

# Applying Project Management Techniques to Proposal Management

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*Knowledge Exchange Across the Contract Award Divide*

# Course Topics

- Definition of a project and project management
- Comparison of project management and proposal management
- Project management process groups and how they map to the proposal process
- Six project management techniques that make managing proposals easier (and more effective)
- How to apply the learned techniques to case studies on common proposal management challenges

# Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, participants will be prepared to:

- Define a project and project management, and the supporting process groups
- Compare project and proposal management
- Correlate project management process groups to proposal management
- Describe key project management techniques relevant to proposal management
- Demonstrate how to apply project management techniques to effectively manage proposals

# What is a Project?

- Temporary endeavor (of any duration)
- Undertaken to create a unique product, service or result
- Has a beginning and an end
- Ends when the project's objectives are met or the project is cancelled or terminated

A proposal is a project:

- ✓ Temporary
- ✓ Unique product/result
- ✓ Has beginning and end
- ✓ Ends when objectives met or it's cancelled

# What is Project Management?

- Making sure the project requirements are met
- Requirements are the individual pieces of what is wanted or needed
- Requirements can be stated (e.g., font must be 10 point Times New Roman) or implied (an expectation, like incumbent personnel will be retained)
- There are many processes and many tools, but the effectiveness of the individual manager makes or breaks it

# What Proposal Management and Project Management Have in Common

- Effort (project or proposal) has a finite duration
- Work is in the same areas of business (the project fulfills the proposal's commitments)
- Managers oversee the schedule, cost and what needs to be done (scope)
- Work results in products and/or services for customers (internal or external)
- Products/services are evaluated
- Effort has internal and external stakeholders

# How Proposal Management is Different

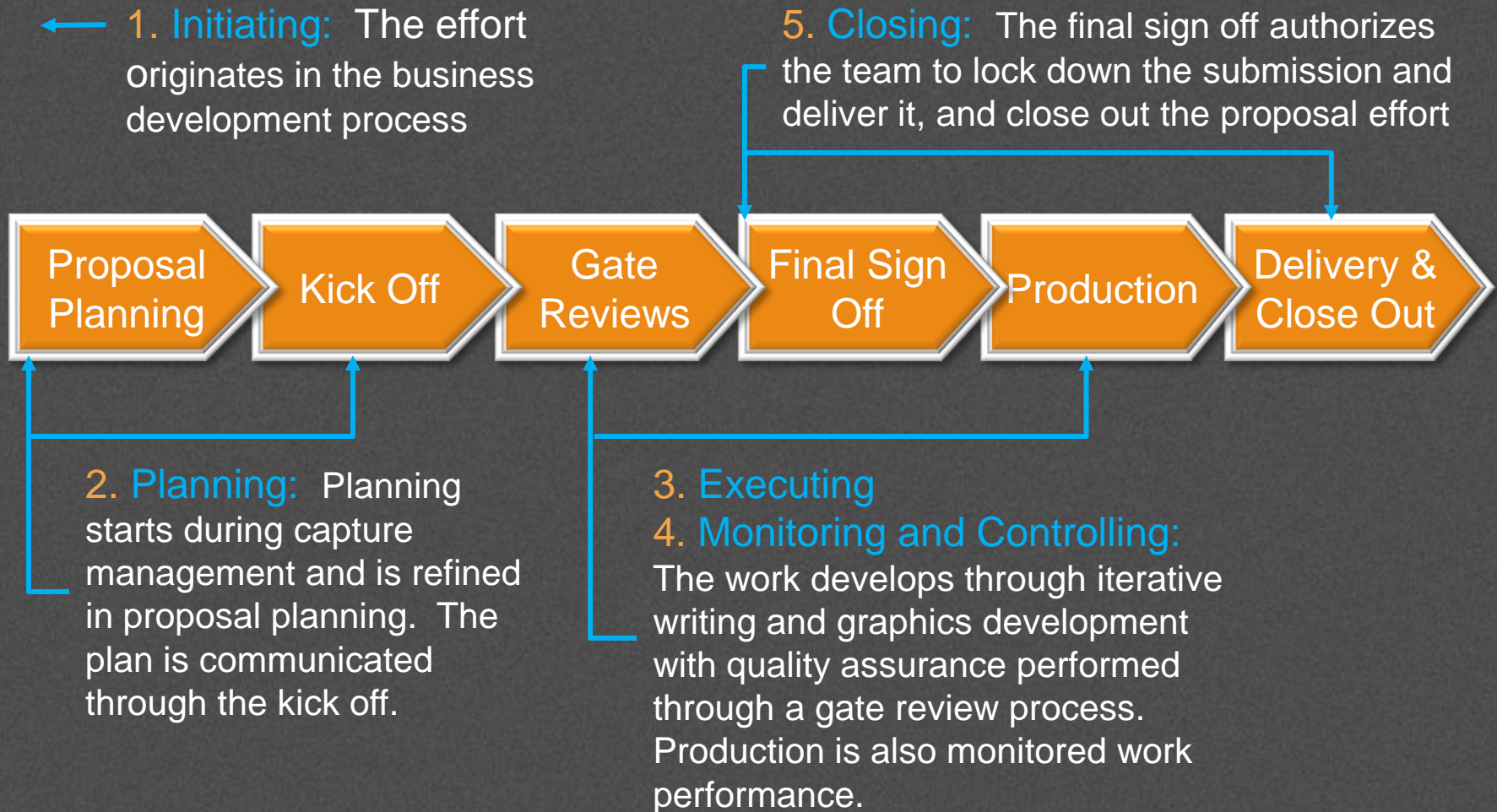
- More opportunities to manage the full lifecycle
  - More start-to-finish experience vs. multi-year projects
  - Greater reach across departments and business areas
  - More knowledge sharing and task sharing across groups versus client or product-specific silos
- Resource advantages and disadvantages
  - More potential time savings from reusable content, templates and tools given repetitive requirements
  - Larger proportion of personnel turnover with each bid
- Greater probability of flux with higher schedule risk
  - Greater need to problem solve and adapt
  - Smaller windows for course correction

