Designing Perfect Proposals



MacGyver Hacks

FOR WHEN EVERYTHING GOES WRONG

INTRODUCTIONS

Becky Ellison

SR. CREATIVE STRATEGIST

MIDDLE OF SIX



AS AN AEC MARKETER:

- **Prolific brainstormer**
- **Wildly resourceful**
- **Big picture thinker**
- **InDesign mercenary**

I'M ALSO:

- **A writer**
- **An artist**
- **Middle of Six's class clown**
- ***AND...***





I live in LA

Come say hi sometime!

Enough about me,

Tell me about you!

Session Overview

1. Visual storytelling to create the proposal of your dreams
2. What to do when the dream is more of a nightmare
3. MacGyver hacks to save the day
4. Q&A

PART ONE:

Visual Storytelling

to Create the Proposal of Your Dreams

80% of success is knowing when to shut the heck up.

This one's for the math people:

Each page should be

30–50% Graphics.



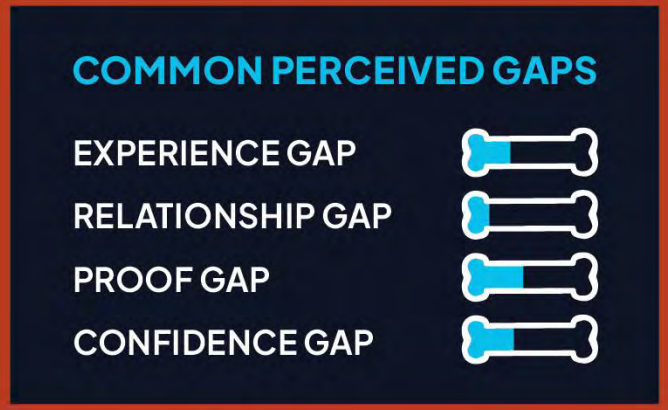


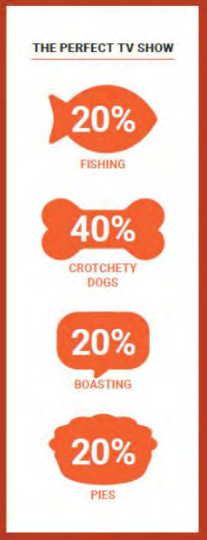




HOT TOPIC: INFOGRAPHICS

- Everything that isn't text is infographics.
- Can you answer the question with visuals? Do it.
- Quick hit facts: numbers, icons, donut graphs, stats.
- Pull out the most important info.
- Think about what you're trying to say.









Questions, before we dive deeper into themes, branding & hamburgers*?

** Yes, really*


HERE WE GO


Dick's
DRIVE-IN
RESTAURANT
DICK'S
DELUXE
1/4 LB. 100% BEEF
POSSE


Dick's
DRIVE-IN
RESTAURANT
DICK'S
DELUXE
1/4 LB. 100% BEEF
96

MIDDLE of SIX

DICK'S DRIVE-IN FEDERAL WAY COMMONS PROPOSAL

for SCHUCHART

A hot, fresh, ***winning*** proposal, made from all natural ingredients. Lightly salted.

