Maverick Messenger

About this Publication

The *Maverick Messenger* is a student-run newsletter featuring articles on technology, cross-culture communication, web design, career advancement, and much more. This award-winning newsletter is recognized by the Society of Technical Communication. In this edition of the *Maverick Messenger,* we explore facets of technical communication, specifically related to proposal and grant writing.

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Technical Communication's Rhetorical Roots

Sara Gulbranson

Early democratic ideals set the stage for classical rhetoric within government and judicial contexts, which we as technical writers still use to reach our readers. Philosophers battled over the preeminence of style over truth in arguments. To engage audiences, rhetors employed metaphors, style, emotion, logic, word choice, educational backgrounds, and personal reputation. Throughout history, people have used rhetoric to gain personal status, promulgate political ideals, and spread religions—similar to today. Recently, rhetoric has expanded beyond written and oral to include visual tactics of persuasion in an online world. Consider the varied range of digital media commonly available.

Democracy

Syracuse, Sicily, embraced an early form of democracy in fifth century. Exiles were returning home to reclaim their lost property. The exiles were permitted to present their cases in court even though the verifying property documentations had been lost with age. The art of persuasion became imperative, and an oratory school developed. One prestigious Sicilian Greek rhetor, Corax, patterned his rhetoric with an introduction, narrative, major arguments, subordinate arguments, subsidiary remarks, and summary—elements we recognize today (Leggett 2012).

Athens, Greece

Most scholars consider fifth century. Athens, Greece, as the birthplace of classical rhetoric (McKay and McKay 2018). In the fifth century, Athens' political scene and cultural shifts set the stage for foundational developments in rhetorical practice and theory.

Athenian democratic society dictated that the Assembly, or governing political body, consist of all free men, nearly twenty percent of the population (Leggett 2012, McKay and McKay 2018). In addition to the Assembly, the Boule consisted of 500 elected representatives from the ten

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Attic tribes. A man's political success depended on his ability to persuade others and counter accusations from others—a familiar mode of political success today. Any man could bring an accusation against another. The accused's or accuser's rhetorical skill was imperative in persuading the jury to make a satisfactory judgement. Juries could number more than five hundred persons, and judges did not determine the outcomes (Leggett 2012). In the absence of a modern justice system, rhetorical persuasion influenced critical decisions about personal liberty.

Sophists

In response, anyone in the public circle worked hard and invested significantly to develop their skills (Leggett 2012), and respected rhetors established schools to teach rhetorical skills (McKay and McKay 2018) and gain financially (Leggett 2012). This first group of teachers were called the Sophists. Students studied poetry, parts of speech, and debate. The most famous school was administrated by Gorgias and Isocrates (McKay and McKay 2018). Other noteworthy Sophists included Protagoras of Abdera, Gorgias of Leontini, Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis (Leggett 2012). Unfortunately, Sophists placed greater weight on the style of persuasion than presenting the truth (McKay and McKay 2018). We encounter the form-before-substance thinking today too.

Greek culture during the fifth century was "marked [by] the gradual shift from a mythological and cosmological view of the world to a more rational and man-centered interpretation" (Leggett 2012). Sophists did not believe a higher deity gave the rules and did not believe in objective truth. Everything was relative and convincing others of one's point of view was all that mattered (Leggett 2012). "Which argument was correct depended on which side of the argument you stood. For many Sophists, there was no right or wrong answer. If there were no higher authority for morality, then surely it depended on each person to decide" (Leggett 2012). For some Sophists, namely Gorgias, words could be used to manipulate others (Leggett 2012). We certainly see some of this in the present.

Aristotle and Plato

Aristotle and Plato criticized the Sophists for sacrificing truth on the altar of emotional appeal and rhetorical prowess (Leggett 2012, McKay and McKay 2018). However, Aristotle did believe that persuasive tactics were acceptable in persuading for the truth. Sometimes, logic alone is insufficient for an audience (McKay and McKay 2018). A powerful statement about the strength of persuasion, it still holds true today. Consider the best marketing campaigns during the holidays, tugging at the heartstrings.

