

SPAC KEYNOTE SPEECH

by

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"AND THE AWARD GOES TO..."

The world of proposal writing, preparing, and presenting is much like the world of story-telling. It requires sparkling inspiration, scintillating ideas, and solid implementation.

This presentation introduces you to classic tools of story-telling easily adaptable to creating vivid, engaging, and winning proposals.

- Learn media techniques such as SDS: Sympathy-Danger-Salvation, and how it can be used to spark attention, deepen interest, and encourage sign-on.
- Fine-tune your own assessment capabilities to determine whether to stress passion-or-ration with different clients.
- Build a Pyramid of Communication Information to guide other's understanding of your works.
- Use Symbols & Imagery (verbally and visually) to intrigue and influence your audience.

Enjoy film clips about good and not-so-good proposals.

Walk away with a handful of golden ideas to help you bring home the big awards.

We are Magicians, we story-tellers.

We take other people's half-formed (sometimes half-baked) ideas and turn them into workable proposals that result in new protocols, projects, and actual objects.

Sometimes we get the Sparkling Inspiration from the potential client. But not always. Often they don't really know what they want, but they'll "know it when they see it". How do you find the fire within the project? What is the soul-of-the-goal? What is it they're really trying to say or to accomplish?

In a meeting once with a corporate communications client, he wanted for his promotional film a herd of cattle and a couple of babies. We gasped, knowing how expensive and how difficult that would be. When we told him how expensive, he gasped, too. Once we determined that the soul-of-the-goal was to show that the company's satellite communications system could work just about anywhere for anybody, we came up with less expensive yet still evocative ways to accomplish that, including the use of stock footage.

A checklist of questions can help define things you need to know about the project: target market or end customer, style and tone, any off-limits topics or images, etc.?

Scintillating Ideas often seem to come from that part of our brain more often used in dreams and in poetry. The use of metaphors and vivid imagery can set your proposal apart from others that simply fulfill the RFP bullet points. Plus, there needs to be interconnectivity and application in any imagery you use.

A colleague of mine who used to work at Arthur Andersen told of a proposal they once received with a nice photo of a sailing ship on the cover. When asked why the ship, the proposal designer said it was because he himself "liked ships". But the proposal itself as well as the client had nothing to do with ships, so it put people off...their imaginations went down an inappropriate road, far away from the point of the project. That designer did not get the project.

These days it's easy to do an internet search for images and quotes that could spin off of the core proposal issues.

What about Solid Implementation? In the film world that's the logistics, including the budget we have or the budget we have to come up with. How many sets are there, are they indoors or out, what size cast, are there kids or animals, any special effects, what's the time frame, is there a broadcast date or a show deadline?

Demonstrating that your company is capable of implementing all the good ideas you've come up with is key to inspiring confidence in the client.

For a trash bag commercial with a Western theme, the production company kept having problems as the actor flung the bags over his horse like saddlebags and they kept breaking, with trash spilling out around the horse. Because of Truth In Advertising laws, the trash bags had to hold real actual trash.

The solution was to create their own trash back in the Chicago office and then fly it out to the filming location, first class. The lighter weight trash with more rounded corners nicely filled the trash bags, flopped convincingly across the horse's back, and fulfilled the law.

During the Implementation phase you often have to fight your own tendencies to try out new equipment, new software, new protocols. Though you can justify charging more when you're using the flashier items, typically the simplest way is the best way.

FILM CLIP: "*Shakespeare In Love*". Opening sequence as the Money-man has the Theatre Owner's feet to the fire, trying to get repayment of a loan. Under duress, the Theatre Owner has a Sparkling Inspiration - a new comedy by young Will Shakespeare, and comes up with a Scintillating Idea - share the profits. The Money-man then adds a cleverly Solid Implementation to save more money - get the writer and actors to work for a share of the profits, of which there are never any, mostly do to the accounting practices.

SYMPATHY-DANGER-SALVATION

These three elements are essential to any good story. How can you use them to spark attention, deepen interest, and encourage sign-on for your proposal?

Sympathy - to spark their attention

Why do we want this bridge, building, study, program, war? Here you will want to align yourself with the client's core need. Do they desire to provide a product or service, serve someone's vision, use up the annual budget, stroke someone's ego, bring about someone's downfall?

We were once contracted to do an awareness film that would include lots of stock footage supplied by various militaries and science groups and were promised that there'd be plenty of time and help to acquire the footage.