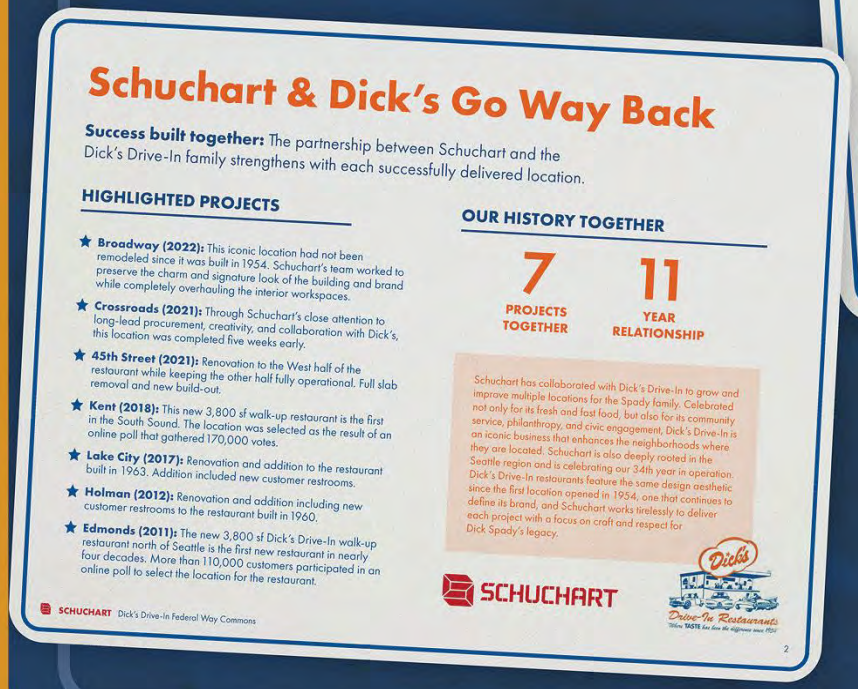


Yes, we absolutely did put a sea of fries on the cover

"A conscientious hard worker who delivers thorough results – even when grilled."

Our design approach was inspired by the iconic 1950's style design aesthetic of the restaurant's branding:







We used catchy, humorous copy to make Schuchart's proposal stand out from the competition and reinforce their commitment and long-term relationship with Dick's Drive-In.



