

The Outsiders

Why 3rd party reviewers rock at color team reviews

By Erin Green, CF APMP

Like most proposal managers, by the time I get to a color team review, I might not know if I've written the best--or the worst--proposal in history. To make sure I have clear goals coming out of color reviews, I bring in...

The outsiders.

Bringing in someone to read the proposal like an evaluator is a critical best practice for effective color team reviews. The 'outsider,' or third party reviewer, can be someone who works in a different division of your company, a consultant, or anyone who can legally read your proposal document (usually not your mother). It's important to make sure that the reviewer hasn't been around during the development of the solution; it could skew how they score.

Giving the third party reviewer instructions similar to what the evaluator would receive produces a score that can then be analyzed by the proposal management team to gain insight on where the document could be improved to maximize the score. It's also nice to hear where you are doing well. The answers could surprise you!

Another advantage of a third party reviewer is being able to ask follow-up questions, a rare luxury in the real-life scenario with the buyer. In the 'outsider' scenario, you're able to ask detailed questions about how they thought sections turned out, and any improvements they would make to add those extra points. The proposal manager can then take those action items and insights and make recovery plans for sections, or strategy changes before the proposal becomes too set in stone.

While getting an 'outsider' opinion is a best practice for color team content, it can also be useful to obtain their opinion on design and graphic components, and overall proposal organization, as these factors can sometimes be left to the wayside when larger content issues arise. An evaluator notices graphical components immediately, and your 'outsider' will tell you if anything was unclear.

If you don't have the time allotted or resources to add a third party reviewer, it's useful to designate one of your internal reviewers to act as the official evaluator. This designation can help make sure that the message of the proposal is clear, and give you some insight into areas that may have been missed. The designated reviewer should use the exact score sheet (if provided by the buyer) or exact evaluation criteria to score each section.

In prior proposal management projects, I've developed a matrix to aid in reviewing proposals that do not include clear evaluation instructions or predefined score sheets. This matrix allows easy summation scores of each section and allows the strategy team to clearly identify outstanding and underperforming sections for recovery.

For proposals of high value, it's worth asking a third party reviewer for both an early and later review. This can confirm if the recovery efforts aided in getting that ideal score, and allow for strategy shifts early if needed.

The idea of having an 'outsider' isn't a new concept for those in APMP. In fact, it's one of our documented best practices in our Body of Knowledge. However, in my experience, being able to see the benefit in practice has made me a believer in the effectiveness and insight this 'outsider' can bring to the inside.



BIO

Erin Green, CF APMP, has more than 10 years of experience in government procurement. She is a Proposal Manager at MAXIMUS, leading large and small efforts in the preparation and delivery of winning proposals worldwide for national, state, and local clients. Erin has been engaged with APMP-NCA since 2011. She is a graduate of the APMP-NCA Mentor-Protégé program, inaugural recipient of the APMP-NCA scholarship, and award-winning author.