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BURNING UP

What do you do when your workload is literally making you sick? Ignoring your health when you're busy can really knock you for a loop. Learn some strategies to avoid burnout.

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THE PROPOSAL DEBRIEF
QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER

QUARTER THREE // OCTOBER 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings GMC Members!

THANK YOU for all that you do to continue making our chapter the best in APMP.

I'm sure that, like me, a lot of you are experiencing various forms of burnout: not being able to travel, changing from working in the office to working from home where tempers can flare if you're not used to being around your family and friends as frequently as you are now, and the blaze of emotions that all of these changes bring. **Before you combust, don't forget to take a moment for yourself and find your moment of zen.**

I hope you all had the opportunity to attend our **Virtual Symposium** and take away lots of great stuff that will help you tamp down those burnout embers. I want to thank all our presenters for the gift of their presentations. These learnings are so valuable and often we don't realize how much so until later. Thank you to the sponsors who helped make this event possible. I also want to thank the Rhythm and Harmony Chapter and their chair, Robin Davis, for partnering with our chapter this year to present the Symposium. And last but not certainly not least: I want to thank Heidi Romero and the GMC Events Team for their outstanding job. This was uncharted territory for us and the fact that we were able to have the Symposium at all this year is in large part due to their hard work.

As you know, we are rapidly approaching that time of year when we are **seeking GMC Board and Committee members**. If you would like to be considered for a board position or committee member role and we haven't reached out to you yet, there's still time. If you are interested in serving our chapter, please email me at v-adunger@microsoft.com.

Our chapter mission is to provide value to each member through impactful content, professional development, and networking opportunities. We want to hear from you with any ideas on what you would like to see (and hear) from us.

All the best,



Andrea has more than 10 years of proposal management experience and is a longtime supporter of APMP. She is APMP Foundation certified and has been serving the APMP GMC board in multiple capacities since 2012. She's involved with the organization and invested at the chapter level because she believes APMP helps instill best practices among the industry and provides networking opportunities with other proposal professionals you can't get elsewhere.

Andrea Dunger, CF APMP
GMC Chapter President

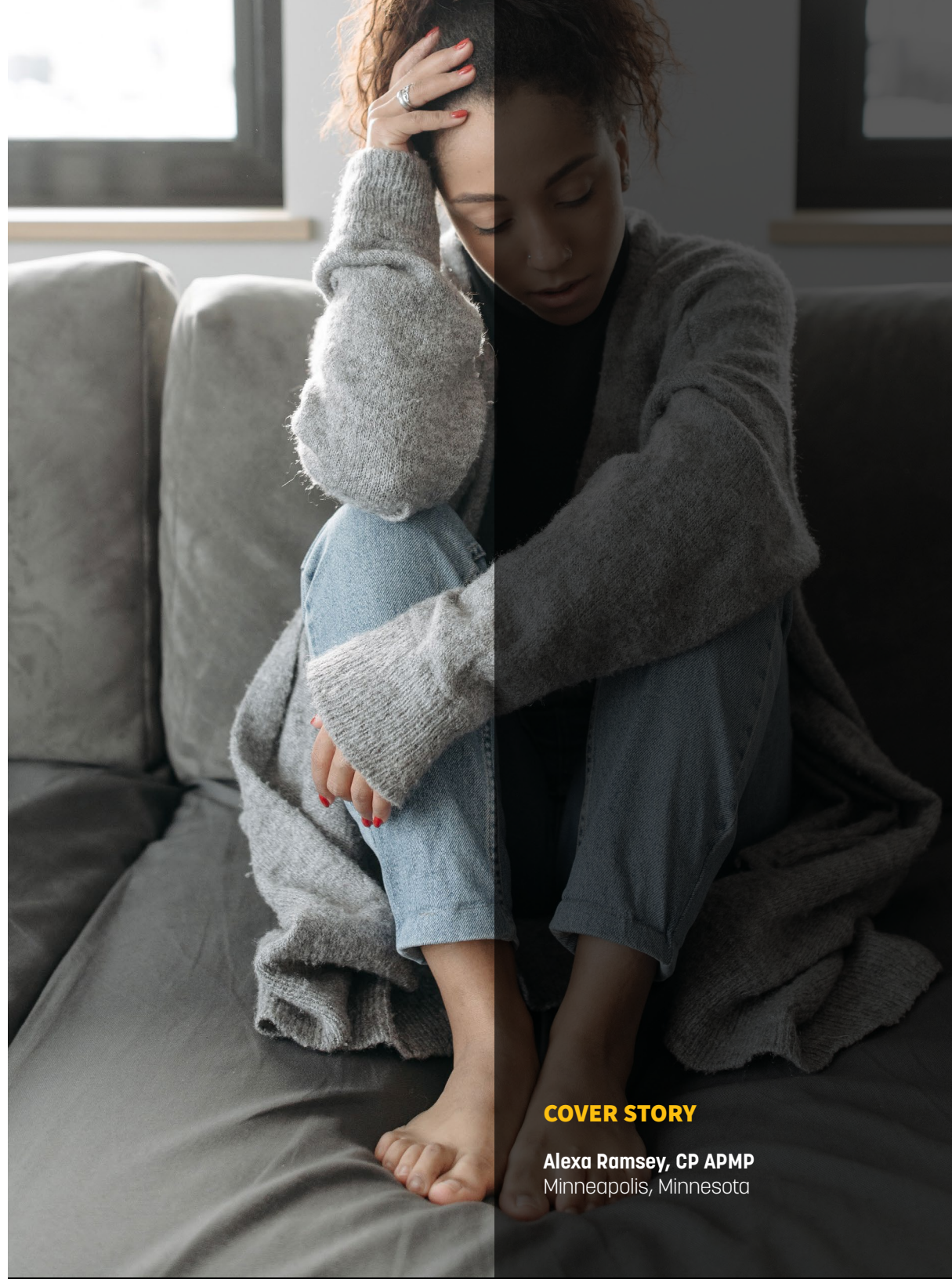
Burning Up:

When your workload literally makes you sick

My cheeks felt flushed and my forehead was hot. But I had to keep going. It was only 10:30 PM. I had at least another hour in me before I needed to force myself to get some sleep and still make it to the office early. With only 32 hours left until the proposal deadline and a never-ending list of tasks left to get done, the extra 60 minutes was critical. Fast forward 30 hours to proposal submission day. I uploaded my final proposal deliverable and pressed submit. I felt relief wash over me and my body finally gave way to the exhaustion and physical illness I've been keeping at bay the last eight days.