Oops, we won a national award

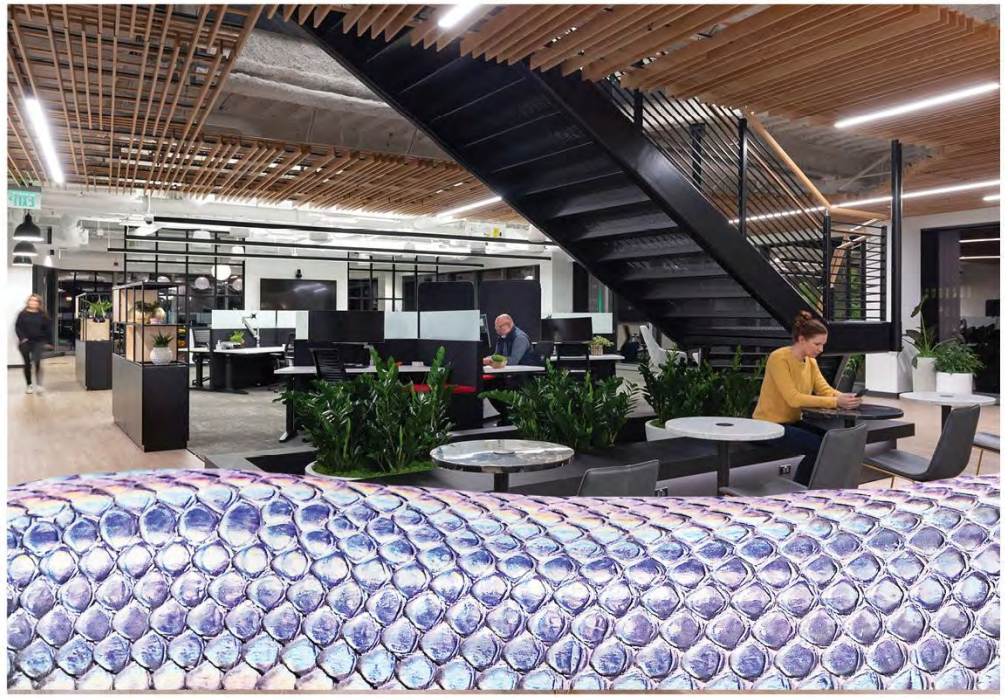


Let’s get nerdy



SECTION 4 – PROPOSED TEAM: THE CHARACTERS

THE BEST TEAM FOR YOUR ADVENTURE: MEET YOUR PARTY



Communication Cheat Code: The Daily Log

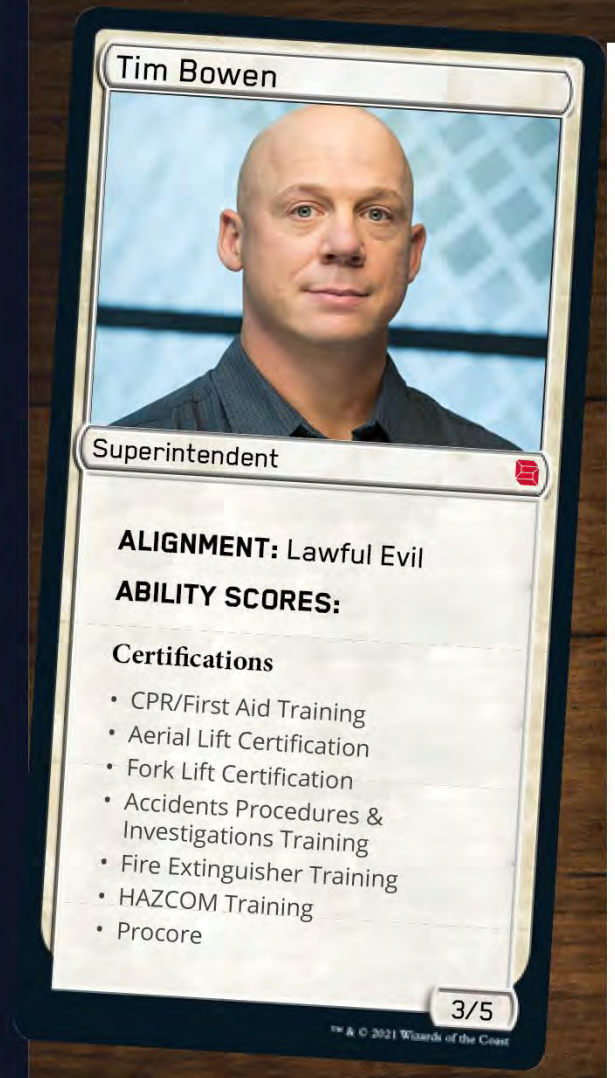
Over the course of construction, Superintendent Tim Bowen, will provide a daily recap of activities and tasks, site visitors, site safety notes for that day, and the next day's tasks. This daily log report serves to keep your team up-to-date on project activities and allows for more fluid schedule management.

These daily logs are also instrumental in quickly communicating scope progress and pertinent updates to the project team. Issues that arise with potential cost and schedule implications are noted on the recap and in follow-up e-mails.



LET'S GET THIS ADVENTURE STARTED.

I had to explain to the superintendent that calling him **'Lawful Evil'** is in fact something the client would appreciate.



EXPERIENCE POINTS:

ZGF | SEATTLE, WA
A 14,000 sf architectural firm tenant improvement expansion including new conference rooms, collaborative spaces and a kitchenette. Demolition of previous tenant build out, construction of new walls, casework, and ceilings. Tied in kitchenette with existing plumbing lines. Additionally, Schuchart perforated the slab and installed a structural steel winder stair system framed in a steel and wood between floors.

DIGITAL STREAMING SERVICE | SEATTLE, WA | with PPM and JPC Architects
51,767 sf build out of three floors in Madison Centre including a main assembly area for 300 people with multiple communicating stairs, bleacher-type seating, open office areas, speak easy, and game room. Significant structural steel upgrades were required for the stairs.

CONFIDENTIAL FINANCIAL COMPANY CO-LOCATION | SEATTLE, WA | with JPC Architects
Interior build out for a financial institution of 93,000 sf. The project spans over six floors and is Class-A office space within a new downtown high rise, with high end finishes and complete MEP systems. The project required close coordination with multiple owners and vendors for commissioning and turn over.

INTEL FOURTH & MADISON | SEATTLE, WA
A 4,800 sf data company relocation tenant improvement project. Construction included partitions to create new collaboration spaces, data processing office space, computer lab and shared amenities space.


Confidential Financial Company Co-Location

AOL | BELLEVUE, WA
Tenant improvement of AOL's 11,098 sf Bellevue office. Non-structural improvements including new electrical, HVAC, and plumbing, finishes, lighting and demising walls and select demolition of the ceiling and small walls. Build out included glass entry with a wood panel feature wall, fabric wrapped wood framed window portals and huddle rooms, three conference rooms with full AV, monitors, and schedulers.

DLA PIPER | SEATTLE, WA
26,000 sf corporate tenant improvement on floors 69 and 70 in the Columbia Center. Scope included the complete demolition of the walls, ceilings and flooring on both floors, the removal/modification of the existing MEP systems, modifications to the fire sprinkler systems and the replacement of the existing mechanical systems including 22 heat pumps. Build back included new finishes.





