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Proposal Lone Ranger

Having Fun Herding the Cats!

By Jeannette Waldie, AM.APMP

I recently realized that I have been doing proposals for more than 20 years now. I am still having as much fun now as I did when I accidentally fell into this profession. How have I continued to enjoy turning chaos into order after all these years? I feel there are four reasons.

First, I know of no other career where I could use most of my skill set at the same time. I loved writing, even as a child. I love designing page layouts and making the page look “real pretty.” When it comes to organizing projects and groups, I am your person. Although I did not know it, I found my perfect job. So recognize what you enjoy about your career as a proposal professional and celebrate it!

Second, I learned a long time ago not to take things personally. Growing up with three older brothers helped me to learn that. As did the lesson in the value of criticism I got from a writing group I was involved with in Boston. Everyone has a different perspective, a different voice or style. Learn to enjoy that difference. It makes a big difference in how you approach your proposals.

Third, I learned to pace myself. It is sometimes a tradition in theatre to take a night off during the rehearsal schedule so the troupe does not become “over rehearsed.” The same thing can happen with proposals. If you do not take a break, you loose per-

spective and become too focused on the details. Even on a tight deadline, I will not take work home one night and focus, instead, on relaxing. The next morning I will get into the office early and start fresh. I found my stress levels go down, and I am much more productive. After I finish a large proposal effort, I will take a couple of days off to recharge my batteries. The key is to recognize when you are overstressed or exhausted. Give yourself permission to take breaks.

The fourth reason I still have fun is humor! I enjoy the silliness of the moment. I laugh. I tell jokes, I email jokes (appropriate to the workplace of course!). Here is a joke for you, written by a colleague of mine a few weeks ago (printed with permission.):

*“Grant me the serenity
To know when to GO;
Know when to NO-GO;
And the wisdom to know the difference.”*
— Sandra Kassa-Rogers

At one company, after weeks of getting in before dawn, I started to tease my team that it “was time to make the donuts,” referring to an old Dunkin Donuts commercial. We even talked about getting t-shirts made with the saying. So feel free to laugh, tell a joke, crack a pun, recognize the silliness that occurs everyday, and make things fun!