# Project Management Process Groups

1. **Initiating:** Authorizes, defines and starts the new project or phase
2. **Planning:** Establishes the scope and objectives, and defines the plan to accomplish the work
3. **Executing:** Completes the work
4. **Monitoring and Controlling:** Tracks, reviews and regulates performance, and identifies needed changes
5. **Closing:** Finalizes activities and closes out the project or phase



# How the Process Groups Relate to the Proposal Process



# Project Management Techniques that Make Managing Proposals Easier

1. LOE-based scheduling
2. Managing critical path
3. Risk management
4. Resource/team management
5. Communications management
6. Effective close out

# Purpose of a Schedule

- Tool used to convey and manage the project information (*activities and their sequence and dependencies, assigned resources, and activity durations*)
- During planning, used to analyze “what if” scenarios
- During work performance, used to review actual data and make management decisions
  - Additional activities and related data or other inputs (change in assigned writer)
  - Variance in start or finish dates
  - Analyzing “what if” scenarios in response to needed changes
  - Truing up schedule with actual durations
  - Resource leveling to distribute LOE

# Key Components of a Schedule

- All tasks:
  - Are identified to reasonable level of detail (e.g., “Format Volume 2” vs. “Get things ready” or “Download files, open files, open template, copy & paste content”)
  - Have an assign owner
  - Have determined anticipated durations
  - Have start and end times (may be different than duration)
  - Have been scrubbed to verify that dates work with durations and dependencies
  - Includes tasks associated with risk mitigation and contingency
- Constraints: Scope, time and cost

# Scheduling Considerations

- Client's procurement schedule
- LOE estimates based on requirements and existing or reusable material
- Resource levels and availability
- Risk and needed mitigation
- Client and partner factors (e.g., client has conference two days after RFP release)

# Duration Estimates

- Start with industry standard estimates
- Refine based on factors:
  - Your resources (junior, mid, senior-level capacity)
  - Type of content (simple vs. complex; e.g., cover letter vs. technical approach)
  - Condition of content (in template or not in template, Red Team vs. Gold Team content)
- Use values that are based on historic evidence and that allow you to flexibility in building estimates
- Ask questions about content requirements and condition to understand schedule impacts and help team estimate their workload

# Duration Estimates

## (continued)

The Capture Manager hands you 20 more resumes—that's...