How to infuse creativity in everyday work

EVEN WHEN YOU CAN'T GO HAM(BURGER)



Stand out & build trust with your client:

- Speak to the client in their language
- Tell stories
- Clever call outs / headings
- Fun facts
- COMMIT TO THE BIT

FUN FACT

Amy volunteered in the Peace Corps and spends most weekends jamming with her Jimmy Buffett cover band, *Piña Coladaville*.

Make the proposal ‘talk’ to the reader



- **Guide them** through the document
- **Short & sweet, big & bold**
- Write like you **talk**

GUIDE THEM THROUGH THE DOCUMENT

Looking for success stories? Turn the page.

Something exciting to read on the next page - **this is where we're going to draw attention** to it.



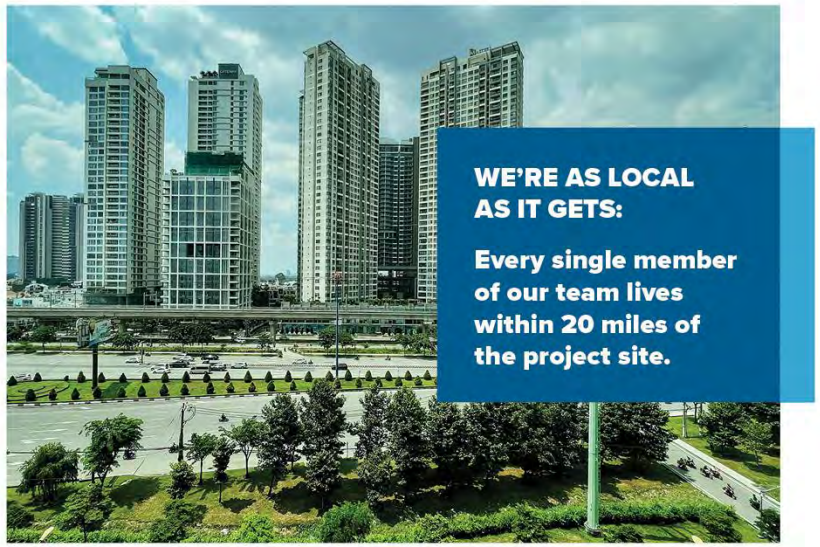
Examples are on the following pages.

Let's go!

Maybe sometimes you want to break a callout **out of the box!** No one's going to miss this.

FIND OUT HOW

SHORT & SWEET, BIG & BOLD



uis sunt fuga.

agnim
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di
os

les

tiunt
ius
t audant, optas
net que parum dem
us earum incil.

Here's the most important thing we want you to take away from this section.

libusaperro testiu
quiatiusam, ates
fuga.
molupt
ex exp
volor a
quame
nulla q
sime p

Elibus,
Nem v
sdaeptate paribe
di venihil ipis abo
resequi derspe in
doles volorerate





Do not be afraid to **SCREAM.** You are competing for their attention and you have about **three seconds** to grab them!

WRITE LIKE YOU TALK

There's a reason people are turned off by AI writing.

We're here to make this process EASIER for you; not harder. *And we bring donuts to meetings.* Just saying.

We saved our client $1m on a project exactly like this; and we won't leave you in suspense—on the next page we'll tell you how.

NEW SERVICE:

Learn how we clean HVAC systems with yogurt. Yes, you read that correctly.

BUILD YOURSELF A KIT OF PARTS.



2 | Text Style Hierarchy

Kinds of Food that Can Be Eaten

Breakfast Foods

Il miliquistem alitatquae. Musciur ma sitatent, sitinim pedigen duntemquae nonsed ereribus utatusa ndant, nonet del ius magni berercime ducius dolorro tectasp erumqui nonsequam, nobitasi inum il magnis molupid mo beria ipid eat accum, consequos aliquam restiate volupta idunt mincipi cienem.