Aristotle's famous work, *The Art of Rhetoric*, continued to influence rhetoric up through the nineteenth century. *The Art of Rhetoric* included three means of persuasion: logos, pathos, and ethos; three rhetorical genres: deliberative, forensic, and epideictic; rhetorical topics; parts of speech; and rhetorical style (McKay and McKay 2018). This is where we see persuasion take the leap to another level.

The three means of persuasion pertain to the speaker's character, the audience's emotions, and the logic of the argument. According to Aristotle, drawing the audience into a proper emotional state aided the audience in judging rightly with the right emotions. Wrong emotions could cloud judgement. Logical arguments included inductive and deductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning could simply follow from one object to another (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2010).

The three types of public speeches include persuading the Assembly to act or not act on the basis of possible future outcomes for the polis (deliberative), court accusation or defense (judicial or forensic), and persuading the honor or dishonor of a person's actions (epideictic). In contrast to the other speech types, epideictic speeches do not require the listener to make a decision (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2010).

Aristotle also supported the importance of word choice and demonstration as the best way to persuade. The rhetor must not overwhelm the audience with words they cannot understand and thereby confuse the message's clarity—so true today, especially with intercultural communications. A rhetor must meet the audience's intellectual level. For example, are you persuading adults or children? Aristotle proposed four types of metaphors: from genus to species, from species to genus, from species to species, and from analogy (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2010).

Rome: Cicero and Quintilian

The Roman rhetorical style was heavy with metaphors, stories, and lavish style in contrast with the Greek focus on logic. When Rome conquered Greece, Greek rhetoric influenced the Romans. Roman rhetor Cicero wrote *On Invention, On Oration, and Topics* and continued to influence rhetoric up through the Renaissance. Cicero believed a broad education was an important rhetorical skill enabling rhetors to connect with a variety of audiences. Roman
rhetor Quintilian developed the five canons of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery.. He actually developed a foundational curriculum that started back in infancy. His five canons are taught in speech classes today (McKay and McKay 2018).

Europe and America

Although rhetoric was used primarily to spread religion during medieval times, rhetoric also experienced a renewed interest along with the other sciences and arts. Universities began offering more studies in rhetoric in Europe and America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Quintilian's *De Inventione* and Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres* were standard university textbooks (McKay and McKay 2018). Europe and America
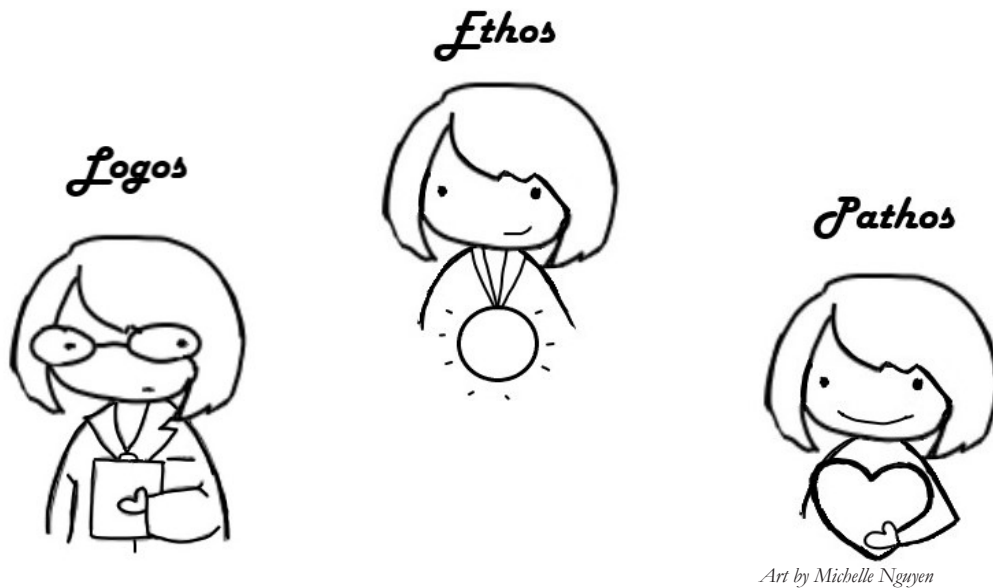spread democratic and political messages through rhetorical means (McKay and McKay 2018).