Scenario sound familiar? More times than I'd like to admit, I have I overworked myself to the point of sickness to meet a large proposal deadline. I know I am not alone. The APMP 2018-2019 Ethics Survey Report showed 82% of respondents reported overwork. Burning out from proposal overload is all too common.

What can we do about it? I believe a little proactivity paired with selfcare, a clear understanding of your role, plus a dash of grace can alleviate some of the burn.



COVER STORY

Alexa Ramsey, CP APMP
Minneapolis, Minnesota



FORCE PROACTIVE BEHAVIORS

Set yourself up for success, not failure.

Fix broken processes. What's the one thing you avoid at work because it's such an annoyance to complete? Can it be solved if there was a workflow in place? Take the 20 minutes (or maybe it's a bigger full day or week) and proactively solve the most frustrating problems. Taking the time to fix the process once can save you future heartache.

Say no. Be realistic about your workload. If you don't have the capacity to handle another proposal, say no. Don't accept a new assignment when it's impractical with the current task list you're already supporting. Saying no to work does not mean you're incapable, it means you're realistic with your time management.

Express concerns early. Have a proposal going sideways? Contingency plans A, B, and C already used up? Get your team together and run them through the scenarios you are worried about. Expressing the concern to the team ensures everyone is on the same page and invested in the outcome.

IN MY WORLD:

To make sure I have time away from work, I'll schedule out vacation time in advance. During the summer, my family regularly visits my in-laws' cabin for a week. I put this trip on the calendar months in advance and make sure the marketing and pursuit teams I am supporting know about these time frames.

PRACTICE SELF CARE

Make time for you.

Take a break. For goodness sakes, walk away from your computer screen. Force yourself to take an hour-long lunch. Leave the office for 20 minutes to grab a latte from the coffee shop down the street. Taking a break from work is not a disruption to your work time. It gives you the ability to refresh and come back to your work with regained focus.

Get away from work. Use your vacation time. Take the holidays off. Schedule that Spring Break trip. Have multiple long weekends at the cabin during the summer. And when you're away, unplug and be away. That means no checking emails or responding to Teams messages. Completely detach yourself from your work. Rest and relax away from the pressures of your job.

Move your body. That hour-long lunch break I mentioned above: no one said you have to be eating the entire time. Go walk the building. Get your blood flowing. You don't have to go to the gym to move your body. A short walk forces you away from your desk.

Get some quality sleep. I am my best self when I have nine hours of sleep. With a small child, a fulltime proposal management gig, and the normal rigors of life – nine hours almost never happens. But when it does (and if by some miracle it occurs a couple of days in a row), I feel like a new person. Whatever you have to do to make it happen, get some quality shut eye for a few days and you'll feel capable to tackle all the other things in this article. Energy comes from resting.

Have some fun. This one looks different for everyone. Maybe it's a night out with friends, your nose in a romance novel, or taking to the outdoors. Invest time in a hobby or just doing what makes you smile. Play is necessary to spark your creativity.

CLEARLY DEFINE TEAM ROLES

Stop feeling responsible for the entire outcome when a proposal is a team effort. Understand your primary roles and those of your team members.

Know your role on the team. What's your role on the team? Are you the proposal manager? The graphic designer? The content writer? Whatever it is, likely you're not solely responsible for the outcome of the entire proposal. Most proposal managers are not directly client-facing and, thus, cannot have control of the client relationship or the proposal. If you are not the main client-facing business development person, how can you be fully responsible for the messaging included in your proposal submittals? You simply can't. You can only do so much with the information you're given. Most of the time, other team mates hold the key to helping create client-specific messages and themes. Remove the weight you've been carrying. Proposals are a team sport that require participation from all team members.

Make sure others know their roles. Likewise, confirm your supporting team members understand the role they are playing. When everyone is on the same page about one another's roles, the expectations are clear. This eliminates added pressure.

GIVE YOURSELF GRACE

No one has a perfect win rate. The best proposal managers have a long list of lessons learned to enhance their skillset.

No one is perfect. All proposal managers have at least a few devastating moments (or entire proposals) on their list. How do you think so many skilled proposal professionals know to never miss a deadline? Have you considered: maybe their current wisdom is a result of past mistakes such as a missed past deadline? Screwing up has a silver lining: it creates lessons learned and forms the best practices APMP members live by. Even the best proposal professionals can't keep up all the time – mess-ups and burnout happen.

IN MY WORLD:

To make sure my pursuit teammates know their roles, I reiterate their assigned responsibilities. When a go/no-go meeting results in a “go”, I'll assign key roles needed to support proposal development and summarize their responsibilities. Then, at the kickoff meeting, we walk through everyone's roles and assigned tasks. This meeting is followed by an action item list/path forward. Continually repeating roles and responsibilities keeps team members informed of their expectations, thus, improving communication, content, and the ultimate output.



Alexa is a marketing strategist specializing in proposal development for architectural, engineering and construction firms. Since 2014, she's helped sales teams develop easily-digestible marketing materials for technical projects. Alexa is an APMP Certified Practitioner and is currently the APMP Greater Midwest Chapter Publications Co-Chair. Contact her at amramsey@burnsmcd.com.





