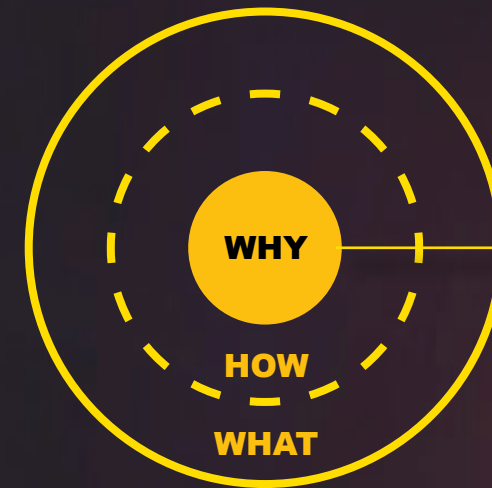
Where Do They Go?

As a best practice, theme statements appear at the beginning of each new section in your document. They should summarize the main benefit of that section and be easy to visually identify – maybe in a different font or color than your heading.

How Are They Crafted?

This exercise can be tricky, especially if your firm is selling “qualifications” and personnel rather than goods. It is easy to get stuck in a cycle of talking about ourselves and what we offer without first considering WHY the client should choose us and what they “get” out of it.

THEME STATEMENTS
CAN HELP YOU BUNDLE
THAT MESSAGE IN A TIDY
PACKAGE AND CAN BE ONE
OF THE MOST POWERFUL
TOOLS AT YOUR DISPOSAL.



Your strategy
should start
with WHY

WHAT

Easy to identify
Produces and services we sell.

HOW

Easy-ish to identify
Things that set us apart from our competition.

WHY

Tricky to identify
A purpose, cause or believe.



Crafting your theme statement

[You/client] will receive this [main benefit] through the use of our [feature], as successfully demonstrated by [proof.]

This formula puts the client first, then shows the reader WHY (benefit) our WHAT (feature) is the right choice and how we know this to be true. Sometimes it can be hard to figure out what that benefit is. In strong theme statements, benefits offer a way to solve a customer's problem.

Example

Lets say Simon is looking for new event space because his current venue has terrible acoustics and his audience members have trouble hearing him. **He requests information from two venues and their proposals each feature a theme statement:**

VENDOR 1

Our bright, friendly event space with comfortable seating, state-of-the-art wireless audio system, and flexible scheduling system is perfect for both large conferences and intimate gatherings.

The first example isn't bad. Those are all great features of the space. However, it focuses on the WHAT instead of the WHY. We need to ask ourselves WHY Simon would care about those features.

The second example is more successful because it puts Simon and his audience's needs first. This lets Simon know that we understand his motivations/ challenge, have a solution to solve his problem, and can back it up with quantifiable evidence.

VENDOR 2

Your audience will hear every word of your message thanks to our "Perfect 180" configuration – a modern space that has received more than 2,500 five-star audience reviews for its plush seating, full stage view from every seat, and balanced acoustics.

It isn't enough to say we know that Simon needs a new space. We have to dig a little deeper to question WHY the acoustics matter to him.

For a motivational speaker like Simon, his WHY likely relates to audiences leaving his talks excited, satisfied with the information they received, and hopefully willing to pay to hear Simon speak again. If they can't hear, they won't return, and Simon will lose business. Because we have identified WHY he needs a new venue, we can leverage that information to create a message that offers solutions.

THEME STATEMENTS IN ACTION

Use this formula during your next kick off or capture planning session. Start with one of your client's biggest challenges or hot buttons, then keep asking "WHY" to dig into their motivations. In putting your clients and their needs first, you will have a much easier time identifying reasons your solutions or feature (the WHAT) will matter to the client.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kati is a certified proposal specialist in the Architecture/ Engineering field. She leads the development of priority and strategic proposals in her office's Great Lakes region, which includes opportunities in Chicago, Indianapolis, and Detroit. Kati leverages her background in communications and journalism to identify and articulate solutions that meet client needs. Past experience in marketing content development, photography, and graphic design all play a role in her approach to creating dynamic proposals.