Today

Now, rhetors—including technical communicators—persuade audiences through written, oral, and visual means in a variety of contexts facilitated by democratic ideals. For example, in the twentieth century, visuals became important ways to influence others through television (McKay and McKay 2018). Schools teach rhetorical skills for those interested in persuading others in court and business. Rhetorical contexts have expanded beyond government and judicial settings to include an online public platform. The online world creates a new context for virtually anyone to try their skills at influencing others about any topic of interest. Controversy in rhetoric ethics still exists as rhetoric and relativism sway the world's definition of truth. Nevertheless, we see rhetorical persuasion on almost every corner, embraced as much by the common person as by any intellectual, and as an integral part of technical communication, especially in relation to proposal writing.

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Art by Michelle Nguyen

Advice from a Grant Writer: Closing the Deal

Diana J. Evans

Over 1.5 million registered nonprofits in the United States vie for billions of dollars awarded yearly by foundations, corporations, and the government (Grant Space, n.d.). As grant writers, our proposals divvy up those dollars. Our clients need us to close the deal with persuasive techniques that will motivate a boardroom full of committee members to act.

As a grant writer and consultant, I recently met with a leader of a local nonprofit because her appeals for funding were not being accepted and she was frustrated with her lack of success. After a conversation and quick review of her writing, it was apparent the issue was not her writing, but rather her strategy. She wrote beautiful, emotional stories, but they lacked persuasive motivation to act, including statistics, goals, strategy, and measurable content and outcomes. The writer was failing to evoke both emotion and action required to receive funding because she was not connecting the stories to vital facts. She questioned, "Can statistics be tied to emotion?" Most certainly. For instance, 1 in 7 children do not have food to eat in their homes (Feeding America, n.d.). Not only does it provide a valuable statistic, it also allows the audience to visualize and consider how many children in their child's daycare or classroom are hungry. Grant writers must implement rhetorical strategies to condense large amounts of information, statistics, strategies, outcomes, and emotion into a persuasive proposal that stands out to funders.

Advice from the Master
Aristotle's logos, ethos, and pathos are the key to winning grant proposals. While utilizing rhetorical strategies may seem foreign and challenging in the beginning, they soon become second nature. Audience, instructions in the request for proposal (RFP), and type of appeal will determine your strategy. As a professional with more than 10 years of experience in this field, I have often used more than one rhetorical strategy in one proposal; it is merely a matter of choosing the appropriate technique to address each question.

Logos
The use of the rhetorical strategy logos "relies on logic...and...depends on the use of inductive and deductive reasoning" (Purdue University, n.d.). For inductive reasoning, a grant writer will utilize reasoning based on a broad audience, such as, "There are 88,640 individuals in our nation experiencing chronic homelessness, which makes us aware of the need to establish permanent and supporting housing options for these individuals in our community to help them achieve long-term housing stability and improve their health and ability to succeed" (National Alliance to End Homelessness, n.d.).

For deductive reasoning, the grant writer will first use information based on a broad population and then use information based on the direct population impacted by the appeal. For example, "As of January 2018, Minnesota had an estimated 7,243 individuals experiencing homelessness on any given day. Approximately 300 of those individuals live right here in Steele County" (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, n.d.). This information conveys that this is a big issue that also exists right in my own community. A statistic such as this allows the reader to understand the issue of homelessness on a larger scale and then bring it to the local level.

Ethos

Ethos is an ethical appeal and helps a writer establish trust and credibility (Purdue University, n.d.). Establishing credibility of an organization is important in the nonprofit world as funders want to ensure their funds are being used to support the cause stated in the proposal and the organization is a place with which they are proud to be affiliated.

Two common examples of using ethos within grant proposals are when addressing sustainability of funding or establishing why your organization is the best suited to implement said program in your region. This example incorporates both: Organization XYZ has been successfully serving individuals struggling with homelessness in our community for over 30 years. The growth of our programs from serving 25 clients our first year of operations to now serving over 115 on an annual basis are evidence of our ability to be good stewards of our funds to best serve those who need us most. In addition, our funding revenues have increased by 47% in the past three years, which proves our donors have confidence and trust in our integrity and ability to use their funds to benefit our clients through our programs.