Exercising Your Mental Fitness

Flexing your leadership muscle can help combat proposal burnout

By Erin Ortiz // Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Cate Stambaugh // Kansas City, Missouri

Proposal management professionals create the foundation for the ongoing prosperity and growth for the organizations they call home. Still, many proposal professionals face an uphill battle when it comes to being as valued and appreciated as other critical roles within an organization. One of APMP's core missions is to elevate the role of proposal professionals across the globe and serve as the authority in educating and mentoring anyone who wins business and drives revenue for their organization.

Our strategic role within the entire winning business ecosystem is critical to keeping cars in the parking lot (or, these days, keeping home offices running). Yet, it's often easy for us to get stuck in the hamster wheel. Daily deadlines, urgent tasks, traditionally poor work/life balance, and the weight of imposter syndrome circling through the week can hinder our broader leadership.

How can we exit the hamster wheel and manage our work in a way that serves us?

It starts with mental fitness.

Imagine you want to climb a picturesque mountain but you're not physically fit. To avoid major physical stress (exhaustion, difficulty breathing, altitude sickness) as you climb, you begin training to enjoy the climb and improve your performance.

This picturesque mountain is a metaphor for your increased confidence, leadership presence, and influence as a proposal professional. If you want to limit mental stress (imposter syndrome, anxiety, frustration or unhappiness), then strengthening your mental fitness is key to enjoying your journey, increasing your influence, and realizing career advancement and benefits.

With stronger mental fitness, you can flex three core muscles essential to self-advocacy and influence:

1

Diminish the voices in your own mind holding you back.

2

Amplify your ability to empathize, empower yourself and others, and navigate stressful situations.

3

Mindfully respond to even the most challenging situations to lead, influence, and advocate in a way that serves you.

Erin Ortiz and Cate Stambaugh participated in a six-week Mental Fitness program. Here's what they learned:



Erin Ortiz

Erin is a development professional with more than 10 years of experience winning business. She is an avid APMP member who has used best practices to improve efficiency and effectiveness both in her role as proposal manager and in her current role as capture manager. In addition to earning APMP Practitioner's certification, she is an APMP 40 Under 40 recipient and active in the GMC, including presenting at symposium, webinar speaker, member of the Marketing Committee, and participant in the mentorship program as both a mentor and mentee.



Cate Stambaugh

Cate has been in the A/E/C industry for three years. She graduated from Kansas State University in December 2019, and it has been an adventure navigating her early career. She is a Proposal Coordinator for the Water Practice at Burns & McDonnell where she is involved in the New Professionals organization and currently pursuing her APMP Foundation Certification.

What made you invest in this development opportunity?

In addition to finding a great activity for our mentorship calls, the program was attractive because of its focus on actionable, immediately applicable tools that anyone can use in their careers, regardless of their career path or achievements.

We used this program as a guide for our APMP Mentorship so we could be working towards a common goal. Both Erin and I can be over-achievers and tend to have a full plate at work and in our personal lives; we wanted to learn ways we can combat these stressors. That is when we stumbled upon Claire's coaching!

How has practicing mental fitness strengthened you as a professional?

Part of mental fitness is thoughtful discussion and deeper thinking: participating provided a forum for us to talk through career success strategies as well as technical skills for better performance. Guided by the weekly readings and topics, we shared insights about negative self-talk that was holding us back and insecurities that were limiting career progression.

The program encourages professionals to take small moments throughout the day to recentre and focus, doing this has helped me conquer larger overwhelming tasks. This program also taught me how to put negative self-talk and judgement of others aside. This has improved my self-confidence and the way I form relationships with coworkers.

What's a common challenge or frustration that stronger mental fitness has helped you navigate more effectively?

As a capture manager, there are many priorities and timelines competing for my time. A key takeaway for me was that mental fitness is about knowing when to invest in time to slow down. Two minutes spent to assess and reprioritize tasks provides a significant return, especially in the midst of juggling many tasks. My former tendency was to work harder to get through it.

As proposal professionals, we often have many coinciding tasks and deadlines. Stronger mental fitness has helped me to be present in each task that I am completing, rather than rushing from one thing to the next.

For whom would you recommend the six-week Mental Fitness program?

Anyone can benefit from the mental fitness program and will identify a few individual-specific gems that will improve their satisfaction at work, their patience with themselves, or their ability to cope with life and career demands. To take full advantage of the program's benefits, I would recommend it to those who enjoy learning from others, who are comfortable self-reflecting, and who can commit to an hour a week participation.



To learn more about Mental Fitness and how this six-week training program can enhance your advocacy and influence, reach out to **Claire Becker** at claire@clairebeckercoaching.com or visit www.clairebeckercoaching.com. The work of Mental Fitness is based on recent breakthroughs in the fields of neuroscience, cognitive, and positive psychology and performance science, detailed in Shirzad Chamine's New York Times bestselling book, *Positive Intelligence*.



Keeping Red-Hot Emotions In-Check When Tensions Run High

By Marcus Hammond //
Kansas City, Missouri

As proposal professionals, we train ourselves to navigate through tight deadlines and cranky capture managers to move projects to the finish line. We adapt and make tools to help mitigate stresses. We have a community who provides us resources. But what happens when the stresses begin to pile up and accumulate? The short answer is: We burnout. And as we burn out, our physical well-being and occupational output can be put at risk. It is much easier to recognize our physical state or even our occupational state. It is extremely difficult to assess our emotional state though until something happens.

Something's Not Right Here

A person on the verge of emotional burnout, whether it be in a professional or personal setting may exhibit drastic changes

in their social interactions. In a proposal management setting, social interaction is a key part of moving projects forward. The tension from multiple sources of stress can create low self-esteem and anxiety where normally a person is confident and self-assured.