However, as production proceeded it became obvious that the liaison person assigned to procure the footage had not been given all the authority and resources to do so. Going higher up the chain of command produced no results and we had a sneaking suspicion that the higher-up wanted the liaison person to fail. It was going to get ugly.

We were able to bow out of the flailing project because the client was in breach of contract by not supplying us the materials. The same company and same higher-up later brought us back on other projects, and we learned that the liaison person was no longer at the company.

Sometimes a difficult project is difficult because it's just a set-up.

Danger - to deepen their interest

In story-telling this is the challenge that the heroine must overcome or the bad guy she must defeat.

In your work, it's more along the lines of what could go wrong if this isn't done right? Or done at all? Why does it need to be done now? How much will it cost if you don't get it done on time?

Why does it need to be done the way you suggest? Is it for longevity, reliability, attractiveness, marketability, government regulations? Be sure to include those must-have elements that *only you* can provide in order to avoid the danger of failure.

Salvation - to encourage sign-on

Why are you the perfect ones to solve their problem? What unique benefit do they get working with you? What will victory look like? You may use storyboards, a script, power-point, a mini-movie, models, etc. to show them how fabulous the end product will be if they sign you on.

Think back to the *SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE* film clip, an example of SDS at work:

Our first sight of this business owner brings out Sympathy for his plight, he and his business are in serious danger, his feet are literally to the fire.

The nature of the Danger - current and future -- is vividly played up.

The businessman uses his wits to come up with a clever proposal that could be the Salvation of him and his business. It's attractive to the client, and there is sign-on.

So keep in mind these three conceptual elements in building the "story-line" of your proposal:

- Sympathy - present an awareness of and engagement with the client, their needs, desires, and preferred style.
- Danger - exhibit a profound awareness of the problem to be solved.
- Salvation - explain why you're the best to do it and not others [quality, innovation, follow-through, etc.]

PASSION OR RATION?

Fine-tune your own assessment capabilities to determine whether to stress passion-or-ration with different clients.

This is about your stylistic approach, which will be based on the client's stylistic approach. No doubt you've come across radically different clients in different companies and professions. No doubt you've also found radically different clients within the same company.

In the mid-80's when we were trying to get permission to enter China and search for my uncle's downed airplane from WWII, we presented to such varied audiences as the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum, JPL, Pan American Airways, Vice President George Bush's office, and the Chinese Embassy in D.C.

Though the facts, photos, maps, and materials we showed were the same, we stressed different aspects in each meeting. For the Smithsonian it was about the C-47 aircraft and the history of its sister plane the DC-3; for JPL it was the use of space shuttle photography to locate the wreck; for VP Bush it was an opportunity to build diplomatic links between the two countries via a personal connection; for the Chinese Embassy we stressed family and our decades-long quest to discover the fate of my Uncle Jim and his Chinese co-pilot and navigator. Same project each time, but very different approaches and all part of the big picture.

Following is an overview of personality expressions excerpted from my book *INNER DRIVES*. With a little practice you will be able to make a general assessment of where a person is "coming from" and use what moves them as a gateway for more effective communication.

Root Center

Sheer Survival, Connection to Physical Form, Groundedness
[*The Terminator*]

Sacral Center

Sex, Fear, Money
[Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire*]

Lower Solar Plexus

Personal Power, Greed, Individuality, Exclusivity, Boundaries
[Rocky Balboa in *Rocky*]

Aspirational Solar Plexus

Self-improvement, Spiritual Yearning, Brotherhood, Inclusivity
[Norma Rae in *Norma Rae*]

Heart Center

Unconditional Love for All Humanity, Ultimate Self-sacrifice
[William Wallace in *Braveheart*]

Throat Center

Conscious Creativity, Communication
[John Nash in *A Beautiful Mind*]

Ajna Center

Balance and Integration of all the Centers
[Frodo in *Return of the King*, *LOTR*]

Crown Center

Connection with higher realms
[The Dalai Lama in *Kundun*]

Find Pamela's book INNER DRIVES
at www.mythworks.net, www.mwp.com,
online, and in bookstores.

