CHAPTER EXCELLENCE AWARD
2015
SDA
Seattle Chapter

Portico

Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Excellence in Design Firm Management **SDA**

Focus on: Marketing

The content of this edition of Portico focuses on marketing and features a column about Proposal Cover Letters from proposal expert Matt Handel. We've also included a recap of the excellent chapter webinar on Using Digital Images.

Be sure and read SDA National President, Natalie Newman's invitation to EDSymposium15 on page 10.

Upcoming Events are on page 4. You can Test Your Marketing IQ on page 7, and meet new member, Carol Wanda Spradlin, on page 11.

Also included throughout this edition are our usual Quick Tips features.

Tragic Misconceptions About Proposal Cover Letters
by Matt Handel of helpeverybodyeveryday.com

Cover letters are one of the most important pieces of a proposal. Unfortunately, 99% of the cover letters I've seen during my Brutally Honest Proposal Critiques are cr*p. The problem stems from common misconceptions about the cover letter's place in the current proposal environment. Let's look at three misconceptions that can lead to epic cover letter failure.

Misconception #1: People Want To Read Your Cover Letter

Recently, I was at a prebid meeting at PASSHE, which is responsible for dorm construction for Pennsylvania's state university system. The Director of Construction made it plain.

"Don't include a cover letter in your proposal. It's not going to convince us. So, don't waste your time."

Why would he say that?

He said that because he's seen hundreds, if not thousands, of cover letters and they all said nothing.

There was nothing of value in those cover letters. Naturally, when he sees a cover letter, we have trained his brain to skip over it.

If you think someone is likely to read your cover letter, you are insane.

Instead, you have to give people a reason to read your cover letter. You have to get their attention and then create a "slippery slope" that will keep them reading.

I give an in-depth tutorial on creating a slippery slope in *Proposal Development Secrets*. Many of you have already read the book. I won't rehash all of that.

But remember, you have to start off by creating a "knowledge gap." You create a knowledge gap by highlighting a gap between what the reader knows and what the reader wants to know.

Let's say you are proposing to a client that knows your firm pretty well. You might use, "3 Things You Might Not Know About ABC Architects."

Those three things better be something they don't know and also highlight what they would be missing out on if they hire someone else for this project.

You'll notice I use this knowledge gap technique with a lot of my titles. That's why my open rate is so much higher than the industry average. I give people a reason to read, then deliver.

Obviously, it's a technique I've also used quite successfully in proposals to clients all over the country.

Misconception #2: You Can Use A Template

People always get angry at me when they ask for an example of a great cover letter for them to use. That's because I tell them such a thing does not exist.

A great cover letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs is not going to be a great cover letter to the University of Pennsylvania Health System.

Each cover letter has to speak to the specific client and project. Unfortunately, that means, gasp, each cover letter will have to be written from scratch.

There is no way around it.

Well, actually there is. Write a terrible cover letter they will simply skip over. But that won't help you win.

Misconception #3: Throw Everything At Them And See What Sticks

This misconception leads to long cover letters. Here's the problem.

If you had received a three-page letter in 1973, the likelihood that you would have read all three pages would have been very high.

But we live in a different world. When was the last time you read, word for word, a three-page letter?

Even better yet, when was the last time you even received a three-page letter?

I'm sorry to say that if my own grandmother sent me a three-page letter, she'd be pushing her luck. I couldn't promise I'd read every word.

Busy people just don't read long cover letters.

Anything longer than one page is pushing it. When my boss sees a two-page cover letter from me, his initial reaction is, "There is something up. Why is this so long?"

Two-page cover letters are sometimes unavoidable. But three-page cover letters are always avoidable.

Every word needs to earn its place on the cover letter. If it doesn't speak specifically to this client, to this project. . . it hasn't earned its place. As much as it pains you, leave it out.

Don't let these misconceptions plague your cover letters. Follow my advice and you'll get an opportunity to make a powerful pitch to your clients.

Read the original article and other great content at http://www.helpeverybodyeveryday.com.