60 more hours of editing  
10 more hours of formatting

Initial Guess

Activity	Estimated Duration
Editing (per resume)	3 hours
Formatting (per resume)	.5 hour
Graphics Design (per graphic)	3 hours

Further Refined

Activity	Factors	Estimated Duration
Editing (per page)	Resume	.5 hour
	Non-Price (Red Team)	.5 hour
	Non-Price (Gold Team)	.25 hour
Formatting (per page)	Raw content (per resume page)	.5 hour
	In template (per resume page)	.25 hour
Creating Graphic	Complex	3-5 hours
	Standard	1 hour
	Simple	.5 hour

If 2-page resumes:

20 more hours of editing  
20 more hours of formatting  
(*not in template*) or 10 more hours of formatting (*in template*)

If 3-page resumes:

30 more hours of editing  
30 more hours of formatting  
(*not in template*) or 15 more hours of formatting (*in template*)

# How to Build a Schedule

- Do not build based on (only) working backwards from submission date
- Mark end points, do a forward pass, and then rework to make things fit
- Identify points that don't work and find solutions
- Do another pass through to review in light of risks and scheduling considerations
- Have SMEs validate the schedule (e.g., Capture Manager, Solution Lead)



# The Danger in Scheduling from Due Date (without Cross-Checks)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday-Sunday	Monday
Kick Off & Writing Time	Writing Time & Blue Team	Pink Team	Red Team	Gold Team	White Glove & Production	Submit in AM

- What if the solution owners can't get together until Tuesday at 11 AM and Blue Team is scheduled at that time?
- What if the production team isn't available over the weekend?

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
Kick Off & Black Hat	Strategy Session & Writing Time	Writing Time & Blue Team	Pink Team	Red Team	Gold Team	White Glove, Production & Submit

- What if this is a re-compete of an existing contract and the requirements are exactly the same for the last bid (which your company won)?
- What is your real LOE for this scenario, and how does that fill the seven-week window?

# Schedule Format

- A detailed schedule is useful for high value, long duration bids
- For smaller and/or short duration bids, you may want a more flexible and less time intensive format (word processing or on-line calendar)
- Format must be easily updateable with the latest version always identified and available to stakeholders
- Ideally, task ownership and/or tracks can be identified on the schedule
- If shared schedule is milestone-based, find a way to communicate detail to task owners (e.g., MS Outlook calendar entries, detailed schedule table) to reduce risk of confusion on start/end times and/or task duration

# Critical Path in Schedules

- Path through schedule that has zero total “float,” which means no wiggle room for delays
- Lots of terms and methods, but you can also just think about it:
  - **What must you have in order to make things work?** (e.g., a hard copy submission must have sufficient production materials and access to production equipment)
  - **What activities rely on another step to start?** (e.g., no one will start writing until the templates and instructions are distributed)