Kinds of Cereal

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LUCKY CHARMS

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Marshmallows

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Lunch Foods

Il miliquistem alitatquae. Musciur ma sitatent, sitinim pedigen duntemquae nonsed ereribus utatusa



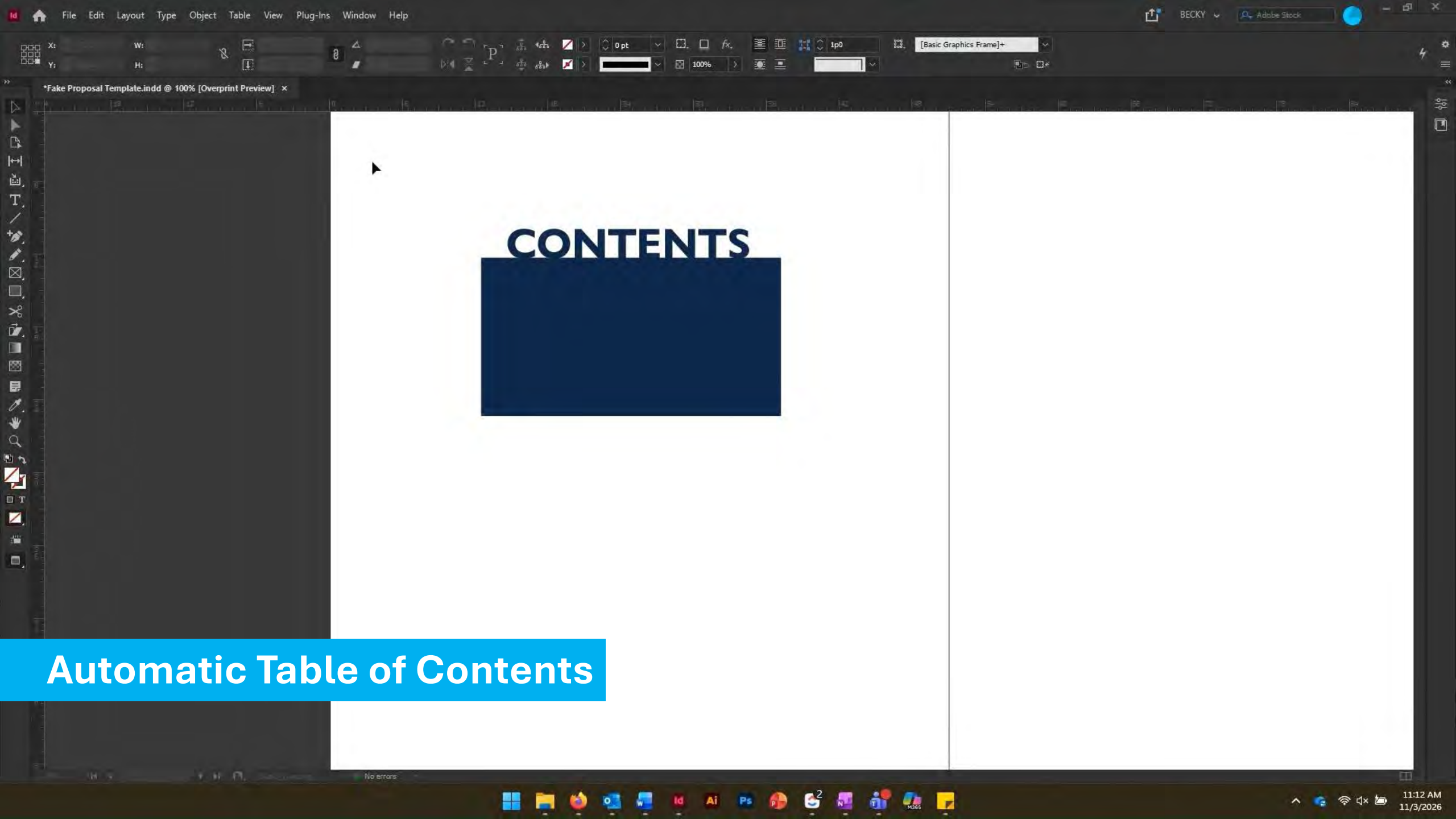
INDESIGN PEOPLE:

Here are some time-saving and potentially life-changing workflow tips!