Are you in the Milwaukee area? Join us for our Spring meetup on Wednesday, March 18th.

Proposal Tools and Technology



Join APMP's Greater Midwest Chapter for drinks and light hors d'oeuvres hosted by SAS-GPS in Pewaukee.

Share and learn from others what proposal tools and technologies are driving successful opportunities.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2020

5:45pm Meet and Network
6:15pm Interactive Conversation



SAS-GPS
GOVERNMENT
PROCUREMENT
SOLUTIONS

N28 W23000 Roundy Drive
Pewaukee, WI 53072
Meet in the conference room off the lobby.

RSVP to Tim Peterson by March 11

☎ (262) 754-8712

✉ Peterson@SalesCampaigns.com

*Interested in hosting a local meetup? Contact **Silke Cole** for questions and information on resources the chapter can provide.*

MEET THIS MEMBER >>

Our Greater Midwest Chapter members do cool things that support the proposal industry. Sometimes that means writing a book about proposal best practices. Dave Seibert brings more than 23 years of experience in the proposal industry. In 1997 he got his start with The Sant Corporation (now known as Upland Qvidian) and founded his own consulting business in 2001 where he combines his passion for selling and writing.

Dave says, "There are a lot of great books on proposal writing, but many seem slanted towards large organizations with lots of proposal resources. I felt like small and midsize businesses were being underserved." This spurred Dave's idea to write a book that identified the most fundamental practices that all business development teams should implement, no matter how large or small they may be. That's how Proposal Best Practices came to be. Congratulations Dave, on this exciting accomplishment and thank you for contributing to our industry!



Dave presenting at the 2016 Bid and Proposal Conference in Boston, MA.

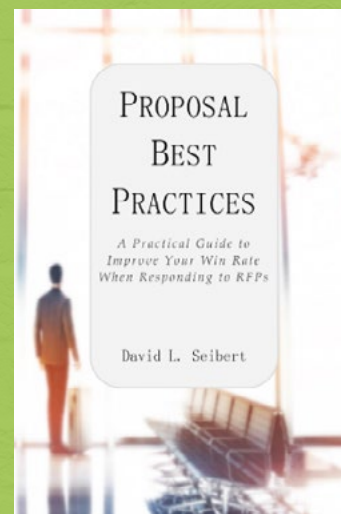
23 years
in the proposal
industry

Favorite Stress Reliever

Floating in the pool with a Cincinnati Reds game on the radio.

Hobbies

Cooking, riding motorcycles, working in the yard and playing with his grand kids.



Proposal Best Practices

A Practical Guide to Improve Your Win Rate When Responding to RFPs

- ✓ Best proposal writing practices
- ✓ Improve your win rate
- ✓ Practical advice and examples
- ✓ Customer-Focused sales messaging

[Want to read more? Order your copy here.](#)

MAXIMIZING MENTORSHIP «

Opinion piece on why you should join the GMC Mentorship Program

By Nichole L. Reber

Let's consider the benefits of mentorship, the kind or kinds of mentor you need, and what to do once you have one. When we're just starting off a career, mentors can impart insight that steers us through the next several years or even into our twilight years. Mid-career, mentors help smooth out our flaws or gaps. As Mike Walsh, APMP International Chair of the Board of Directors, co-wrote in a LinkedIn article with Melissa DeMaio, [Your First 100 Days as a New Leader](#), "Mentorship doesn't end when you reach a leadership position, but quite the opposite mentors become even more valuable."

Mentorship has countless benefits:

- » Obtain knowledge from experienced professionals
- » Share lessons learned
- » Gain different perspectives and alternate approaches
- » Invest in the proposal profession and help it grow
- » Receive personal training/tips and techniques

- » Achieve your professional goals
- » Mentors receive 8 CEUs toward APMP certification
- » Build relationships with others in the industry
- » Get to know your fellow chapter members
- » Get more involved with APMP GMC

Consider the qualities of a person you would want to pair with as a mentor or mentee and mention that in your application. For instance, Walsh advises us "not to get hung up on the notion that mentors need to be older or senior to you." People who are younger or older and below or above you on the corporate ladder can play the role of a mentor.