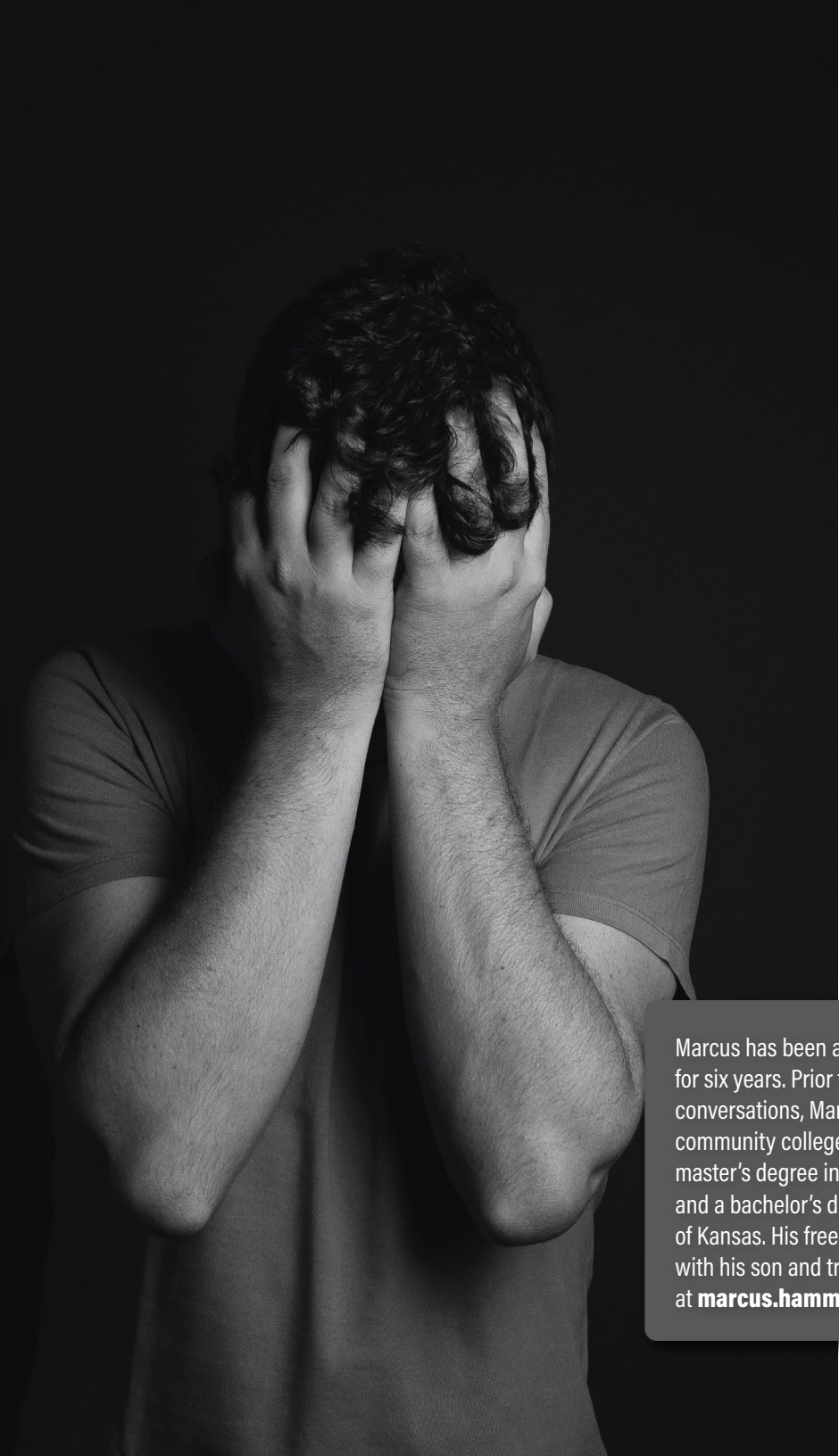
An Emotional Storm Brews

Imagine this situation: Ella is the sole proposal manager for a large graphic design firm. She's recognized as a trusted business advisor and thought leader for the firm's proposal process. Ella strives to treat everyone with respect.

Since her firm moved to remote working spaces, Ella has not had a break in deadlines, and it's much harder to separate work and home life. She wakes up 30-45 minutes before her

alarm now and goes straight to her office. She never takes a lunch and works 10-11 hours a day. When she finally gets up from her desk, she begins organizing her thoughts for the next day. This type of schedule is really wearing Ella down mentally.

During a planning meeting with an opportunity manager, Ella shares her screen. They are working through a go/no-go scenario for a project that is clearly a No Go. While discussing the opportunity someone sends her a chat message. Ella clicks on the chat screen, and responds, "I'll be with you as soon as these guys stop wasting my time." Because of the tension and stress, Ella is under she forgot she was sharing her screen, and the opportunity manager states, "Ella, you're sharing your chat screen..."



The rest of the meeting is awkward and unproductive. Ella is at a loss as she's never disrespectful. She's making mistakes and is completely unmotivated. She is completely burnt out.

Small Changes Make a Difference

Situations like Ella's occur more often than we realize. And it's hard to identify our emotional state until it's too late. Ella was hyper-focused on work, not sleeping well, and generally not taking care of herself. There's hope though because even the smallest things can make a difference.

- 1 Check in on yourself.** When you're assessing what needs to be done, take a minute to remember yourself. Build in a 15 minute walk around the block, or allow yourself 10 minutes to meditate, read a chapter in a book that has nothing to do with your job, or paint with watercolors. We spend so much time focused on our jobs that it's hard to focus on ourselves too.
- 2 Hold yourself accountable.** It's easy to say, "I'll eat lunch everyday no matter what's going on." What's hard is getting up from your computer and making food. There's always going to be a "next thing" and maintaining a healthy diet is going to help make sure you do the "next thing" well.
- 3 Find support.** It would be hard to find someone who isn't dealing with some level of emotional burnout. If you see others pulling away from social interaction, or notice they are always working, start a conversation. You will most likely find commonalities and can share ideas on how to mitigate the stressors.