Pathos

And finally, the emotional appeal, pathos, which speaks to the needs, values, and emotions of the audience. When a funder prepares an RFP or places content regarding the grant application process on their website, they will state what causes they support, i.e., the values of the audience. No guessing required. The funding organization will also most likely state what type of proposals they will and will not accept, which would fall under the needs your organization is striving to address and the needs the funding organization wants to meet. One caution to consider is that emotion in grant proposal writing must be never be used to distract from the issue or to frighten people into supporting a cause.

Oftentimes, proposals will have a section dedicated to sharing information not yet captured in other areas of the proposal. This "Anything Else?" section is the place to integrate emotion into your proposal by sharing a personal story of someone affected by one of the organization's programs. Even a statistic (1 in 7 children do not have enough to eat in their homes) can bear emotion if placed correctly. Emotion should be integrated into the proposal to increase the connection the audience feels with the organization and cause. (Also note that many post-funding grant-proposal reports request organizations share stories about those impacted by the funding, which creates an emotional connection encouraging the funder to continue supporting your cause through other requests.)

Persuasive techniques are an essential piece of a successful proposal and should be implemented by every grant writer. Practicing these strategies will tip the scales in your direction; however, even skilled writers who use ethos, logos, and pathos effectively do not win every proposal. The outcome can be influenced by other factors, including organizational grant readiness, the grant writer's ability to identify funders whose priorities fit with the organization and specific ask, and quality of additional documents (e.g., finances, strategic plan, affiliations of board members, and diversity within organizational staff). While many factors affect the success of a proposal and all play a part in getting funded, perfecting your persuasive writing skills will, in the end, play a major role in closing the deal.

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Flexibility and Fluidity in Technical Writing

Kristi Karels

Art by Michelle Nguyen

The handbooks and how-to-write advice that fill our shelves echo the importance of adaptability. Other traits are important, but they radiate from a core knowledge foundation and the flexibility to adapt to various circumstances as we shift from one writing assignment to another.

Our handbooks also identify steps to successful writing and stress malleability and overlap within these steps: preparation, research, organization, writing, and revision. Implementation is not sequential, one and done, but instead blends and flows, transitioning from one stage back to another—like vinyasa yoga. (Alred et al. 2019). We, as writers, should attempt to master the basics so we can continue stretch our abilities in diverse writing situations.

Preparation

In my yoga classes, I love the expectation of mindfulness and preparation. Writers need to have these skills as well. Preparation includes framing the writing experience, including mulling over ideas prior to getting them on paper. Developing a strong understanding of expectations and audience needs, in addition to defining deliverables, is part of the preparation process for technical writers. Determining a timeline for project management and team check-ins (sprints) are also critical to successful technical writing assignments.

Research

Technical writers also have a dependence on subject matter experts and resources to contribute foundational knowledge to the writing. In yoga, a leader often guides the movements and mindset of others in the room. A good technical writer can lead, guide, and inspire group process and projects, while being an expert in escalations, i.e., understanding when to contact the subject matter experts for additional insight into content development. As an analyst, I find that I am consulted by my director as she translates numerical data, topic trends, and student challenges (which I provide) into interesting and bite-sized commentary that can be shared with and understood by busy college leaders.

Organization

Writers need organization in a variety of ways; structured settings and following a timeline to approach, create, and write are necessary to get started as a writer. Incorporating writing skills that ensure that the product is acceptable to various audiences, including those with disabilities, is critical to project organization. Technical writers need to incorporate shared goals, a team approach, and opportunities for feedback into their writing timeline. These are also parallel in the realm of yoga (and the adjoining exercise, stretching, and meditation), because there must be a core understanding of the movements and shared expectations within the group.

Writing

The writing process should be coordinated into sessions (flows) throughout the day. Often, it's good to get one large block of uninterrupted time early in the morning to get dream visions written and to plan writing sessions. As with yoga (incorporated into periodic stretch breaks away from a computer), it's good to incorporate writing sessions to retain the flexibility of the writer's mind and ensure continued progress.

