

THE TOP 5 THINGS I LEARNED AT APMP 2016

Now that I have unpacked, answered the flurry of emails, and returned the voice mails, I can take time to reflect on an amazing four days of learning and networking! Here is what I learned – how about you?

5 – No one can stop me from having fun.

Tim Gard said that in his Thursday Keynote, and after I stopped laughing, I reflected on his message: how I feel about things is up to me. Many management gurus will tell you the same thing – but giving ourselves permission to have fun helps make it stick.

A desk full of work and a broken printer: Bummer.

David Sotolongo and Amy Shende Mills put that message to work in “The Walking Capture,” a fun and educational session on improving the capture process and results. In particular, gathering intelligence about the client so your solution is relevant: Woo Hoo!

4 – No one can stop me.

That is what Steph Davis taught me at her Friday Keynote. I am reasonably sure that I am not going to take up free climbing or BASE jumping, but two things in particular resonated with me – her determination to face her fears and her resiliency in the face of tragedy. “What I could control was myself, and never more than when I stood on the edge,” she wrote in her recently re-released memoir Learning to Fly: a Memoir of Hanging on and Letting Go. Her message: what I do is up to me and that includes taking risks.

That message really struck home in the workshop from Samantha Enslin and Christy Hollywood, with their presentation on “Writing Proposals without the Pain.” Their point? Avoid letting anxiety about writing block your creativity – use tools and simple short cuts (bullets, anyone?) to start the process. Moreover, spend more time reviewing and editing than writing!

3 – Get Organized.

APMP Bid & Proposal Con had 850 attendees, something like 70 workshops, keynotes, and/or learning sessions. From app to end, the conference was incredibly well planned and executed. Sessions started on time, there was plenty of room, networking with your peers was as easy as sitting down to lunch, and every aspect of the conference fit together beautifully to make a phenomenal experience.

That was also the message from the “APMP Practitioner Quick Start Workshop” I attended Wednesday afternoon. The availability of certified proposal professionals to review, coach, and explain opened up the Standards and Body of Knowledge in a way that cleared up a lot of confusion for me.

ON THE HORIZON

Reading and analyzing the requirements and organizing the materials helps make it a breeze to complete the practitioner response. Woo Hoo!

2 – Everything Matters.

From the outstanding visual and graphic presentation by Mindy Marchel, Aaron Birkbeck, and Anita Magriplis, “Making Design a Discriminator” to the “Four Domains of Value” from Tom Sant, and “Instant Oodles” from Christopher Sant, the message is everything that goes into a proposal matters. Understanding and articulating the value of your solution is the essential foundation. Using meaningful, easy to understand, and relevant metrics to quantify your value that resonate with your prospective client can take your proposal to the next level. Content might be king, but how your proposal looks and feels to evaluators can elevate your message or obliterate it in a muddle of colors, texts, and stale graphics.

Does this seem overwhelming? Not if you are organized, resilient, and willing to have fun tackling the tough challenges of proposals!

1 – I Matter.

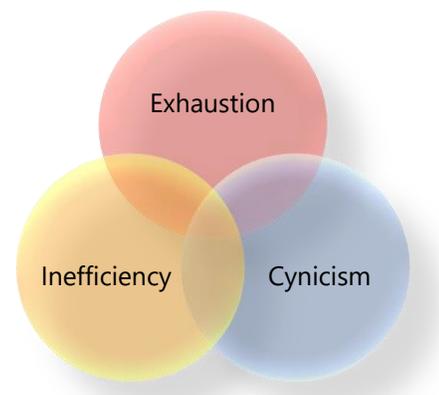
Like many conference attendees, I came to Business Development and proposal management by way of no one else in the organization being willing to do it. In addition, like many fellow conference attendees, I mostly work by myself, often providing full service proposal support from capture to production. Proposals are a lonely business, with late nights, tired eyes, and caffeine overdoses – and often enough, they lead to disappointing results. Business Development Burnout: Bummer!

APMP elevates our field through education and networking, and promotes a sense of belonging and pride in our profession. The antidote to burnout? Learning from people who do what I do; talking to people who understand what I say; and listening to people who listen to me.

Thursday’s Awards Dinner was a testimony not only to the individuals recognized for their outstanding contributions to the Association, but also to APMP itself for its relentless dedication to people like me – to make my work more fun, to help me keep going and be better organized, and to improve every aspect of my work to deliver a better product to my clients and ultimately to their clients.

Somehow, even Woo Hoo is not enough!

But maybe thanks IS a good start – see you in New Orleans.



A Prescription for Burnout!