



Characteristics of a Successful Career Path in Proposals

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Disclaimers!

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

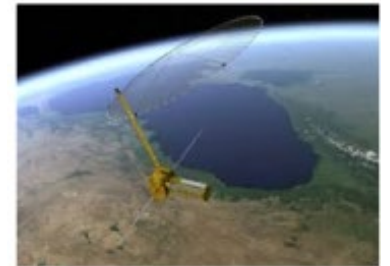
Orientation

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



Long hours, stress, demanding processes, strict compliance, high quality – no errors, 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
- Look externally...then do some introspective analysis into your professional selves



Achieving Personal and Professional Balance

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

**Yet We Are All Different as
Individuals and Professionals**

Going Beyond the Baseline

- Knowing what proposals are, what the process is and a lot of hard work puts you on the Same Playing Field, professionally speaking

- *Required baseline*

At prior APMP Bid & Proposal Con's, who are some of the speakers that demonstrate professional excellence?

Dick Eassom, Mike Parkinson, BJ Lownie, Randy Richter...others?

- *Very accomplished proposal practitioners/consultants/tool-software developers*
- Industry and profession-respected authorities

What Sets Them Apart?

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!

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

#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



“vote” with your mind; your feet if necessary

- Combining what you love to do with what you are good can lead to a fulfilling career
- 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)

- Too many people worry about change...

Embrace change! Be more concerned about 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, 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
- Attain your first or next level of APMP certification

#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)



- Share your knowledge and expertise; mentor or be mentored
- True professionals have a unique combination of styles, techniques, attitude and leadership, and inter-personal skills that will *always* set them apart
- 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

#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

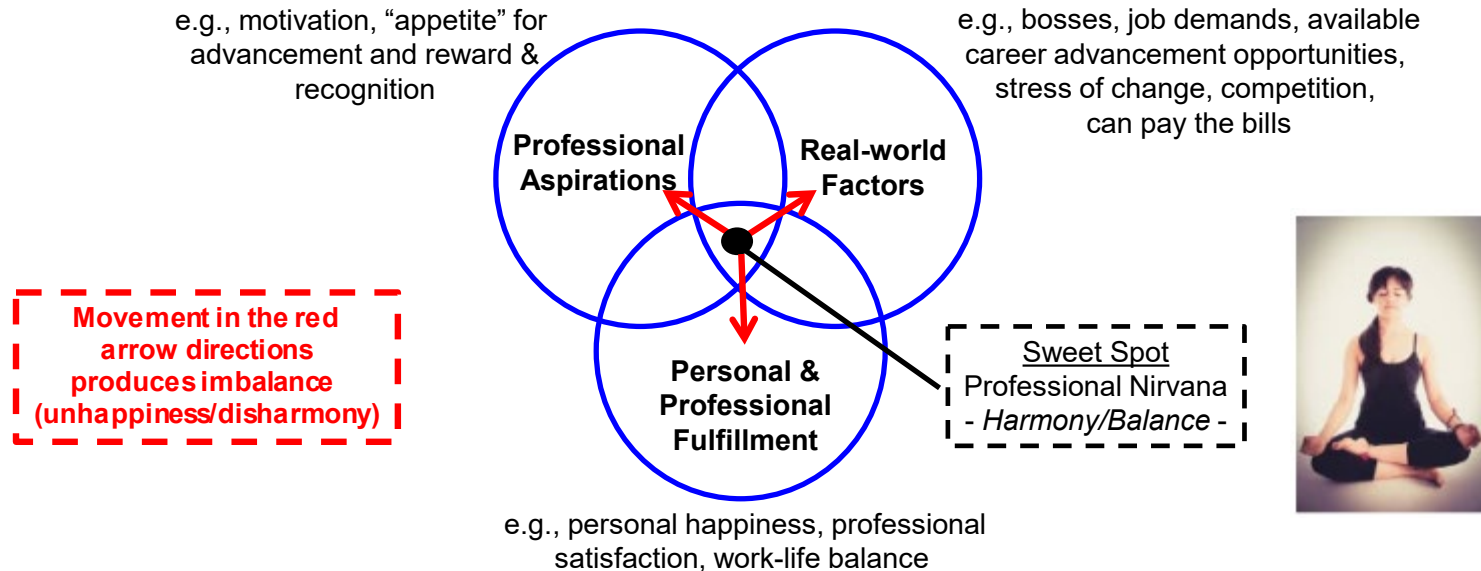
- If you spend too much time thinking about a thing, you will never get it done. Make at least one definite move daily toward your goal

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 and Motivational Skills

They Matter...*a Lot!*

(A virtual show of hands only, please)

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

Let's face it...

How you come across to other people,

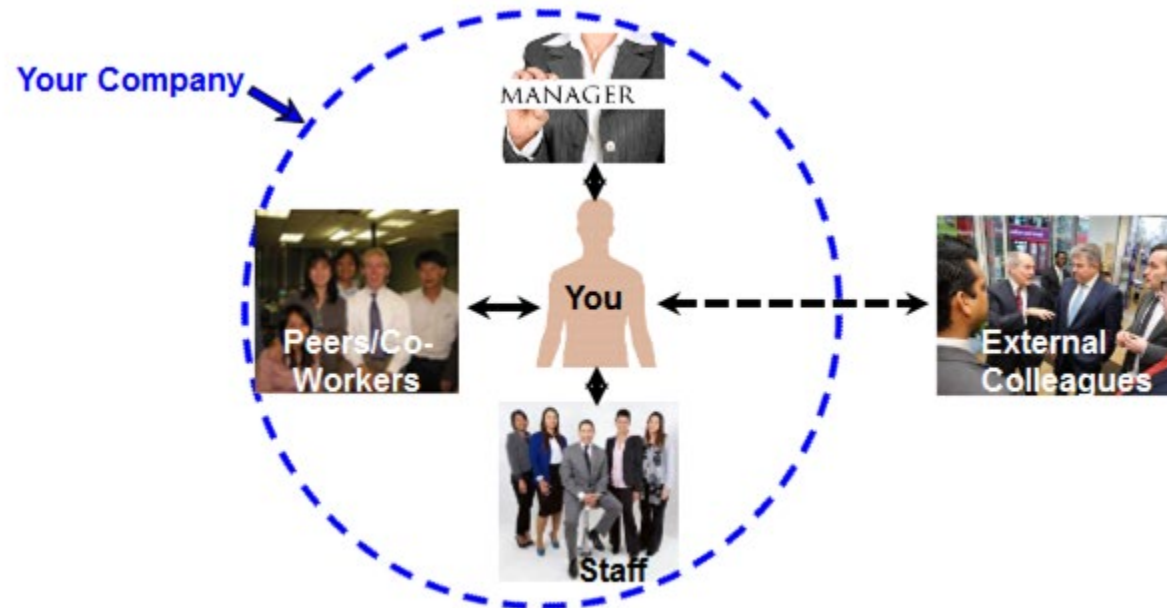
How much they want to work with or for you, and,

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 probably not where you want to be

- 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”

Planning Approach for Career Advancement

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.

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 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?