> *"In short, the five steps expand, contract, and at times must be repeated to fit the complexity or context of the writing task"*
>
> *Alred et al. 2019*

Revision

Revision is a constant state of desired improvement. With yoga, we are introduced to the same positions in every session, while new and innovative exercises are

introduced as we gain experience. The same happens with technical writing. If technical communicators have a solid foundational skill in grammar and sentence and document structure, we can be confident when we are introduced to new frameworks: grant writing, proposals, processes, procedures, instruction manuals, training programs, in addition to various publishing platforms of social media, websites, eBooks, and traditional print copy.

The goal is adaptability. As professional writers, we need to be prepared for unique writing situations. For various projects, we may feel external stressors in different ways. Our project teams may be extremely organized and goal oriented, or may be whimsical, haphazard, or simply lack vision. The technical writer can still be focused and results-oriented by staying grounded. By retaining a writing mindset and understanding the stages of the writing process, we can shift work groups and change the pace of new projects. Similar to a yoga session in various unpredictable settings—such as the contemporary goat yoga, tantrum yoga, or hot (Bikram) yoga—various writing environments can help us grow, adapt, and flex our writing skills.

As technical writers, we also need to adapt to external influences by incorporating all demands and criteria into a great product: consistent style, audience needs, ADA accommodations, and the necessity of simplification. Various

writing settings are diverse and new projects can be frustrating, thus making the outcomes more difficult. By focusing on the writing process and acknowledging that writing does not follow a step-by-step process, it will help us adapt to each project and work group.

As a professional writer, I bend over backwards to meet a shared vision and create the best product. When I practice yoga, I find that when I get into a new position or hold a challenging pose, the activity excites me, frustrates me, and simultaneously provides a satisfying stretch of my core and lumbar system. In new writing situations, I find that my limbic system appreciates the challenge, and that brain activity increases along with the gauntlet of new writing expectations. How can you prepare yourself to be flexible and adapt to new writing situations, challenges, and expectations? Maybe you should start with a laptop and a room full of goats.

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Popping the Question

Peter Marino

I proposed to my wife at the top of a ski hill. I wish I could say that it was the perfectly romantic conclusion to an elaborately orchestrated plan. I mean, I did okay—but the truth is that I chose the setting based exclusively on one fact: my wife loves skiing. Of course it helped that she likes me and that I asked nicely.

Marriage proposals are significantly different from scientific and technical proposals. In some ways, however, these three central rhetorical principles are at the core of all proposals: context, audience, and tone.

In other words, successful proposal writing needs to do three things. First, it needs to act as a sales pitch, which means acknowledging its rhetoric. Second, it needs to have a logical course that makes it accessible to the reader. Third, the writing needs to operate in a non-hierarchical manner, which is both cross-disciplinary and collaborative. With these three strategies in mind, a proposal has a much greater chance at success—no matter the pitch.

Sales Pitch

Monte and Libby walk us through the features and goals of an aims page in grant proposal writing. "This page should be a succinct combination of sales pitch and science" (Monte, 2018). The ultimate goal of a grant application is to obtain funding. Or, as Monte and Libby euphemistically put it: "The target audience is the review panel, and the goal is to enlist reviewers as partners and advocates of the proposal" (Monte, 2018). Ultimately, you need to get the reviewers to back your project, and this is not simply about the validity or utility of the research. This is about persuasion.

Dorpenyo states this succinctly: "science is a rhetorical enterprise" (Dorpenyo 2015). Any information that is designed to meet the needs of a specific audience is "rhetorically charged" (Dorpenyo 2015). And, of course, aims pages and grant proposals are designed to meet the needs of their review panel audiences.

Some of these rhetorical moves are inherent to the given discipline. For instance, science readers expect writing to be in passive voice, which attempts to separate the writer from the reader "and create an objective framework" (Dorpenyo 2015). In this way, and in others, Dorpenyo argues that scientific proposal writing is "grounded and shaped by an ideological paradigm" (Dorpenyo 2015).

However, Dorpenyo does not stop at the rhetorical persuasion of proposal writing. She claims that "we need to know the culture, the ideological practices that shape what our audiences do before we can persuade" (Dorpenyo 2015). Passive voice might be a small, syntactical piece of this culture, but science writing obviously does not stop there. Dorpenyo does not have the space to delineate all of the subcultures that inevitably influence proposal writing—and neither do I. The important piece is that every proposal writer is aware of a discipline's culture before she writes.