MICROSOFT PEOPLE:

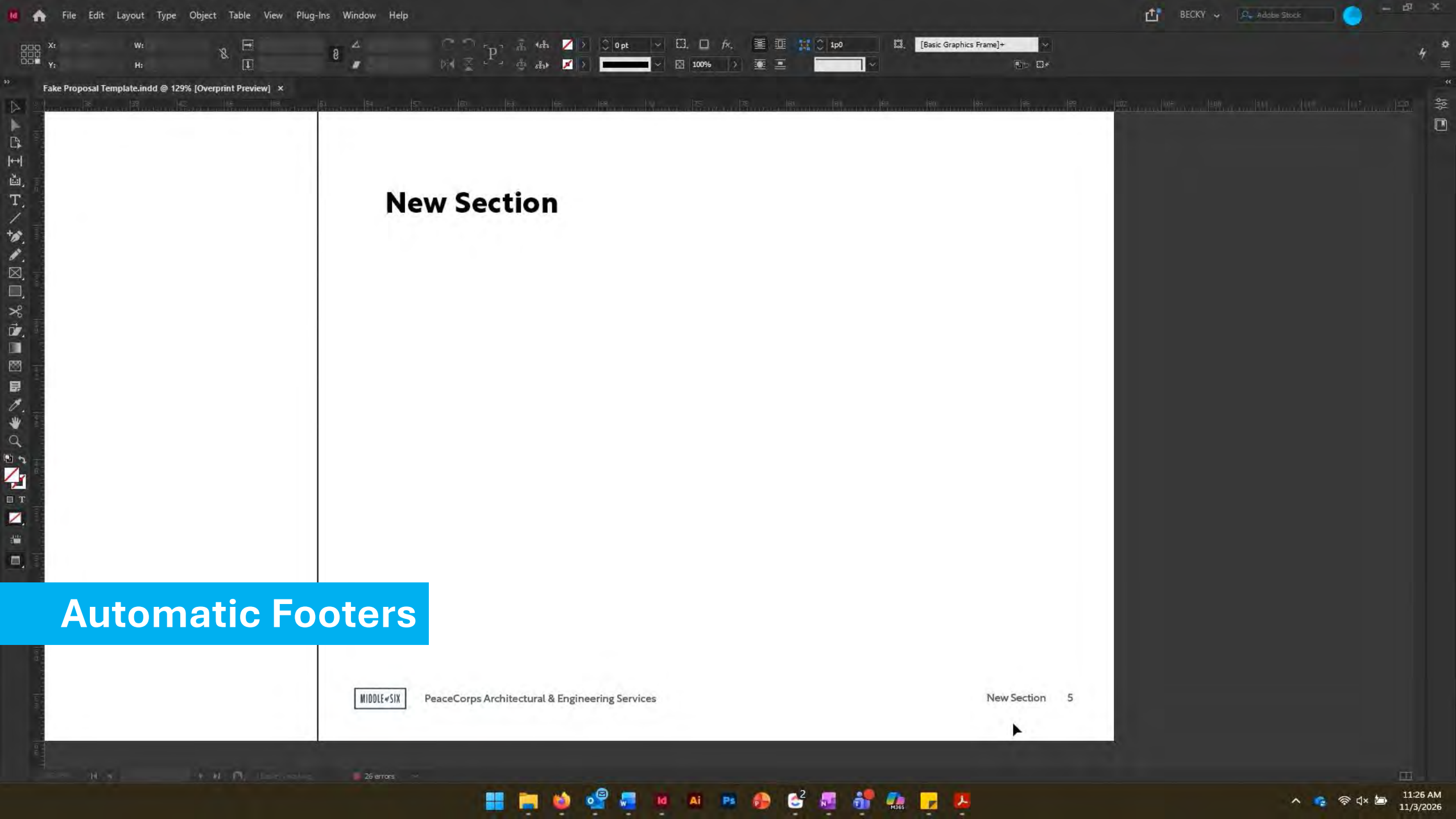
Don’t worry - I’ve also included some regular life hacks that are relevant to everyone.


File Edit Layout Type Object Table View Plug-Ins Window Help
BECKY
*Fake Proposal Template.indd @ 100% [Overprint Preview]
CONTENTS
Automatic Table of Contents

REGULAR LIFE HACK:



Pack your pillow case the next time you travel. You'll get that familiar bed feeling without the extra bulk in your suitcase from a whole pillow.