FILM CLIP: In the movie *GET SHORTY* there's a scene when Chili Palmer (John Travolta) has broken into actress Karen's (Rene Russo) home and is having a midnight conversation in the kitchen with her director boyfriend Harry Zimm (Gene Hackman). Karen enters the scene and Harry enthusiastically promotes Chili's idea for a movie to her. She's skeptical, but Chili is a very smooth operator and switches back and forth between the passion-and-ration presentation to appeal to both Karen and Harry.

Some things we always try to figure out early on in a meeting to pitch a story or making a bid on a job is that military concept of the Center of Gravity. Or as we say in the movie business, "Who can green-light us?" Lots of people can say "No"; who has the power to say "Yes"? Be sure you're presenting to the people who can actually give you a "Go!" by asking questions that qualify them as real buyers.

Once you discover who the decision-maker is, then assess their persona as best you can and use emotions to capture emotions. If they're a logical Throat Center person, use logic; if they

are self-centered, appeal to their personal gain; if they're altruistic, highlight the benefits; etc.

PYRAMID OF COMMUNICATION

It's hectic on the set of a film shoot and each department head has their hands full. The producers and assistant directors have the most going on at once, and as proposal managers you're in a very similar situation, often for months or sometimes years at a time.

An approach we promote for efficiency of communications on a film set is the Topic Pyramid. Rather than starting a conversation with a very busy producer by saying, "On Tuesday, because they've got all these other orders, Barbara thinks they probably won't be able to get the truck or the guys to make a delivery on the camera we want so maybe we could sub-rent from..." Already they've wasted ten precious seconds of time and torqued your brain trying to figure out what they're really talking about.

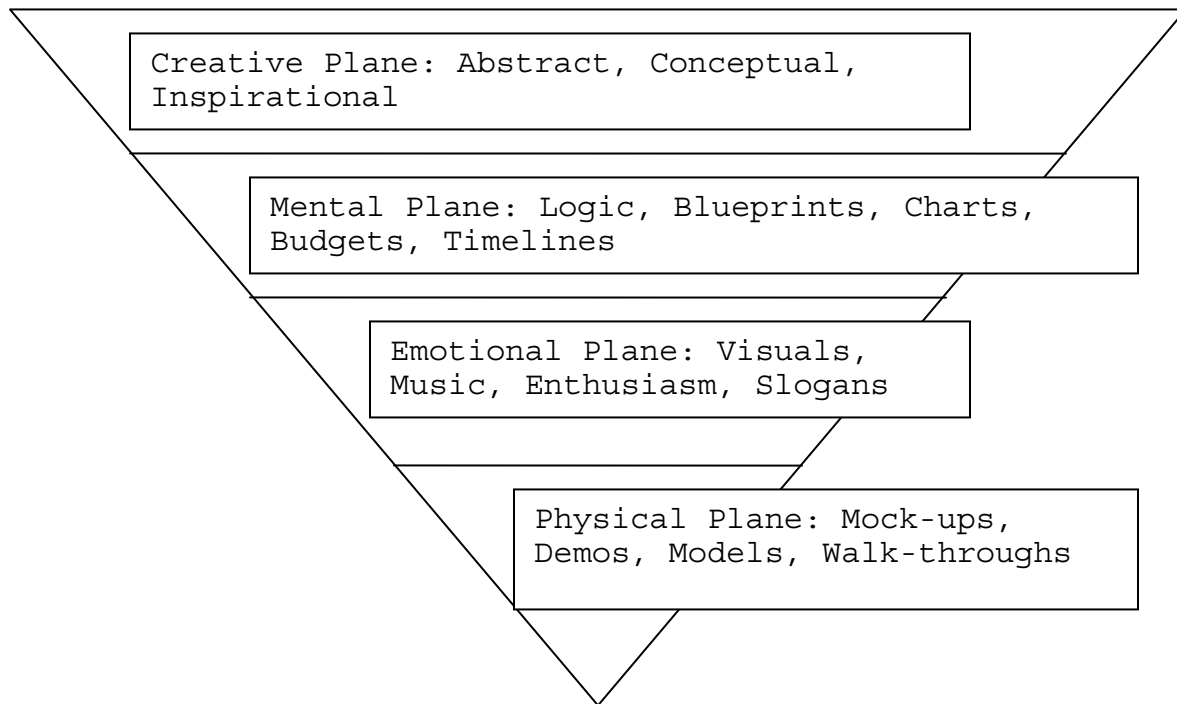
Better to start the conversation with the topic itself so you can home in on that and get your own brain aligned with the situation: "About the camera (I know what category). Tuesday's not available (I now know the problem). They can get us one on Wednesday (I'm offered a solution). Will that work or do you want to push it to Thursday?" (I now have some options).