About Help Every Body Everyday Founder Matt Handal: An out of the box thinker, Matt's passion is doing what others assume can't be done. He is an aggressive marketer who has helped construction, engineering, architectural, and real estate consulting firms realize tens of millions in fees from projects ranging from $500K to $2B. He has been quoted in Engineering News Record, written about in Zweig White's Marketing NOW, is an award-winning speaker, and hosts HelpEverybodyEveryday.com, a blog authored by some of the brightest minds in the marketing field. Matt wrote the book, Proposal Development Secrets: Win More, Work Smarter, and Get Home on Time. He is also a co-author of the Marketing Handbook for the Design & Construction Professional and author of the Society for Marketing Professional Services' research white paper on "Marketing to the Mind." His interest in reaching audiences stems from a lifelong obsession with music. His work in podcasting, social media, and website development was born from a love of exploring new technologies. And his competitive edge and drive to always improve the firms he works with can be traced to his past as a competitive runner.

Presentation Quick Tips

The power of 3.
Three blind mice, the three little pigs, three wishes—there's a reason childhood stories revolve around the magic number "3." Our brains tend to think in threes. Add a fourth item, and it doesn't stick in our memory as well. How can you take advantage of this simple truth? Persuade someone to think of three points you want to convey. Repeat them throughout your story or pitch. End your spiel by touching on the three points again.

Act Naturally.
Want to give a great presentation? Be yourself. Don't try to act like someone else. Just be you because authenticity is powerful.

Start Strong.
Memorize your opening. That way, you're not focused on slides or notes, your head is up and your eyes are connected with your audience.

Don't Cross Your Arms
when addressing a group. Audiences are less likely to respond to someone whose arms are crossed because it gives the impression that the speaker is guarded. Instead, smile and keep your arms bent at your sides.

Give Emphasis to the main point of your message by leaning slightly forward when delivering it.

President's Message

With a hot, hot summer on the wane, it's nice to have a little cooler weather. (I freely admit I'm a weather wimp). While the weather will invariably get cooler, SDA Seattle chapter won't. We have a busy year planned.

I'm excited to be working with a great group of SDA professionals on the chapter Board. We began the planning for this year at our June planning retreat. We were inspired by last year's accomplishments to continue it forward. Winning the SDA *Chapter Excellence Award* is powerful incentive to continue improving the benefits of SDA membership. While we still have the main goals as outlined in our 5-year plan last year, the one we'll be focusing on particularly this year is Membership Growth. New perspectives, new experiences, new members keep our chapter vibrant and growing. Bring a friend, a colleague, or anyone you'd like to introduce to the power of SDA to one of our many business practice events this year, whether it's a webinar with a shared viewing in your office, a monthly chapter meeting, our national EDSymposium conference in Golden, CO in October, or one of our planned coffee/happy hours. We all benefit from the shared knowledge and influence of our members.

We'll be kicking off our monthly chapter programs Thursday, September 17 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown Seattle with a breakfast presentation on the redevelopment of the Seattle waterfront. Anyone who lives, works, or plays in Seattle will be affected by what will happen there over the next several years. Come learn who's involved, and what's in our future, by registering here: http://sda-seattle.org/events/. Bring a friend, and they'll hear what's on tap for the rest of the year.

I'm looking forward to seeing new & familiar faces, and excited about this year's potential. Join me on this journey, won't you?

Shannon Soady, CDFA

We have another CDFA. . .
Congratulations to Kurt Wong of Schemata Workshop who received his CDFA Certfication in June.

Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

September 9, noon to 1:00p: Board of Directors Meeting via Conference Call.

September 17, 7:30a to 9:00a: Business Practice Breakfast - Imagining a New Seattle Waterfront—A Waterfront for All. Crowne Plaza Hotel, Seattle. See sda-seattle.org for more information and to register.

September 17, 11:00a to noon: SDA National Webinar - Website Management for Lead Generation. See sdanational.org for registration and details.

OCTOBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

October 6, noon to 1:00p: Board of Directors Meeting via Conference Call.

October 8, 8:00a to 5:30p: BusinessTrak Workshop, Golden, Colorado. See sdanational.org for details and registration.

October 9 and 10, 8:00a to 5:00p: EDSymposium15, Golden, Colorado. See sdanational.org for full conference brochure and to register.

October 15, 5:30p to 8:00p: Business Practice Dinner - Flexible Workplace Issues. Crowne Plaza Hotel, Seattle. See sda-seattle.org for more information and to register.

October 20, noon to 1:00p: Quarterly Town Hall Conference Call. For SDA members only. See sdanational.org to register for the dial-in number and conference code.

October 27, noon to 1:00p: Business Practice Webinar - Everything Your Employees are Thinking But are Afraid to Tell You. See sda-seattle.org for more information and registration.

NOVEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

November 3, noon to 1:00p: Board of Directors Meeting via Conference Call.

