

# B&P Update

A Newsletter from Stewart Systems, Inc.

## Orals Coaching: The Secret Weapon for Winning Contracts

*Oral Presentations are the Norm in Government B&P Procedures*

The fight to win and keep government contracts is an intense and unforgiving business. In the present and future market place, competition for contracts will only increase, especially as government funding rises. For example, after fifteen years of decline and stagnation, the defense industry Bid and Proposal (B&P) funding will increase \$600 billion in real terms over the next five years, according to the 2003 Department of Defense projections.<sup>1</sup> Because of the war on terror and the effort to recapitalize the armed forces other government funding will likely grow as well. To effectively compete, contractors must use every resource they can find to successfully win contracts.

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style. This is partially because written proposals involve a long and costly process. Reliable studies have shown that the average selection board member normally does not understand 75 percent of what he or she reads in the proposal.<sup>2</sup> Because of the challenges associated with written proposals, government agencies are placing more emphasis on untraditional methods for awarding contracts.

While a comprehensive, written proposal is still often expected, an additional method, the orals presentation, is quickly becoming a standard feature of the evaluation process. In fact, a General

Services Administration executive recently estimated that over 70 percent of solicitations for programs valued at \$10 million or more will have orals requirements, with the orals counting an average of 40 percent of the evaluation.<sup>3</sup> The Department of Energy has issued a statement encouraging the widespread practice of orals. And orals proposals are inline with the revised meth-

### A New Type of Proposal

Typically, a Request for Proposal (RFP) is announced and a large, comprehensive, written proposal is prepared by those seeking the contract. However, the sole reliance on a single written proposal is growing out of

<sup>1,2</sup> DeVore, C. & Moler, T. (Fall/Winter 2002). "US Department of Defense B&P Expenditures on the Rise," *Proposal Management*, 11-12.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.orgcom.com/newsletter/newsletter2.html>, retrieved on Oct. 27, 2003.

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ods advocated in the new Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 15 guidelines.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to written proposals, oral proposals more effectively convey the contractor's technical approach, management experience, and past performance. Orals reduce procurement lead time and administrative costs for both government and industry. Most important, orals help the selection board create a relationship with the potential contractor, providing a clearer picture of the contractor's adaptability, competence, and values. The selection board is able to evaluate the key members of the potential contractor and gain deeper insights into the proposed technical and management approach.

### Orals Matter

The bottom line for business development is that the orals part of the evaluation process matters, and will probably de-

termin the outcome of the entire contract. In response to the importance of the orals proposal, organizations have begun to invest in orals coaching to effectively prepare the orals team.

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Organizations realize that the orals team represents the company and can project a positive or negative image based on the perceived cohesiveness and competency of the team. Thus, contractors who want to win contracts engage an orals coach. As a general rule, teams who have an orals coach win more contracts than teams without such guidance. Some contractors choose an internal orals coach to direct their proposal team. Though this may reduce costs in the short-term, an internal coach normally lacks experience, objectivity, and full expertise in the proposal process.

Today, more organizations hire external orals coaches. These external coaches have extensive experience, understand what it takes to win contracts, and have a proven track record of teaching effective presentation skills. They know how to direct the intense orals coaching process of selecting team members, developing individual presentation skills, creating a cohesive team, highlighting discriminators, and continually practicing until the presentation is flawless.



## John Parker Stewart

One of the most experienced and successful orals coaches is John Parker Stewart. For the last twenty-six years, John has been providing orals coaching and proposal management for organizations such as Boeing, GE, Hughes, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and United Space Alliance. Just read what his clients have to say:

“John Parker Stewart brought out the best of our Orals Team. With John’s guidance and coaching, they delivered a clear, well organized presentation that resonated with our customer’s needs and requirements.”

*Donald G. Fulop  
Vice President, Business Development  
Lockheed Martin Space Operations*

“I have experienced unbelievable success with John’s help for almost twenty years.”

*W. W. Brett  
Program Manager  
Raytheon*

“No one has more creative talent and raw energy than John. I consider him the best in the business.”

*Jim Adamson  
Former President, AlliedSignal  
& Space Shuttle Commander*

“John is invaluable in providing me a “tool-box” of ideas. A 4.0 instructor and mentor.”

*William Gay III  
Former Captain,  
Nuclear Submarine  
Fleet, US Navy*

“John’s bag of tools, and a recognition that there are various roads to success, puts him in a class by himself.”

*Ed Adamek  
Vice President  
United Space Alliance*

Because of his extensive leadership, team-building, and communication consulting experience in government contracting, few others have his insight of the people and practices that win large government contracts.

John consistently creates a united proposal team, identifies the discriminators that resonate with the customer, and provides expert feedback through extensive videotaping and coaching. *If you want to win your next contract, engage John.*

## Partial Client List

Babcock & Wilcox, Boeing, Department of Energy, EG&G, GE, Hughes, IBM, Lockheed Martin, NASA, Northrop Grumman, Parsons Engineering, Raytheon, Rockwell, Rust International, SAI,

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### What John Delivers:

- Speaking & Presentation Skills
- Speech Writing & Script Preparation
- Content Development and Organization
- Group Practice Coaching
- Customer Profiling and Analysis
- Preparation of Charts & Graphics
- Leadership Development
- One-On-One Coaching
- Video Taping & Analysis
- Question & Answer Preparation
- Credibility & Presence Development



## The Orals Coaching Process

### **Officially, Contracts are Awarded for:**

- Past experience
- Technical approach and cost
- Management experience

### **Unofficially, Contracts are Awarded for:**

- Open communication between source selection evaluators and orals teams during the presentation
- The cohesiveness and competence of the orals team
- The customer's ability to understand the proposal
- A professional and concise presentation
- Clearly designed and presented charts
- Properly highlighted discriminators
- The ability to speak persuasively

- 1) Quick study the situation (RFP, customer needs, history of contract, special circumstances)
- 2) Assess individual and team capability
- 3) Develop presenters into a cohesive team
- 4) Video tape each presenter to determine initial strengths and weaknesses
- 5) Identify and emphasize key discriminators
- 6) Design coaching plan and schedule
- 7) Monitor design of all charts and visuals
- 8) Coach for presentation at pink team
- 9) Extensive team and one-on-one coaching with video feedback
- 10) Prepare for red team
- 11) Polish presentations using video feedback
- 12) Finalize plan for delivery to source selection board



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