We will never be able to alleviate all stress, but we can improve how we cope with each situation. By taking small steps towards changing our outlook on the stress, we can find ways to work more efficiently.



Marcus has been a proposal manager in the financial industry for six years. Prior to jumping head-long into a life of go/no-go conversations, Marcus taught English at several Kansas City area community colleges and wrote content for a pop-culture website. Marcus has a master's degree in liberal arts from Baker University with an emphasis in literature and a bachelor's degree in English and communication studies from the University of Kansas. His free time is spent sharing a love of Legos, Pokémon and comic books with his son and traveling, reading, and creating art with his wife. You can reach him at marcus.hammond46@gmail.com.

Lighting a Match

Aligning team skills and needs to build passion for proposal projects

By Corinne Jorgenson // Dayton, Ohio

Proposals are wonderful little microcosms of our greater work lives. Like work in general, there are team dynamics to manage and tasks we either love or hate. There are also big opportunities for personal and professional growth along the way.

As a proposal manager, coordinator, or contributor, this means there is an opportunity to act as a leader, no matter what role you're assigned to, and to utilize each proposal as a way to align skills and abilities to build empowerment and passion through the process. Here are five tips on how to practice your individual leadership skills during a proposal, align your goals with the team's needs, and help keep others engaged in the process.

Advocate for yourself by asking to take on tasks that make you feel confident. After a few proposals, you'll start to recognize there are tasks you love taking on for your team, like building a compliance matrix, building templates, or running daily tag-ups. Ask the proposal manager about taking this project on more regularly; most managers appreciate when a team member is eager to take on a task. As an added benefit, this sets you up to self-advocate; other team members will see and appreciate the confidence and energy you bring to the task. On the other hand, stretching yourself by volunteering to take on or accepting a task you're less

familiar with is another great way to learn and build your professional skillset.

Recognize the power of task mentorship. As you develop your skills and abilities, be on the lookout for ways to share your knowledge with other team members. Not only does this put you in a position of trust (where others come to know you as the go-to for a particular task), it also helps your entire team. By sharing knowledge, you're helping to reinforce others' skills and demonstrating leadership by doing so.

On the other hand, if you're looking to expand your role within a team, asking a trusted leader to mentor you can help build your skills and demonstrate that you're focused on professional development. Even if you feel competent in a task already (for example, if you're new to the team or company and have yet been asked to step up to a task you've done in a previous team or role), asking for mentorship can help you build rapport and trust with leadership, who will grow confident in your ability to execute the tasks in the way the project needs.

Take advantage of proposals as projects with finite endings. Unlike other work projects that might feel like they drag on forever, each proposal actually does end. This makes each proposal a perfect opportunity to "sandbox" budding passions or skills, see what works and what doesn't work, and then get feedback quickly. Recognize each proposal is an opportunity to hone a particular skill – like learning to quickly edit for passive voice or how to keep writers motivated after tough reviews. Across proposal projects, advocate for yourself to try out new specialties or progressively larger roles within the team.

Rotate tasks to keep things fresh and build team empathy. Within proposals, there are tasks that are more well-liked than others, and some tasks that need continuous attention to do them well. Rotating tasks like building compliance matrices or leading just-in-time

training can help combat both problems – giving your team members the chance to practice skills that need regular attention (like presenting) and a breather from tasks that some might find boring or tedious. This also helps your team see and build trust in the knowledge that everyone is ready, able, and willing to take on whatever task is needed to help out the whole team.

Attend training to find a new way to approach sticky problems. Unavoidably, there are some aspects of proposal development that cause you or your team to hit a snag time and time again. Or perhaps the task at hand just isn't that enjoyable and becomes burdensome. While it might feel like spending more time with these types of problems is the last thing you'd like to do, seeking out training on them could help breathe fresh air into them. Once you've learned a new way to tackle the problem, sharing this with your team puts you in a position of leadership for having gained expertise and for having taken the initiative to take on the hard problem.

Every proposal is an opportunity to advocate for yourself, improve your team's abilities and processes, and stretch yourself to meet your career goals. Make the most of each one by being on the lookout for mentorship opportunities, volunteering to take on projects you feel confident doing, and looking for ways to learn through training and feedback.

Corinne is a senior-level subject matter expert in defense and intelligence proposals, strategy, marketing, design, and writing. As a senior proposal manager and marketing expert at Dragonfly Editorial, Corinne applies her years of experience in industry to help clients deliver winning, impactful, and engaging messages. She loves taking on big challenges – like massive multi-volume RFP responses – but also really enjoys digging into tactics to create clever marketing pieces. You can reach Corinne at cj@cjjorgenson.com.



BRAIN

By Kat Becchina, CF APMP // Kansas City, Missouri

Kat brings 10 years of experience in event planning, strategic proposal and marketing management in the A/E/C industry. She is currently serving as the Vice Chair for the GMC and looks forward to serving as President in 2022. Kat can be reached at klbecchina@burnsmcd.com.



FREEZE

What do you do if your proposal processes or tools are going to waste or no longer fresh?

I am one of three girls in my family—the middle child. I won't go into a sob story about how I was neglected or mistreated. But, I will tell you: I was resourceful. I used to hide our ice cream in the deep freeze downstairs so my sisters wouldn't eat it all. The only downside was the tiny ice crystals that would form at the top of the ice cream because it was a heavy-duty commercial freezer (not ideal for a pint of Ben and Jerry's). I would have to scrape them off, but I could still taste that weird stale flavor. It just didn't taste the same. *(I promise this little antidote has a purpose.)*

A little over a year ago, our team experienced a significant shift in proposal workload. On top of that, we were short-staffed and going through leadership changes. There were two of us carrying a workload for a team of four. Even worse, our proposal tools and resources were stale. Just like that tub of ice cream, they didn't quite "taste" the same.