For instance, Monte and Libby remind us that when writing scientific proposals for educated non-experts, it is important to adhere to the standard structure of the aims page. That structure is as follows: introductory paragraph, which identifies the problem; rationale paragraph, which proposes a solution; aims paragraph, which outlines how objectives will be fulfilled; and overall impact paragraph, which explains the long-term value of the project (Monte, 2018). If you do not know this foundational structure, you have not made the first cultural/rhetorical step toward persuasion.

Logical Course

In her article "Guiding the Reader: Proposals and Persuasion", Maria Cole argues that "persuasive writing of document proposals requires providing readers with a logical course of argument" (Cole, 1992). Cole bases her assertion on research that began with a different hypothesis. She set out to demonstrate that headings could change the interpretation or meaning of a text.

Cole gave subjects two different copies of the same text. However, each copy had different headings. While these headings did influence the readers' experience, they did not change the text's meaning. Rather, the disorganized texts distracted the readers. The takeaway is less philosophical and more practical: don't distract your readers.

If a proposal writer labels the parts of her proposal poorly, she may not drastically change the meaning of her text, but she may lose her reader anyway. Distraction is not a useful persuasive strategy.

Tone

Kent-Drury points out that cross-functional groups are more common in work places than they were in the past. These are non-hierarchical groups that lack vertical structure and top-down leadership. In other words, many proposals are written by groups of peers. These groups can be very successful if team members learn how to negotiate with each other. For instance, conflict within a group can be constructive or it can be divisive (Kent-Drury, 2000). This is essentially a problem of tone. How do you talk to your co-writers?

Kent-Drury describes the mechanisms for success in cross-functional writing groups as follows: they have "accurate, redundant, visible tracking systems," they have the ability to negotiate, and they have a neutral workspace (Kent-Drury, 2000). In other words, in order for group proposals to be successful, we have to be able to track their progress, talk about their proposals in a meaningful way, and have a neutral space in which to do these things. And this is even more essential as teams write proposals for/with individuals from different work environments—where language and negotiation may have a very different feel.

In short, when we negotiate as part of a writing team, we have to watch our tone.

The Answer

There is only one answer anyone wants to hear after a proposal: *yes.* The literature suggests that if we consider the context of our genre, the organizational framework that we build for our audience, and the tone that we adopt during the writing process, we will be much more successful in all of our proposals.

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Proposal Timelines: Meeting Tight Deadlines

Jordan Schroeter

Tight deadlines, complex instructions, and the difficult task of keeping multiple subject matter experts (SMEs) and directors on board are common to professional proposal writing.

You may be surprised to know that up to 70% of a professional proposal writer's job is spent not writing. Although it seems counter intuitive, the most time-consuming task a proposal writer undertakes is project management. The main goal of the proposal writer, especially if you are writing to a federal agency, is to submit a compliant proposal on time. The writing aspect itself is often secondary even though superb effective writing is the goal.

Successful proposal writers excel at time management and juggling several projects at once. The worst-case scenario is turning in a proposal late. For several agencies, and all federal agencies, a late proposal will not be evaluated; all the hard work you, your SMEs, and your reviewers put into the project will be for nothing.

I have picked up some tips along the way:

A good first step is to set deadlines in reverse—allowing a margin of extra time for each phase.

Submission
If the submission method is electronic, schedule the submission for the business day before the proposal is due to accommodate for any potential technical difficulties. If the submission method is mail or hand-delivery, determine how "on time" is determined, and build in any applicable time buffers.

Review
Many times, reviews take longer than expected. Some review types your organization may request are a content edit, compliance review, and a proofread. If your organization has brought on a partner for the opportunity, you may also have to accommodate for the partner's internal review process as well in your schedule. How long it takes will vary depending on the length of the proposal, but if the reviewers have job duties other than editing, budget at least one and a half days per editor. A helpful tip is to always ask the editors about their availability far ahead of time as possible and formally get penciled onto their schedule.

Drafting
You will often find that the job of drafting never feels complete, so it is important to set a cut-off date for this phase. Set the end date the day prior to when it should be reviewed and allow time for inserting (and more importantly formatting) content supplied directly from SMEs. When the deadline is strict, the goal is to create an effective and compliant draft rather than a literary masterpiece.