Although you want your stories to begin by setting the scene and building up to the point, you want your business communications to cut to the chase. Starting with the topic is a very efficient way to do that, especially when under time pressure.

FILM CLIP: A scene in the comedy film GALAXY QUEST illustrates how difficult it often is to get all your team members working together. Starship Captain (Tim Allen) is stuck on a planet, being beat up by a rock monster while his crew tries to make the transporter work and beam him up to safety. Crewmembers Sam Rockwell, Alan Rickman, and others all have personally focused but useless suggestions and the chief engineer Tony Shaloub can't focus at all. The Captain's leadership abilities - along with a pretty alien who admires Shaloub - convince him to try the transporter and he saves the day.

PYRAMID OF CREATIVITY

Another effective pyramid is the Pyramid of Creativity. This is a paradigm you can adapt in presenting your ideas in a proposal.



In your proposal you'll want to touch upon all four of these aspects so that you appeal to and address all four approaches and fields of interest your clients may hold (consciously or not).

Story-telling tools suggest that you begin with the Creative or Conceptual aspect. We call this the "hologram of the story", or the set-up that sets the tone and the topic. Think of the beginning of *Star Wars*: a small spaceship pursued by a gigantic spaceship = David and Goliath in space.

Then you'd want to bring in the Emotional aspects since that's what attracts and holds the attention of most people. After that, you can get into the Mental aspects and explain how you're going to accomplish the project. Physical examples are the anchoring factor.

SYMBOLS & IMAGERY

Humans react instinctively to many symbols and images: fire, water, fierce faces, heroes on hills, lemons. Our language is filled with analogies and metaphors: sly as a fox, brave as a lion, fast as the wind. Branding, logos, and mottos are effective tools to promote awareness and sway behaviour: the Nike swoosh, the golden arches, "Have It Your Way".

Too often we see a lack of connectivity between images and messages in TV ads for drugs. They show us people, and things, and places, but there's no sure way to tell what it is the drug does - although we do learn that the side-effects include dry-mouth, grogginess, and death.

Once you can identify that soul-of-the-goal for your client's project you can then select symbols and images that will reflect, as well as the various features of the product or process. For an aerospace piece on a new satellite technology for commercial use to "wire the world", we started on people in a business office and by the end of the scene had pulled back out to see the entire planet.

<http://www.rgomeia.com/demoClip3.asp>

Becoming familiar with the client's Vision and Mission statements can suggest approaches. Though both might be about installing the same new communications system, your presentation for an innovative technology company would look and sound different than that for a green-leaning social services organization. These are obvious differences, but as in stories where we often start with stereotypes and generalizations and then work on becoming subtle (not always with great success, unfortunately) so too you can use that story tool of broad strokes first, then refinement.

As a member of Boeing's think-tank for their Workforce Development program, I created table-cards and mini-posters comparing each of the topics in our break-out workshop at a NASA Space Conference to characters from myth.

Prometheus, Icarus, Daedalus, Hermes, the Hindu Garuda, and Mezo-American Quetzalcoatl, and more appeared with explanations of how their characteristics could be models for our work.

The stand-by writer's tool of a thesaurus can provide inspiration for your text, and an internet search of images on

your topic can provide new perspectives for your visual presentations.

You certainly don't want to do something like that presenter who put a sailing ship on the cover of the proposal just because he liked ships. The point to remember about symbols and imagery is that "Recognition Creates Relationship". Selecting symbols and images that your client can recognize will go a long way towards building that positive relationship with them.

IN CONCLUSION then, you can use many of the tools of story-telling, from yesterday's classics to tomorrow's Oscars, to strengthen and enhance your proposals.

- Use Sympathy-Danger-Salvation to spark attention, deepen interest, and encourage sign-on.
- Use the *INNER DRIVES* character analysis paradigm and fine-tune your own assessment capabilities to determine whether to stress passion-or-ration with different clients.
- Use the Pyramids of Communication and Creativity to guide other's understanding of your works.
- Use Symbols & Imagery (both verbally and visually) to intrigue and influence your audience.

May you enjoy applying the magic of these story-telling tools and may you bring home the big awards!

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