We knew we had to devise a plan to save ourselves. Once we finally hired a team to help us out, we took the time to dig deep and figure out how to reinvent the tools that once served a critical purpose in the proposal process.

I recently came across a powerful **TED Talk** by

Darrja Long. She talks about managing workload like hospital emergency room and prioritizes by the degree of urgency. She calls it "relentlessly triaging" to categorize the requests or issues coming through the door as life-threatening, serious but not life-threatening, and minor to go from "crazy busy" to "ready mode." She also discusses several strategies to help you to work smarter and not harder:

- **Plan:** We invested in Monday.com to help us manage our workload and hold weekly meetings to plan out the week and keep all team members up to speed and reduce surprises. Notice: I didn't say eliminated because we all know that doesn't happen in our world!
- **Automate:** Identify those repetitive tasks and how to keep them reoccurring to take out the extra busywork. Our team created a graphic to include in every color review meeting. We took out that busy work of typing the same email message over and over again. This also keeps our teams consistent in review expectations.
- **Co-Locate:** Previously, we had our graphics, photos, and other content stored in several different places. Fortunately, our company invested in an asset management system that allows us to keep all content in one place.
- **Design:** By revamping our go/no-go form and the proposal management plan, our team can lead more effective meetings and provide easier access to crucial proposal data (notes, schedule, action items, strategy, etc.) throughout the entire sales lifecycle.

Think of your proposal processes and content as that tub of ice cream. Inevitably, those tiny ice crystals are going to form. You can scrape them off, but they will still leave that nasty stale taste and ruin the whole thing! When it comes to proposal management, it's essential to assess your processes, tools, and content to make sure they are functioning the way you need them to.



PODCAST: MEETING MAKEOVER

When I feel that "freezer burn" coming on, I try to find ways to reinvent myself. I'm a big Brene Brown fan. She has a podcast segment about rehabbing a team meeting that just isn't working. She brings in Priya Parker, trained in conflict resolution, to help the team reconfigure the meeting to serve everyone consistently.

DEAR GMC:

Q

I've been networking a lot through APMP, which has been invaluable for my current job search. But, as far as I can tell, the proposal industry is a tight-knit group. I am getting ready to put in my notice, and I'm worried about the impression I'll leave on my way out. I never know when I'll run into my colleagues in the future! How can I make sure I depart on good terms and don't burn any bridges in the process?

Sincerely, Burnadette

A DEAR BURNADETTE,

Deciding to leave a job can be a nerve-wracking thing, and the prospect of tendering your resignation is part of it. Generally, as long as you are professional and do your best to communicate throughout the process, you'll be in good shape. Here are a few recommendations that will help you accomplish a smooth departure:

- Provide a minimum of two weeks' notice unless extraordinary circumstances prevent it. It is the convention to do so, and anything less is likely to be viewed as disrespectful. **Ask a Manager** offers good advice on her **blog here**.
- Make it a conversation. Many companies will also require you to submit a letter of resignation, but most managers will appreciate a conversation over receiving an email out of the blue. If you can, make it in person, but a video or phone call will work if you can't meet face-to-face.
- Ask your manager before sharing the news with others. There may be preferred methods of communicating someone's departure, so it's a good thing to check with your manager before you start calling all of your colleagues with the (hopefully good!) news.
- Keep it positive and professional on your way out. Resist the temptation to badmouth your manager or colleagues, which can be hard if you

are leaving a toxic environment. That being said, it's okay to give candid feedback in the exit interview if you are asked for it. When people leave, it is a good opportunity for employers to learn how to make their organizations and departments better. Just make sure your tone is respectful and in the spirit of making things better for the colleagues you're leaving behind.

- Kick the communications up a notch while you are wrapping things up. You won't be able to save the day if something is behind or a proposal gets extended. Make sure you are keeping your manager apprised of the progress of any proposals or other projects you have in process and any anticipated issues or delays.
- Acknowledge if the timing of your departure is inconvenient, but don't dwell on it. It's rarely a good time for someone to leave an organization. It could be as simple as saying, "I was very excited to be assigned to work on the proposal for Building Bridges, Inc., and I'm sorry I won't be able to see it to completion. I'm happy to give it my all for the remainder of my time here and hand it off to the appropriate person."
- Thank the people who helped you along the way, especially those who served as your mentor, coach, or sponsor. A little gratitude can work wonders in leaving a positive impression—bonus points for maintaining those connections once you are in your new role.

Perhaps it might go without saying, but no matter how toxic the environment is or how awful your boss treats you, going

out in a blaze of glory is never the right decision. No matter how well you worked or how much you accomplished in your time there, you will only be remembered for that last rash decision.

Best of luck navigating your resignation and beginning your new role! I hope it is an excellent next step in your proposal career. Please write back and tell us how it goes!

Heather Finch, CF APMP // *Dear GMC Columnist*

Just a little disclaimer: The advice offered in this column is intended for informational purposes only. Use of this column is not intended to replace or substitute for any professional, financial, medical, legal, or other professional advice. This column, its author, and APMP GMC are not responsible for the outcome or results of following any advice in any given situation. You, and only you, are completely responsible for your actions.