[Kate Volzer](#), the CEO and co-founder of Wisr, a mentoring platform, suggests articulating the gaps in your skill set and finding mentors who can help in those areas. If you're not sure, observe your office mates and notice what actions or qualities they possess that you admire.

My professional development goals include self-regulation, negotiation, increasing persuasiveness, and becoming a respected leader. That's entirely too much for one mentor to tackle. Therefore I have a handful of mentors I collectively call my Board of Advisors. This group represents a number of industries as well as the various stages in my 24-year career. My Board contains the various types of mentors Volzer discusses:

Coach: helps you improve your performance in specific skills or issues.

Connector: This kind of mentor helps connect you to build your network.

Career guide: This mentor helps you think big about long-term career goals.

Reverse mentor: This is a type Anthony Tjan, CEO of Cue Ball Group and author of *Good People*, discussed in his [TED talk](#). He echoes Walsh's comments about age and seniority.

“By taking on a younger or less senior mentor, we can often improve our leadership skills or tech skills or refresh our corporate and professional perspective”

Anthony Tjan | CEO of Cue Ball Group

“Mentorship doesn't end when you reach a leadership position, but quite the opposite — mentors become even more valuable.”

Mike Walsh | APMP International Chair

MAXIMIZING MENTORSHIP CONT.

EFFECTIVE MENTORING CAN HELP YOU GROW YOUR CAREER

“By taking on a younger or less senior mentor, we can often improve our leadership skills or tech skills or refresh our corporate and professional perspective,” he says.

Some mentors will fit only one type. Others may serve in multiple mentor capacities. A mentor’s role may also change in the course of your relationship according to your growth and need and/or other life changes. They may also help you branch out. “If your mentor cannot help with a particular issue during your relationship, ask if they can connect you with someone uniquely qualified to assist you,” Volzer says. If the suitability issue is more than just one-off, it’s okay to disconnect. Ghosting a person who has agreed to help you grow, won’t help you professionally, though. Establish clear expectations of what your goals are. Remember, you get out of the program what you put into it!

Our chapter will hold a webinar to kickoff mentorship pairs on Wednesday, April 1. Pairs work together through December and mentors and mentees should meet/chat regularly. The way you interact is completely up to you and your partner but you might consider communicating via phone calls or face-to-face meetings or have daily check ins. On the first Monday of the month, you’ll receive an email with insights, tips, and activities to spark conversation for your weekly chats. You also have an opportunity to meetup at our chapter’s planned networking events for BidCon in Nashville, TN, May 17th - 20th and Symposium in September (TBD).

If you are lucky enough to have multiple mentors, you will find yourself contacting them before important events for pep talks or advice just as you may also have a set schedule of when and where to meet and what to discuss.

No matter how you work together, optimize the time the mentor is kind enough to give by preparing yourself with specific questions or concerns.

Here are some other tips to a lasting, mutually beneficial, and productive mentor-mentee relationship:

- » Have an agenda
- » Allow yourself to be vulnerable. Recognize your flaws or bad habits. These are what mentors help you overcome, mitigate, or turn into positive qualities.
- » Use anecdotes to show your mentor how you’re applying the wisdom s/he has imparted.

About the author: Nichole is a happy participant in APMP GMC’s mentorship program and amplifies her professional development through the University of Chicago’s Conscious Leadership course. Come say HI! When you meet her at BPC on Nashville, where she used to live.

Are you ready to Join APMP GMC's mentorship program?

We are excited to announce the launch of our 2020 mentorship program to support the growth and development of our chapter members. This year's program consists of three pillars:



Mentor/Mentee Relationships

Foundational to the program are individual mentor and mentee pairings. After applying as either a mentor or a mentee, you will be matched according to your region, industry, job function, background, and goals. After matching, it's up to the pair to determine the frequency, direction, and goals of the relationship.



Challenge Chats

Back by popular demand are our quarterly Challenge Chats to discuss hot topics and tackle key industry challenges. Each webinar will be focused around a theme and include experienced mentors available to facilitate the discussion, share their experiences, and answer questions.



