

# CEO/COO FORUM

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## The Benefits of APMP

**R**ecently, I was sitting in my client's war room surrounded by approximately a dozen proposal team members. We were experiencing a rare opportunity to talk about things other than the proposal at hand. The topic was APMP.

The room was evenly divided by those who belonged to APMP and those who did not. Quickly the question surfaced: "Why should I belong to APMP? What is in it for me?"

I resisted the urge in me to jump up and dominate the conversation with my views. I sat quietly and listened to the discussion as those who belonged validated their reasons for becoming a member. I was impressed with the breadth of their responses, from personal growth, to being mentored, to earning professional accreditation, and even my favorite "I was tired of constantly struggling with proposal responses so I joined so I could learn how to improve these darn things" (I had to substitute a couple of words in that quote).

A thought occurred to me that perhaps it would be valuable to others to hear some of the benefits that APMP has to offer. So over the course of the next four issues of the

*Perspective*, I will share with you what my peers and I believe to be some of the most significant benefits that APMP offers its members. Here is what we will cover:

- The Annual Conference
- Accreditation
- The BD-KnowledgeBase™
- Becoming Affiliated With a Chapter.

There is not an order of importance to these benefits; they are all equally valuable. I chose to start with the Annual Conference because when you are reading this, the conference will be right around the corner. Maybe you are still undecided on attending, or maybe you need a little more information to sell your manager on your being allowed to go. In either case, I hope that the benefits that I describe get you motivated more than ever that the conference is the place to be.

APMP's Annual Conference is the largest gathering of proposal professionals in the world. These professionals come from the US and abroad, from Federal and commercial markets, from large and small companies, senior management to the daily warriors, and cover every job function that it takes to complete a proposal response! They are all extremely friendly, and all have

one goal in common—"to advance the arts, sciences, and technology of new business acquisition and to promote the professionalism of those engaged in those pursuits."

Notice the last half of that statement—"promote the professionalism of those engaged in those pursuits." That's you! These professionals are at this conference to teach, learn, and share their experiences in the proposal world with you. By being at the conference, you have access to all these people. They will gladly take time to answer your questions, listen to your issues, or follow up with you on questions you may have had after listening to their presentation.

The topics presented at the conference cover every imaginable aspect of the capture process through the proposal process. If you are struggling personally or your company is struggling within its process, come and find out alternative ways of getting this accomplished. Bring these new ideas back, and add immediate value to your company by improving your process. If this allows you to win more proposals, you will be a hero! Compare your methods and procedures against some of the best in the industry and evaluate if there are

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ways to improve. Listen to the presenters talk about skills that you can use personally. Some will just keep your work in perspective; others can dramatically improve your productivity and value to your team.

In addition to the people attending the conference, there are many vendors who are supporting the conference with the latest in hardware, software, tools, and processes that support proposal professionals. Talk to these experts, and listen for ways to improve your processes. Evaluate tools, and see if they can increase the productivity of your shop, reduce overhead, or perhaps improve your final product, thus giving you an advantage over your competitor. If any one of these ideas or tools helps you win more business, isn't the conference worth it?

Browse through the bookstore. The what? Yes, back by popular demand and increasing in the titles available is our bookstore. Stocked with the latest titles specific to business development and proposal management, it is perhaps the largest collection of books in one room dedicated to our profession. Many people have commented that they were unaware that there were so many books available on capture management, business development, and proposal management. They also have

told us that these books were excellent tools to further develop ideas and concepts that they discovered at the conference. Quite a few of these books are authored by people in attendance at the conference! And yes, they would be honored if you asked them to autograph the book for you!

Finally, take advantage of the hotel. These destination hotels are exclusively researched and ultimately selected for their compatibility to support our conference experience. Everything we need is right there. Most amenities are included, such as wireless access at the conference center; free Internet access in your room; and breakfast, lunch, and snacks included with the registration. This year, we have the entire facility, so the hotel staff is committed that week to make our experience the best ever.

That is just the beginning at this resort. Remember, during the other 360 days of the year, our job requires us to sacrifice our time and be at the office more than most other professions. Now, surrounding the conference times, relax with a couple other new-found proposal professionals by one of the many water features and finish the conversations started earlier. Build these new relationships so that you can call upon one another for mentoring in the future.

Take a swim in the pools that are right outside your rooms. Enjoy the compa-

ny of others in one of the many areas that offers a light meal or full dinner. Build those professional relationships. Perhaps these new business relationships will be your teammate in the future, or maybe they will become that professional friend who gets you through the next effort or, in some cases, the next crisis.

Have you had a great year? Celebrate it with a foursome on the golf course. Our hotel has two, and there is even a member organizing a golf outing! Tennis is available for you to unwind after a long day of soaking up all those presentations. And the ultimate—a variety of spa treatments will refresh and re-energize you for that trip home and the journey to begin to integrate all the ideas that you learned at the conference!

The APMP Annual Conference offers something for everyone. Whether you are looking to grow personally or get the one idea that separates your proposal shop or proposal from the rest, or both, you will find it at the conference. Hosted this year in beautiful Palm Springs, co-chaired by the Northrop Grumman Corporation, at the Westin Mission Hills, it promises to challenge and reward all who attend.

In the next *Perspective*, we will look at the benefits of the Accreditation Program. ■