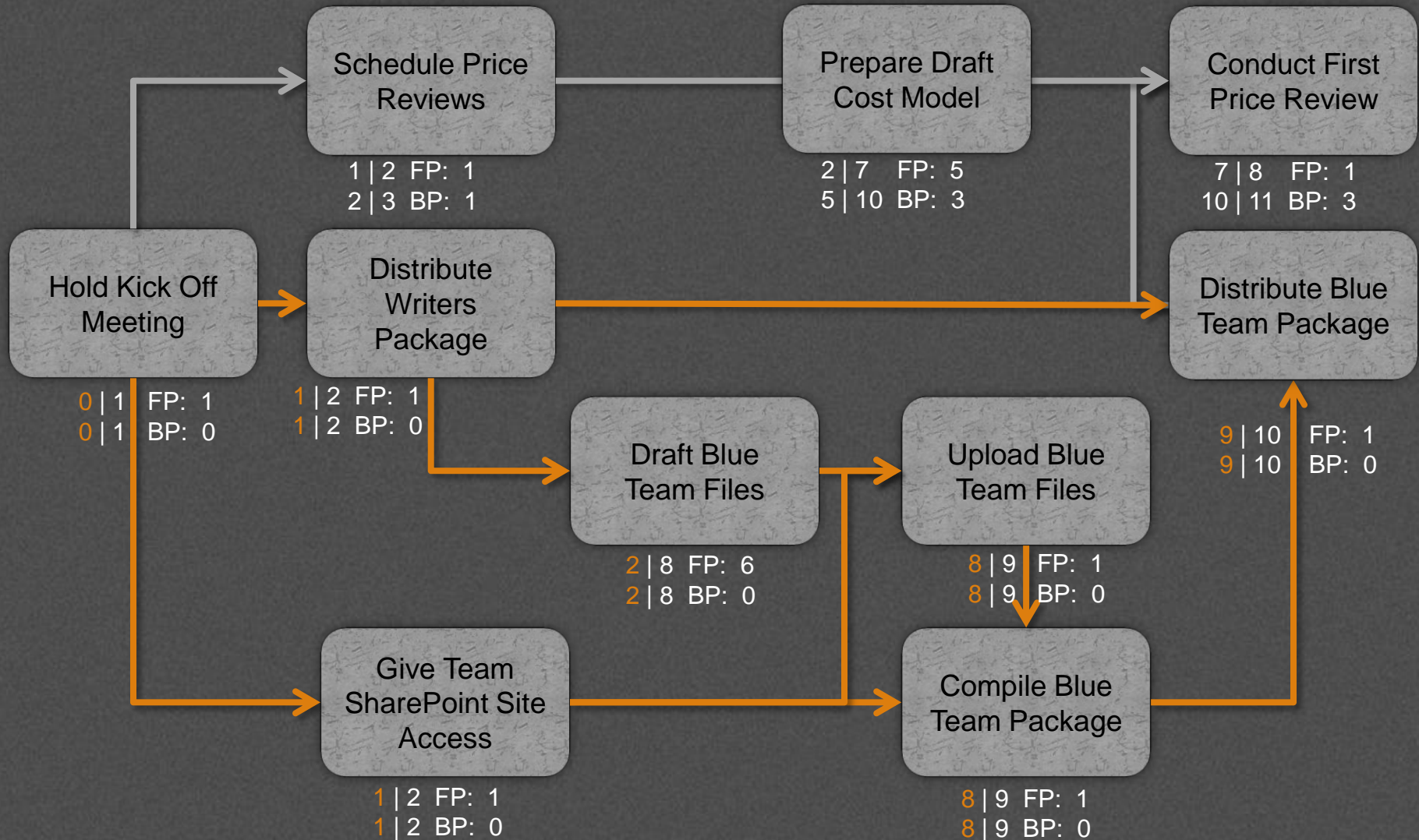
# Sample Activities and Durations

Activity	Duration (in Days)	Day of Week	Day #
Hold Kick Off Meeting	1	Monday	Day 1
Distribute Writers Package	1	Monday	Day 1
Draft Blue Team Files	6	Tuesday-Sunday	Days 2-7
Upload Blue Team Files	1	Sunday	Day 7
Give Team SharePoint Site Access	1	Monday	Day 1
Compile Blue Team Package	1	Monday	Day 8
Distribute Blue Team Package	1	Monday	Day 8
Schedule Price Reviews	1	Tuesday	Day 2
Prepare Draft Cost Model	5	Thursday-Monday	Days 4-8
Conduct First Price Review	1	Tuesday	Day 9