Heather first encountered the acronym "RFP" when seeking ways to diversify funding sources for a human services company in 2012 and hasn't looked back since. Since then, she's moved on to lead proposal teams in both the commercial and government sectors, refining processes and developing efficiencies along the way. You can reach Heather or submit a question through the [Dear GMC form](#).

meet the member lindsay lange, cp apmp

Interview and Profile By
Kati Stutsman, CF APMP, Shipley BDC

Lindsay Lange loves s'mores. To be fair – who doesn't? That combination of gooey chocolate, toasty marshmallow and crunchy graham cracker takes us right back to barefoot childhood summers. But if you were to ask someone what makes the perfect s'more, you'd get completely different answers. While Lindsay has perfected s'mores in her kitchen thanks to a small torch gifted by her husband, she's the first to celebrate others' individual methods, preferences and creativity. In fact, "individualization" is one of her top Strength Finders elements – she loves learning about what makes people unique and different. That authentic connection through exploration and sharing is what makes Lindsay feel fulfilled... and what makes her a great proposal manager.

Like many, Lindsay found the proposal management profession accidentally through a colleague. But with a degree in mass communications and journalism, maybe she has always been destined for proposal management. With an ability to tell and share stories and the

inquisitive mind of a reporter and writer, Lindsay enjoys the puzzle of learning how each proposal is different and strategically identifying ways to individualize responses to each customer. She is currently on a team of three proposal managers for a hardware/software manufacturing company and often collaborates with subject matter experts to craft customized, industry-leading proposals.

That kind of focused effort – an elevated, relationship-driven way of crafting client-focused messaging – can be draining. And for someone like Lindsay (who strives to be a strong, reliable support for friends, family and professional teammates), burnout is a real thing. When she finds herself losing that inner fire, she takes time to re-connect with what makes her an individual by finding pockets of joy and peace amidst the chaos. For her, these could be pockets of humor when working against pressing deadlines or pockets of rest to renew the brain (sleeping, listening to music, etc.). Pockets of time away from her desk or taking a short walk sometimes

lead to surprise breakthroughs when she gives her mind some space to zoom out.

Lindsay also finds pockets of people – people who understand what she's going through – and really invests time in those relationships. For example, she currently co-chairs the APMP GMC Certification Study Group with the goal of providing help and resources to other GMC members who want to grow and thrive in this industry.

When all else fails, maybe it's just a quiet s'mores break in her kitchen while she and her husband talk about their dreams of starting a family... or cheering through a rowdy Husker volleyball game with friends who have gathered to share food, laughs and good-natured competition.

The beauty of life is that we all have an individual journey – but we also have a lot that unites us. It's okay to be honest when you need some space or time to reconnect with the core of who we are as individuals, when you need to take a few moments to clear your head... or eat a marshmallow just because it gives you joy. Be you – unapologetically.

You can reach Lindsay at
lindsay.lange@essvote.com or
www.linkedin.com/in/lettersfromlindsay

s'more roaster.
fan of authentic people.
good at finding the pockets.



APMP GMC EVENTS + WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Local Engagement

Are you familiar with our chapter's [local meetup program](#)? This year, our goal is to have a local meetup in each of the 12 states we support. Hosting a local meetup is very simple! We provide invite templates and planning support. The chapter is also proud to offer \$20 per attendee to cover food and beverage (non-alcoholic) costs and \$50 for a guest speaker. If you would like to host a local meetup in your state, please email localmeetups@apmpgmc.org to get started.

Monthly Webinars Series

Our Webinars Chair, Nichole Reber, is always looking for topics that interest you. She also wants to hear from new voices. If you have a topic you want to learn more about, or if you want to speak or suggest someone who would be a good presenter, reach out to her at chicagowriter1@gmail.com. Meanwhile, watch for news about webinars on leadership, getting buy-in for your proposal department, and diversity. You can always rewatch previous webinars at apmpgmc.org/webinars.

College Outreach Program

The purpose of the College Outreach program is to educate students on the proposal profession, the skills needed to be successful in the role, and resources to help students find an internship or entry-level position. Interested chapter members can help us by recommending their alma mater along with any college/university contacts so we can target schools to engage with. Additionally, if you have internships or entry level positions open at your organization, please share them with program chairs Maddie Redman and Dena Stukenberg so we can include the information in communications to students. Please email them both at stukenbergd@bcbsil.com and madeleine_redman@bcbsil.com.

SAVE THE DATE!

BID & PROPOSAL CON // OCTOBER 10-13 (DENVER)

Bid & Proposal Con (BPC) is the world's largest conference for proposal, bid, tender, capture, business development, and graphics professionals. People from around the world attend to gain tested information, proven strategies, and best practices from the best and brightest in the industry. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

EVENT AGENDA

Already signed up? Check out the schedule of events [HERE](#).

ABOUT THE VENUE

Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center

6700 N Gaylord Rockies Blvd
Aurora, CO 80019

Visit the resort website [HERE](#) for information about on-site restaurant and dining options, spa services, and entertainment.

NOT REGISTERED?

It's not too late! As of the date of our publication, there are still a few spots left. Use the registration page [HERE](#) to sign up for the event.

THOUGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

By Sonali Oberg, JD/MBA // Chicago, Illinois

How do you host a virtual symposium and get your attendees excited? Our theme, **Together We Grow**, was an excellent way to introduce this year's GMC Annual Symposium. As a nod to our collaborative theme, the GMC enjoyed an opportunity to co-host the symposium with the Rhythm & Harmony Chapter. It was great to see new faces and interact with our Southern colleagues.

The choice of virtual collaboration tools was very important, as the Socio platform allowed for attendees to engage virtually without losing the opportunity to feel included. In fact, I believe the virtual platform allowed for more collaboration between attendees, where an in-person meeting would have led to attendees to be less interactive.

One of the major themes woven throughout was building a successful team by leveraging unique experiences and skills of the team members. As a proposal leader at my firm, getting buy-in from team members is important, and many of our speakers presented tips and tricks on how to encourage and validate team members' interests to motivate them for a successful project.