Mentorship Mondays

On the first Monday of the month, we will serve up insights, tips, and activities directly to your inbox to help spark conversation starters during your weekly chats.

Whether you are new to our industry or a proposal veteran, there is no shortage of professional development that is possible through this program. Ready to join?

APPLY HERE

[Mentor Application](#)

[Mentee Application](#)

GMC Book Club

The GMC Book Club is reading *Deep Work* by Cal Newport this quarter, and there is still time to join the discussion! We're reading about the science and importance of focused work time to grow in our crafts and professions, and sharing the challenges we encounter. We're looking forward to learning more about Newport's strategies to cultivate deep work in our daily routines.

It's Not Too Late To Join the Club!

Join the conversation in our Goodreads group:

APMP GMC Book Club

Book club members will vote on our second quarter book in March. When you join the GMC Book Club and participate in the discussion, you will be eligible to receive reimbursement from the GMC for the next quarter's book. Questions? Contact **Karin Olson Held** for more information.



APMP GMC Gives Back 2020

APMP Greater Midwest Chapter is a collection of more than 650 members across 12 states. To engage members and strengthen our ties to our local communities, we identified two easy ways you can get involved:

1

Lend a Hand

Host a local "meetup" event to give back to a local charity. Reach out to **Christine Sowinski** for coordination and support, and Engagement Chair, **Silke Cole** for possible collaboration opportunities.

2

Donate Books

Reading and writing skills are keys to success in the proposal industry. We encourage our members to collect new and gently used books and donate to an **organization**.

- ✓ Interested? Reach out to **Christine Sowinski** for more details and support with your volunteer activity.
- ✓ Take pictures of volunteers in action, record names of participants, and share your volunteer experience and success stories to **Christine Sowinski** by **August 31, 2020**.
- ✓ Your efforts will be shared on our GMC website, future newsletter issues, and special prizes for the top three participants will be awarded at the **Annual GMC Symposium in September**.

Don't Miss Out on This Local Meetup!

APMP Greater Midwest Chapter

CHICAGO AREA MORNING MEETUP

Join your bleary-eyed proposal peers to network and talk shop over complimentary coffee and pastries, courtesy of APMP's Greater Midwest Chapter.

WHEN: Thursday, April 16, 8:00 to 9:30 am

WHERE: Burns & McDonnell Engineering
200 W. Adams, #2700
Chicago, IL 60606

This meetup is open to non-members interested in learning about APMP. Please feel free to bring a friend.

RSVP to jbrequiron@burnsmcd.com by Monday, April 6



GMC Kansas City Area Meetup Success



Just a quick follow up, some pictures and note of thanks per our APMP GMC KC meet up last night! We had a great time, lots of synergies, fun and definitely more interest to do other events. I encourage other local chapters to start/keep doing these...personally and professionally it was fantastic!



Megan Krier | Marketing Campaign Manager at RFP360



Pictured Above: GMC Members Megan Large, Carerra Kautzler, Scott Vogel, Grant Willsie, and Monica Dirnbeck attend the Kansas City Meetup at RFP360 in Leawood, Kansas.

CONTACT US



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Call to Action

*The GMC is looking for contributors for upcoming issues of the Proposal Debrief. In addition to providing informative and relevant content to our members, you can receive three Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for every article you contribute **AND** a \$10 Amazon gift card. Contact [Kat Becchina](#) for more details!*

201

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Chapter Members

DON'T FORGET! Register for the March Webinar

Maybe you're a graphic designer or tech writer. Perhaps you're a SME or a marketing wiz. Wherever we come from, many of us stumble into proposal management roles. But what about those of us who intentionally want one? Join panelists Mike Walsh, national APMP chair, Precious Patch, CF APMP, CSM, and Christopher Guethe who will discuss how you can land that proposal manager position.

March 25, 2020 10:30 - 11:30 EST | [Register Here](#)

Did you miss the February webinar?

[Watch the recording now!](#)

Wouldn't proposal life be better if you could wrangle Word into doing more for you? CF APMP Fellow Dick Eassom will show us how in his webinar: *Things I wish Proposal Writers Knew About Word.*