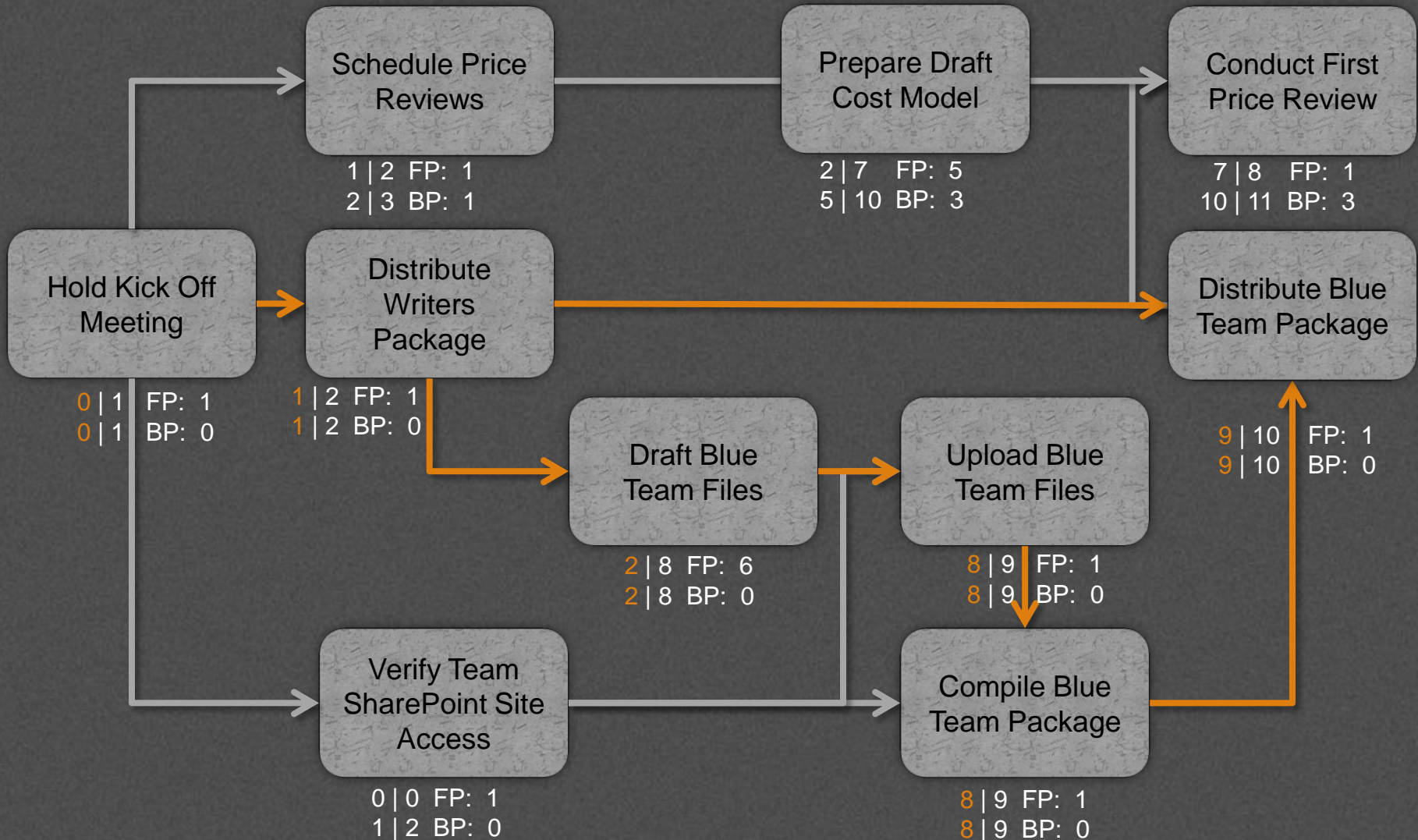
# Schedule Dependencies

- A dependency is something (activity or milestone) another activity depends on to start or finish
- Types of dependencies:
  - **Mandatory:** Contractually or inherently required
  - **Discretionary:** Logical or desired
  - **External:** Out of team's control
- Dependent relationships and examples:
  - **Finish-to-start (FS)** – *Complete writing before compiling gate review package*
  - **Finish-to-finish (FF)** – *Finalize price before finalize price proposal*
  - **Start-to-start (SS)** – *Start document template set up to start graphics palette set up*
  - **Start-to-finish (SF)** – *Start proposal planning so can finish war room scheduling*

# Finding Critical Path



# Adjusting Critical Path



# Lessons from Critical Path

- Adjust items that don't have to be critical path, e.g.:
  - Start-start [SS] instead of start-finish [SF]
  - Have routine/admin tasks pre-completed where possible
  - Introduce efficiencies to do work in parallel (e.g., if author finishes section early, verify content and format early) to gain earlier finish (thus, slack from reduced LOE)
- If delays look inevitable, review entire critical path to assess actions needed
- If there is no critical path, your schedule is padded, which means unnecessary cost
- Manage risk to have mitigation and contingency plans



# About Risk

- You can't eliminate all risk but you can manage it
- Risk management:
  - Identifies the things that can go wrong
  - Plans how to respond when/if they do
  - Manages the process as the work is performed
- Risks have varying probability (how likely is it to occur) and impact (how badly will it affect our effort if it does occur)
- Risk probability and impact changes with risk response
- You plan for all and focus attention on highest probability, highest impact

# Risk Management Terms

- **Mitigation** reduces the probability or impact (e.g., Proposal Coordinator sets aside inventory for hard copy materials needed)
- **Contingency** is another way to handle the task if risk occurs (e.g., if business analyst is pulled off proposal, bring in SME writer consultant)
- **Risk register** is where you record the risks and associated information
- **Tolerance** means stakeholders' level of comfort with risk (type or degree) (e.g., VP may be okay with seeing how cost plays out but never want to postpone a scheduled review)