File Edit Layout Type Object Table View Plug-Ins Window Help
BECKY
Fake Proposal Template.indd @ 129% [Overprint Preview]
New Section
Automatic Footers
MIDDLE SIX
PeaceCorps Architectural & Engineering Services
New Section 5

REGULAR LIFE HACK:



Dish soap and water cleans glasses just as well as special cleaning liquids.

Save money!

Fix line breaks
REALLY FAST

An Excerpt from an Underrated American Classic

Hello. Hello. I'm looking for my wife. Wait. Okay, okay. Okay. If this is where it has to happen, then this is where it has to happen. I'm not letting you get rid of me. How about that? This used to be my specialty.

You know, I was good in the living room. They'd send me in there, I'd do it alone. And now I just... I don't know. But tonight, our little project, our company, had a very big night. A very, very big night. But it wasn't complete, wasn't nearly close to being in the same vicinity as complete, because I couldn't share it with you. I couldn't hear your voice, or laugh about it with you. I missed my wife. We live in a cynical world, a cynical, cynical world, and we work in a business of tough competitors. I love you. You complete me.



At Middle of Six, we don't gatekeep.

We're happy to share what we know. For the step-by-step guides to these three InDesign tips, just scan the qr code with your phone to email me and I will send them to you!

Scan with your smartphone camera!

PART TWO:

What to do



when the dream is more of a nightmare

“We’re like the Loch Ness Monster:

We have no good photos.”

taken in 1934 by Robert Kenneth Wilson, a London gynecologist



What DO we have?



the monster

Scotland

tourists want to see



1. Firm Background & Experience

Monster Understanding

The Loch Ness Monster known affectionately as Nessie, is a mythical creature in Scottish folklore that is said to inhabit Loch Ness in the Scottish Highlands. It is often described as large, long-necked, and with one or more humps protruding from the water. Popular interest and belief in the creature has varied since it was brought to worldwide attention in 1933. Evidence of its existence is anecdotal, with a number of disputed photographs and sonar readings.

Relevant Sightings

Reports of a monster inhabiting Loch Ness date back to ancient times. Notably, local stone carvings by the Pict depict a mysterious beast with flippers. The first written account appears in a 7th-century biography of St. Columba. According to that work, in 565 ad the monster bit a swimmer and was prepared to attack another man when Columba intervened, ordering the beast to "go back." It obeyed, and over the centuries only occasional sightings were reported. Many of these alleged encounters seemed inspired by Scottish folklore, which abounds with mythical water creatures.

The Truth is Out There

Revelations in 1994 that the famous 1934 photo was a hoax hardly dampened the enthusiasm of tourists and professional and amateur investigators to the legend of the Loch Ness Monster.

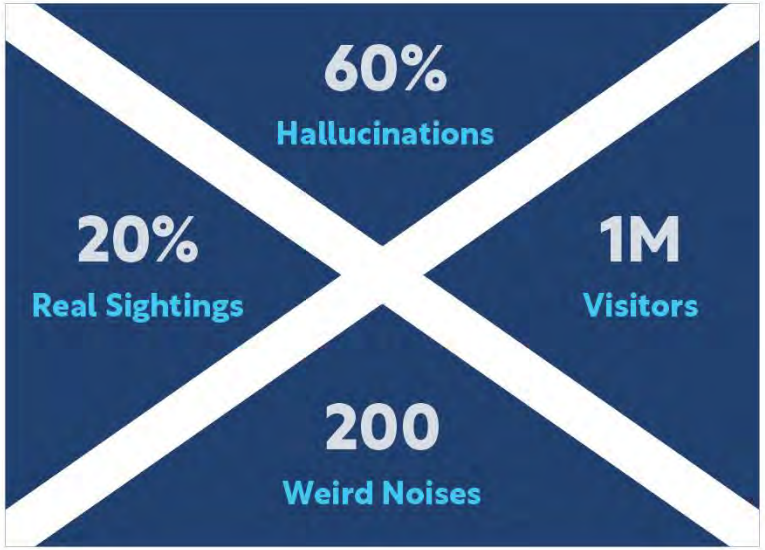
The Search Continues

Amateur investigators kept an almost constant vigil, and in the 1960s several British universities launched expeditions to Loch Ness, using sonar to search the deep. Nothing conclusive was found, but in each expedition the sonar operators detected large, moving underwater objects they could not explain.