Research
Most proposals will require sourcing past performance references, conducting market research, sourcing sample products or services, and beginning pricing discussions. If utilizing SMEs for these tasks, account for time spent hosting meetings, creating user-friendly resources to bring them up to speed on relevant details, and following up to ensure set deadlines are being met. Additionally, set deadlines for content provided by SMEs to avoid being flooded with content one hour before the proposal submission deadline.

Pre-Proposal Development
Since the second most important factor of a proposal is that it is compliant, this is a critical part of the proposal writing process. Many organizations, and all federal agencies, automatically reject a proposal that is non-compliant. Some solicitations can be in the hundreds of pages with instructions and tricky clauses hidden throughout. Budget a large chunk of time for perusing the solicitation, identifying all the requirements, creating a comprehensive proposal outline from those requirements, and requesting any clarification before the end of the Question-and-Answer (Q&A) period.

Then, create a proposal calendar according to the deadlines. Separate it by phase and delineate each individual task inside those phases. Indicate who is responsible for each task and the preferred deadlines for completion. If the members of the proposal development team are extremely busy, it might be helpful to set the preferred deadline for all tasks at least one day before the phase's deadline. This provides a buffer that you can utilize in case something pops up or someone forgets an assigned task.

With a proposal calendar in hand, begin communicating with all proposal development participants and invested parties. Many organizations encourage hosting a proposal kickoff meeting for all partners, SMEs, and invested partners where proposal writers can present the proposal development calendar and an overview of the opportunity. This can be an efficient way to get everyone up to speed, garner interest and enthusiasm, and open a dialogue.

By creating deadlines, defining who is responsible for each task, and being in constant contact with your team to ensure all proposal development milestones are met, you will have accomplished the first step towards creating a winning proposal.

Staff Bios

Teresa Beacom teaches writing and literature courses at Minnesota State Community and Technical College (M State) and is enrolled in the Technical Communications Certificate Program in order to get up to speed and better prepare M State students for writing in their fields. When not reading papers or conferencing with students—you can find her buried in a book, out on a running trail, or working in her flower garden.

Stephen Burgdorf is enrolled in the MA in Technical Communiation program and works as an academic editor at his day job. He has a BA in Professional and Technical Writing from Metropolitan State University in Saint Paul, Minnesota and enjoys outdoor activities and spending time with his kids. He works and resides in Minneapolis.

Diana Evans is a graduate student at Minnesota State University, Mankato, has over 10 years of experience working for non-profits in development, including grant writing, direct mail, events, and consulting. Currently, she serves as the Grants Manager for Project Legacy in Rochester, Minnesota, and Executive Director of the Blooming Prairie Youth Club. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in communications/public relations from University of Northwestern, Saint Paul, MN. Evans and her husband, Ryan, reside in Blooming Prairie, Minnesota, with their five daughters and are always up for a new adventure!

Sara Gulbranson is fascinated by communication in all its forms. As a musician, artist, teacher and writer, she is always excited to learn something new and creatively tailor information for diverse audiences. After taking graduate marketing, MBA and health informatics classes, she is pursuing her MA in Technical Communication to sharpen her skills in writing educational and marketing content for the business and medical fields. She enjoys organizing closets, studying interior design, and taking on a new workout program.

Mary Hollaway supervises technical writers in her daily role and is currently earning an MA in Technical Communication from Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Kristi Karels earned her master's degree in Education from Hamline University and is making baby-steps toward the graduate certificate in Technical Communication. As an undergrad, she avoided Shakespeare and degree planning, so she earned four dozen English credits, but no English major/minor. She has works for the Minnesota State system at the Info Hub. Someday, she'd like to teach English coursework to college students.

Peter Marino has a MS in English Education from SUNY Brockport and is in the final semesters of his MA in Technical Communication. He has taught high school English for 18 years near Rochester, New York. Upon completion of his technical communication degree, he hopes to begin applying for some part-time writing or editing jobs. He enjoys hiking in the Adirondacks with his wife and three children.

Michelle Nguyen is enrolled in the Technical Communication program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She has her Bachelor in Asian Language and Literature and Associate of Dental Hygiene at Normandale Community College.

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