# Sample Risks

- Authors do not turn in their sections on-time
- The client releases the answers to questions the day before response submission
- Our subcontracting partner decides to go with another team
- The cost review shows that the solution is too expensive and the authors have to rewrite
- The graphics are in a non-compliant font size
- The client's acronym is misspelled throughout the submission

# Sample Risk Assessment

Risk	Impact	Probability	Mitigation	Contingency	Sample Priority
Authors do not turn in their sections on-time	High	Moderate	Check in with authors; require end of day file uploads to review progress; use status meetings	Postpone review or divide into sections	2
The client releases the answers to questions the day before response submission	High	Low	Contracts Administrator checks in with client on answers timeframe	Determine actions to take with likely answers	5
Our subcontracting partner decides to go with another team	High	Moderate	Capture Manager has signed teaming agreement early in the process, and/or makes contact with back up partner	Bring in back up partner and/or contingent hires to cover requirements	3
The cost review shows that the solution is too expensive, which causes the authors to rewrite the response	High	High	Pricing analyst attends Blue Team; Tech Lead verifies that the cost data fully covers the bid solution	Identify sections impacted by cost adjustments and support resources	1
The graphics are in a non-compliant font size	Moderate	Moderate	Have requirements on graphics request form; review graphics as soon as they're completed	Check compliance at Red Team gate (which includes graphics font)	4
The client's acronym is misspelled throughout the submission	Moderate	Moderate	Provide writers and editor bid-specific terms list	Make terms list compliance check part of Red Team	6

# Resource Assignment

- Strive for the best (reduce risk)
  - Bid personnel leadership design the solution and approach
  - Existing team members (if applicable) provide input and serve as reviewers
  - Client, functional and solution SMEs are writers
- Adapt to circumstances (mitigate risk)
  - Take team constraints into consideration for schedule
  - If SME is not a good writer, have a writer interview him/her
  - If bid personnel are not available, request writers who know the company's processes and methodologies

# The Importance of an Effective Team

- A bid is always a team effort (regardless of size or duration)
- Effective teams are led by effective managers
- Teams require direction and communication
- Teams are often unfamiliar with the process, the people and expectations so the manager must lead
- The proposal manager is in a management team with the capture manager and other roles (e.g., VP)
  - Get guidance on the bid strategy and expectations
  - Escalate concerns (risks)
  - Verify that you're on the same page at key points

# Communication Methods

- **Listening**
  - Gain information on risks
  - Understand stakeholder concerns
- **Speaking**
  - Establish a team vision
  - Provide updates and changes
  - Elicit comments and questions
- **Mentoring (Two-Way Communication)**
  - Provide resources and templates that increase efficiency
  - Provide offline guidance for a consistent approach and language
  - Serve as a reference for guidance and reinforcement
  - Deliver the information needed by the various stakeholders
- **Providing Access to Information (Offline Communication)**
  - Have one central source or repository for relevant information
  - Deliver relevant information in a timeframe that allows for maximum usefulness

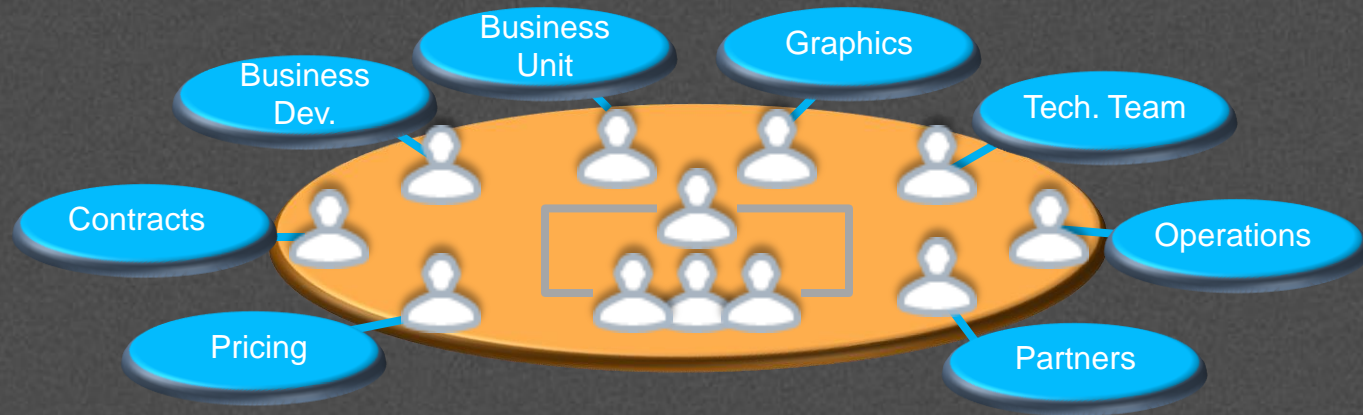
# Who are Stakeholders?