November 19, 7:30a to 9:00a: Business Practice Breakfast - Stories from A/E/C Industry Advocates: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly. Crowne Plaza Hotel, Seattle. See sda-seattle.org for more details and registration.

Program Recap: Digital Images Primer

In March, Matt Virkler of DLR Group presented a brown-bag webinar on using digital images. He began the presentation by qualifying that he couldn't provide concrete "always use X when you are doing Y" answers because using images is very situational and what might be right for one case will be wrong for the next. Instead, he gave us what he called "Dirty Little Secrets of Being 'Good Enough' But Still Kinda Professional When Working with Images."

Here are some of the key takeaways from Matt's presentation:
- Figure 1 illustrates the differences between raster and vector image types.
- Vector file types are driven by software, so there are almost as many file types as there are vector-based programs. We most frequently encounter Adobe Illustrator (.ai) and Encapsulated Postscript (.eps) files.
- Rule #1 of working with raster images is to SCALE DOWN, NOT UP.
- Images degrade when you scale up because pixels don't grow—they are the size they are. When you increase the size of the image, the gaps between the pixels grow and the computer fills in the gaps with its best "guess" of what color to put into the gap.
- Resolution Rules of Thumb: When printing, use images with a resolution of 300 ppi (pixels per inch). For web or screen images resolution can be 72 ppi.
- Scanning Guidelines: If the original image is equal to or larger than 5" x 7", scan at 300 ppi. If the original image is less than 5" x 7", scan at 600 ppi.
- When using images for printing, the ideal is to use an image that is the exact size that you need, but you shouldn't see too much degradation if you select an image that is within 15% of the final dimensions you need. For screen images, that allowance drops to only 5% of the size of need.
- Color Modes: CMYK is used when ink will be used to create color. CMYK stands for the inks that are available for printing: cyan, magenta, yellow, and black. RGB mode is used when light is used to create color (on a screen, for instance). The initials stand for red, green, and blue. The numbers in the formulas relate to the percentage of each color that are used.
- Dirty Little Secret of "Good Enough" Color Modes: Just use RGB. You'll almost always get away with it.
- Figure 2 illustrates the different raster file types and when each type might be used.
- When finding raster images, find an image equal to or larger than your intended display or print size.
- When searching online at Google Images, select "Search Tools" from the navigation bar to dial in your search by size, image type, usage rights, color, etc.

Many thanks to Matt for the informative and entertaining presentation.
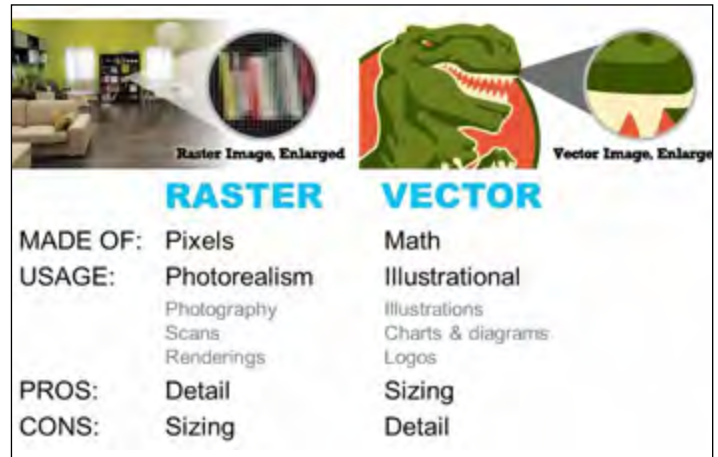

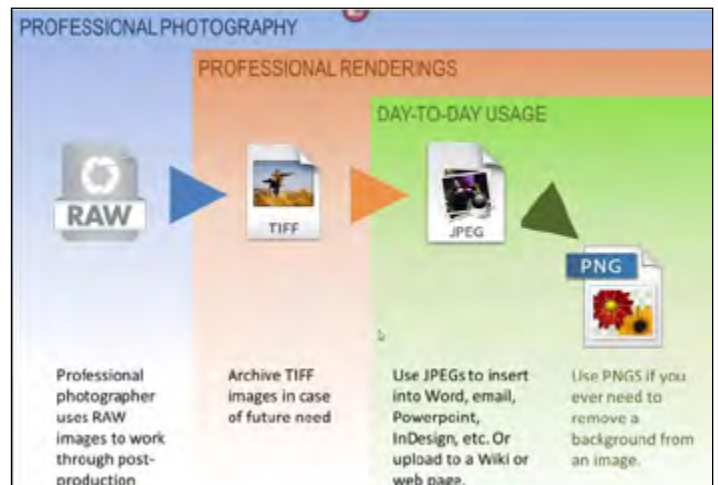Figure 1: Raster and Vector Images

Figure 2: Raster File Types

Curb ramblers during meetings with this question: "Would you please summarize your point for our meeting notes?" That will force the person to focus his or her remarks.