In 1975, Boston's Academy of Applied Science combined sonar and underwater photography in an expedition to Loch Ness. A photo resulted that, after enhancement, appeared to show the giant flipper of a plesiosaur-like creature. Further sonar expeditions in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in more tantalizing, if inconclusive, readings.

Loch Ness was formed around 10,000 years ago at the end of the last Great Ice Age. Before then, the whole area was filled with glaciers over a mile high.

Nessie Facts



MIDDLE of SIX

and now, some

MacGyver Hacks & Tips

FROM THE MEAN STREETS OF OVER A DECADE OF PROPOSAL CREATION



"The file crashed and the proposal's due in five minutes? Wake me up in four."

When you have to cram 10 pounds of potatoes into a 5 pound bag

Monster Understanding
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If you have to MAKE it work:

- Typography sneaks (within reason)
- Tiny images > no images
- Margins mean nothing
- Put the caption *in* the photo
- Columns tend to save space



IF YOU'RE OUT OF SPACE:

If you don't know what it means or how it answers the question, CUT IT.

Especially on an A3!



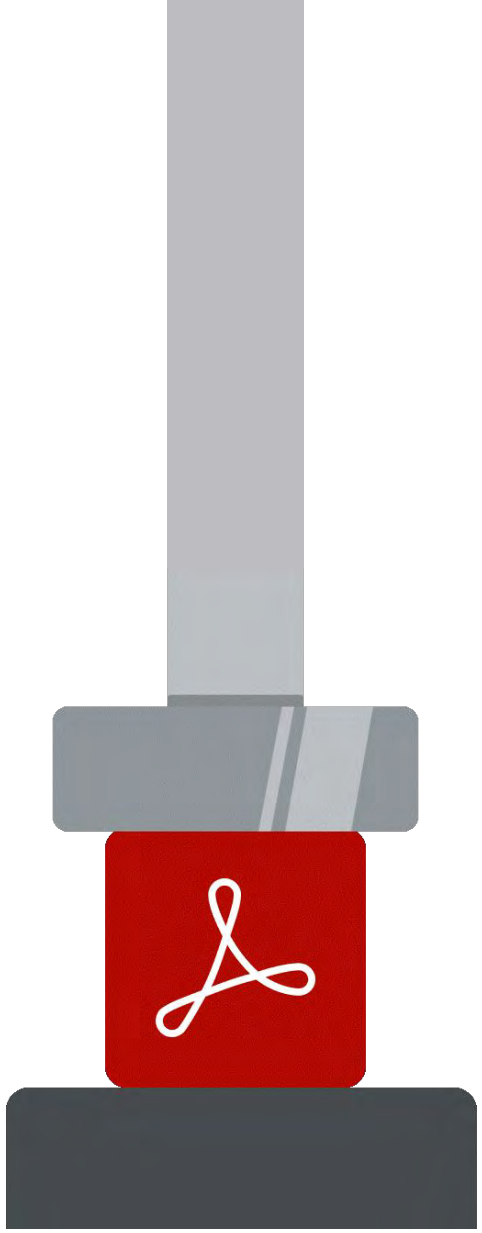
How to deal with file crashes and exporting errors in InDesign

- **Save As** to reduce InDesign file size and start fresh
- Save a copy to your **desktop**
- Save as **IDML** if you're getting corruption errors
- **Export in sections** to identify the source of the error
- Change **placed PDFs** to JPG images
- Make edits directly **in Acrobat** if you have to
- **Screenshot pages** if you are **truly desperate**



If the PDF is too big to email:

- Save as a **reduced size pdf**
- **Compress the images** down in Acrobat (≥ 150 ppi)
- Sometimes you have to compress **individual images** (maybe the schedule needs to be higher res, but the cover image can be compressed)
- Save a **pdf preset** with compression settings
- Email with a **download link** as a last ditch option



Okay let's go:

Questions?

For more tips
and fun stuff,

CHECK OUT OUR PODCAST!

THE SHORTLIST

Highlighted Episodes:

- InDesign Rumble 1 & 2
- Pushing the Boundaries on Pursuits
- Efficiencies in Proposal Development
- Design Strategies for A3 Proposals
- Tackling Cover Letters
- 10 Graphic Design & Workflow Tips

THANK YOU!



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Hit me up!

MIDDLE of SIX