- Anyone (individually or as group representative) impacted by the bid
  - **External:**
    - Client office that receives the bid
    - Client office that receives product/services proposed
    - Partners, vendors
  - **Internal:**
    - The group(s) (sponsor) that funds the proposal activity
    - Capture and business development managers
    - Team members (matrixed from the various departments)
    - Affected groups that have work dependencies (e.g., Proposal Division, Facilities, Operations)
  - May or may not have assigned tasks in schedule



# Stakeholder Communication

- List all groups involved
- Determine your core team (anyone assigned a task)
- Set up Communication channels and methods
- Communicate channels and methods during Kick Off
- Be consistent and reliable in communicating



**Level 1 – Team (including representatives):**

- Close monitoring on tasks
- Frequent communication
- Multiple communication formats
- High availability

**Level 2 – Stakeholders without Assigned Tasks\***

- Keep informed
- Provide appropriate access to tools/artifacts
- Provide clear POC(s) for any questions

*\* Note: A stakeholder becomes a team member when performing gate reviews*

# Communication Considerations

- **Frequency** needed for each level (1 and 2)
- **Scheduled** versus **ad hoc** communication
- **Level of detail and type of content** each audience needs (e.g., team member versus VP)
- How to make communication more **efficient** (e.g., prepare boilerplate text and templates)
- How to make communication more **effective** (e.g., provide links to referenced resources, review for accuracy and completeness)
- **LOE to update** communication tool/format and implement reoccurring meetings or tasks

# Close Out: Intended, Actual, and Another Possibility

- **Intended:** Once order is restored, I'll clean up files and drives, archive resources, and talk with colleagues about any suggested improvements
- **Actual:** Once the response is submitted, I need to catch up on other things; just as I start clean up, I'm put on another bid
- **Another possibility: Make it easier and do it in steps**
  - Close out as you go to reduce the LOE at end of bid
  - Use a checklist so it's easy to remember and track tasks
  - Use templates and resources to make steps easier

# Pain Points from Incomplete Proposal Close Outs

- **Missing artifacts:** Files are not saved or are not in the correct place or in the central repository
- **Version control:** Final versions are difficult to identify because of unfamiliar naming conventions
- **Lost information:** Insight gained during proposal is not captured so larger organization will still refer to outdated or incomplete information
- **Lack of reusable component storage:** Text and graphics with other potential uses are not flagged, cleaned and put into repositories

# Close Out in Project Management

- Verifies that the actions and activities:
  - Satisfied the criteria for the project or phase
  - Successfully moved the work to the next phase
  - Captured needed records and information for archive, successes and failures, and lessons learned
- Is scheduled and resourced
- Applied at end of overall project as well as closing processes within the project
- Is performed even if the project is cancelled

# Applied Close Out Principles

- **Schedule close out activities:** Define the tasks and role responsibilities, and track completion
- **Monitor progress:** Between gates, check progress against next gate entry criteria, and take action to reduce the risk that won't meet criteria
- **Audit post-gate and after bid conclusion:** Use a checklist for what closeout activities to complete from initiation through bid conclusion
  - Use standard file naming conventions and storage locations
  - Schedule close out tasks to fit into natural ebb and flows of standard workload
- **Capture artifacts, information and reusable assets:** Know what you need to collect and what makes a component reuse-worthy
  - Create **templates and boilerplate** for reoccurring tasks (e.g., e-mails, meeting agendas, delivery list for internal copies)
  - Close out **communication** with non-team people who gave inputs (e.g., to past performance project manager who provided data)
  - Flag **reusable assets** and make them centrally available