The sessions ranged from **building teams for successful proposals**, to using **"capablism" and Gestalt language to encourage buy-in from your teams** with an added sprinkle of how to do this in the new COVID world and potentially in a post-pandemic world.

One session that was particularly useful to me as a manager was **Robin Davis' session on "How to use Gestalt Language Protocols to Improve Communication."** This session was compelling because it allowed me to take stock in how I communicate with my team and whether I am effective in how

I articulate myself. I liked Robin's advice on speaking from your own experience rather than giving advice or opinions that could ring hollow. By providing examples of past learning experience that derived from a negative experience, my team is able to see that I am not trying to judge them, but merely help to guide them into translating a mistake into a learning lesson for future projects. Personalizing failure was something I had not done in the past, but find this technique useful as a learning tool. Experienced-based creates a safe environment for team members to share openly!

Baskar Sundaram (GMC enthusiast) spoke about capablism and **how to harness your inner unique capabilities.** With this capablism perspective, all my goals now are capability goals. I'm focused on what I can do individually, and then on my teamwork with other people. I'm always trying to be a more valuable team member in terms of my capabilities so that I have access to the capabilities of others. After listening to Baskar talk about his experience with our chapter, it had me thinking, "How do I get better at something so I can be a better team member with someone else?"

What an exciting opportunity to have spent two days with our colleagues. I cannot wait for 2022 and look forward to seeing many of you there!

Sonali is a senior proposal writing manager for Sidley Austin LLP, a global law firm. She is also a non-practicing lawyer who decided to build her legal credentials by specializing in proposals, especially in multi-national, large law firms. Writing is one of her passions, and she is lucky to have a job that combines her writing skills and knowledge of the law. She is a multiple writing-award winner and has published articles in several law review journals. You can reach Sonali on **LinkedIn**.



LINK TO RECORDED SESSIONS

Thank you to all who participated in our virtual symposium on September 14-15. Event registrants have access to all recorded sessions **HERE** through August 2022.

*The GMC would like to give a special thank you to the **Rhythm & Harmony Chapter** for co-hosting our Annual Symposium!*

GET TO KNOW YOUR APMP GMC COMMUNITY

Baskar Sundaram, Founder and Director of Baachu Scribble, has announced that he is graciously giving back in honor of a strong role model many of us know – a guru who has taught us, inspired us, and allowed us to elevate: Bruce Farrell.

BRUCE FARRELL APMP CERTIFICATION TRAINING SCHOLARSHIPS

Learn more about the scholarship program [HERE](#).

Listen to Baskar's podcast, Scribble Talk, where he gets to know Bruce Farrell. This podcast is Baskar's little part to showcase human stories behind our industry and enable us to come together and kickstart a concerted effort to maintain and build on this – 'Together'.

Baskar and Bruce talk about early careers, life in the world of proposals, design principles, music, memorable presentations at BPC, and a love for Lord of the Rings. Listen to the podcast [HERE](#).

OTHER RECENT WINNERS

2022 BPC registration winner: **Shelby Newberg**

2022 GMC Symposium registration winner: **Rachel Dodson**



Book Club

Join the GMC Book Club to read our fourth and final book for 2021: **Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leadership, Teams, and Why People Follow** from Gallup. Building on the Strengths Psychology and Clifton StrengthsFinder, this book explores what leadership looks like when you know your strengths, invest in others' strengths, and lead in a way that meets others' needs. Strengths Based Leadership is a short book (only 95 pages!) followed by numerous additional resources such as the StrengthsFinder assessment and chapters specific to leading from your identified strengths. You can read just what applies to you or read them all.

Join our APMP GMC Book Club group on [Goodreads](#) and watch for updates on the date for our live Zoom chat in November. Happy reading!

MENTOR CORNER

72% of APMP survey participants report feeling **emotionally exhausted**

YOU'RE NOT ALONE // Our Mentorship Chair **Hayley Watkins, CP APMP, CCMP** presented a few statistics at our last GMC Symposium: 23% of survey respondents report feeling burned out at work "often" or "always." Even worse, 82% of APMP respondents report overwork, burnout or emotional distress. 72% of APMPers report feeling emotionally exhausted according to a 2018 Ethics Survey. Check out more stats at this [Gallup survey](#) and learn the top causes of burnout and how to stop it at its source!

CERTIFICATION // If you are pursuing the Practitioner certification, a great place to start your quest is on the [APMP website](#), where you can watch a one-hour webinar about the ins and outs of taking the exam, download the preparation guide, and even take a practice exam. For anyone attending BPC in Denver, **Sunday, October 10 is APMP Certification Day**, where you'll have the opportunity to take the Practitioner exam. Details are coming soon, so keep an eye on [this page](#) for details.



ABOUT APMP GMC

Founded in 2003, GMC serves the Greater Midwest region, which is comprised of the following states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Although

we officially serve these 12 states, we have members all over the map. Any APMP member can join our chapter and/or meetings.

Our mission is to provide value to our members through engaging content, professional development, and networking. We strive to engage our members 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.

813 MEMBERS
across 12 states

33 NEW MEMBERS
in September

NEW APMP CERTIFICATION

Congratulations! Shara Thiele and Sandra McGregor achieved Practitioner certification. Jessica Guggenheim, Ryan Cociolone, Nancy Hultberg, Dawn Kujawa, Jazmin Merriweather and Alex Schuett all earned Foundation certification.

8 PROGRAMS

chapter committee members support eight programs, including mentorship opportunities and career development initiatives.



Looking to become APMP certified? Learn more about the requirements by visiting the [APMP Certification Program](#) page online.

2021 APMP GMC BOARD

Andrea Dunger, CF APMP	President
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Bruce Farrell	Webmaster Co-Chair
Stacey Duwe, CP APMP	Webmaster Co-Chair



QUESTIONS?

Contact us at admin@apmpgmc.org