# Traits of a Well Closed Out Proposal

- Designated **artifacts** (hard and soft copy) are in correct repositories
- **Communication** has been closed out with stakeholders and those who gave inputs
- **Information** has been updated or recorded in the appropriate systems
- **Reusable components** have been identified and assigned an owners with due date for cleaning and uploading/storing them in the centralized repository
- **Lessons learned and feedback on improvements** have been recorded, shared and adjudicated with any follow up assigned (owner and due date)

# Solving Common Problems with Management Techniques

## Case Study 1

- The scenario:

*The editor is working on a stack of 25 resumes. He says he'll have them done by tomorrow morning. You stop by his desk at 11:00 AM and he's not even half done. Your Red Team package needs to be ready by 5:00 PM and your Proposal Coordinator is already pinging you to get the files.*

- What usually happens?

- What management techniques might help?



# Solving Common Problems with Management Techniques (continued)

## Case Study 1 (continued)

- Near-term:
  1. Determine how many resumes are left
  2. Calculate the LOE required to finish (use estimating method)
  3. Determine how to assign resources
    - a. Option 1: Add resource(s) to collapse the schedule
    - b. Option 2: Stagger work so completion isn't on critical path (FS to SS)
    - c. Option 3: Change the editing requirements to reduce LOE
- Long-term:
  - When planning, estimate the LOE and validate that the schedule and resources are sufficient
  - Perform check-ins to make sure the work is on track to mitigate risk
  - Use a file check-in procedure to allow the Proposal Coordinator to begin work as resumes are completed

# Solving Common Problems with Management Techniques (continued)

## Case Study 2

- The scenario:  
*You develop a proposal schedule and the proposal finishes on-time without major problems; however, a month later, the Capture Manager tells you the business line VP is upset because it was an expensive bid.*
- Why is there a disconnect with the VP?
- What management techniques might help?

# Solving Common Problems with Management Techniques (continued)

## Case Study 2 (continued)

- Near-term:
  - Escalate the concern to the BD side senior manager (e.g., Director of Proposal Services) to address, as appropriate
- Long-term:
  - When assigned to manage a bid, discuss the budget with the Capture Manager to receive the hours and/or personnel constraints
  - Assess what resources are available to reduce bid costs (e.g., reusable content, project artifacts, previous bids on same project with same client)
  - Schedule the proposal activities based on effort rather than working backwards from the calendar due date
  - Flag to Capture Manager and/or appropriate POC if actual LOE will be different from planned LOE as soon as that is known

# Solving Common Problems with Management Techniques (continued)

## Case Study 3

- The scenario:

*You are assigned to a new bid, which is a re-compete of an existing contract your organization has with the client. The RFP's evaluation scoring is weighted toward key personnel, and the win strategy is to propose the existing (experienced) team. You meet the writer assigned to the team for the Staffing section. He is a new hire and is not familiar with the team or the client. No one from the current project team is on the proposal team.*

- What usually happens?

- What management techniques might help?

# Solving Common Problems with Management Techniques (continued)

## Case Study 3 (continued)

- Near-term:
  - Discuss with the appropriate POCs how the existing team's leadership will be involved in the process
  - Request that the key team members (e.g., Project Manager, Technical Lead, Business Analyst) participate in the Blue Team and Red Team at a minimum
  - During proposal close out, verify that reusable assets are stored in the appropriate repositories for future add on contracts and re-compete bids
- Long-term:
  - During planning, flag the need for current team involvement and take their work hours and location constraints into consideration when scheduling activities

# Conclusions

- **Proposals are projects** that can be more effectively managed by applying project management techniques
- **LOE-based scheduling; managing critical path, risk, resources/teams and communications; and using close out procedures** can be immediately applied to make proposal development more efficient
- Proposal managers must **tailor project management tools and techniques** to the bid's specific requirements, including size and duration, and constraints
- Proposal managers can **fine-tune their management processes and tools**, such as LOE estimates, as they are used to optimize them for their organizations

# Additional Resources

- Project management standards and practices: Project Management Institute (PMI) (<http://www.pmi.org/>)
- Proposal management standards and practices: Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP) (<http://www.apmp.org/>) and Shipley (<http://www.shipleywins.com>)
- For Deca Management training or consulting: Denise Taranov, Denise.Taranov@decamanagement.com, <http://decamanagement.com>