— From "Managing Rambling Meeting Discussion" video, Dana Brownlee, YouTube, www.youtube.com.

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Excellence in Design Firm Management

Death by PowerPoint
by Judy A. Beebe, CDFA

Editor's Note: In the Spring edition of Portico we announced that Judy Beebe was the recipient of a chapter scholarship to attend a day of EdConnect. Judy and the other winners committed to sharing what they learned at EDConnect with the Chapter through a Portico article, roundtable, or some other means. The following is Judy's recap of one of the webinars she attended.

He wanted to name his webinar for EDConnect15 "Why Most PowerPoint Presentations Suck," but he didn't. (Did you know he has a book by the same name, and it's already in its third printing?) Instead, he named it something that was sure to attract an audience, "Do Your PowerPoint Presentations Stink? Most do. Let's make sure that yours don't . . ."

Presenter Rick Altman shared examples of what your PowerPoint slides should not look like, and what they could look like.

Here are the highlights of what I learned (screenshots taken from the webinar presentation).
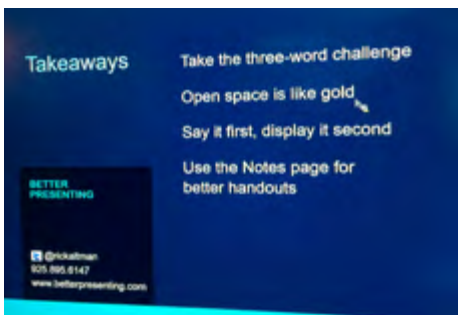

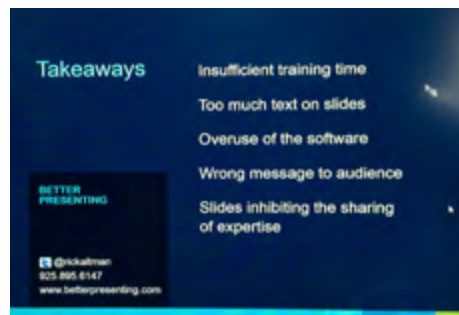Figure 1. Best practices for creating a PowerPoint presentation.

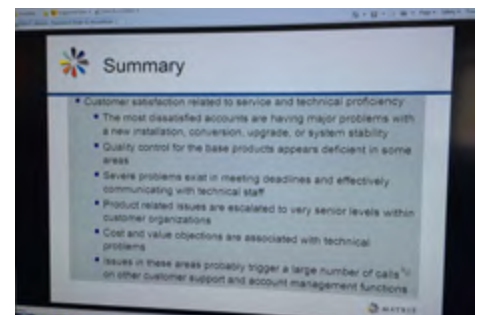Figure 2. Do this and it's guaranteed to make your audience feel *death by PowerPoint*.

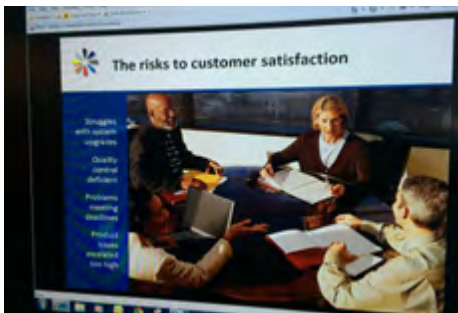Figure 3. Way too much text; lousy title (Summary.)

Figure 4. Better title; a representative graphic; the bullet items condensed.
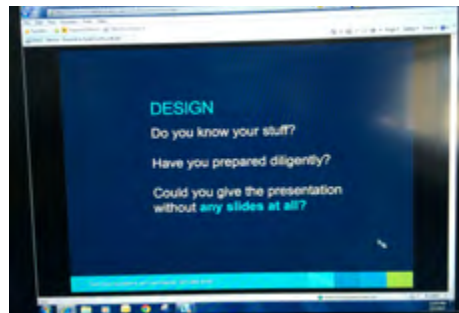

Figure 5. If you can answer Yes to the first two questions, then you will be able to answer Yes to the third question.
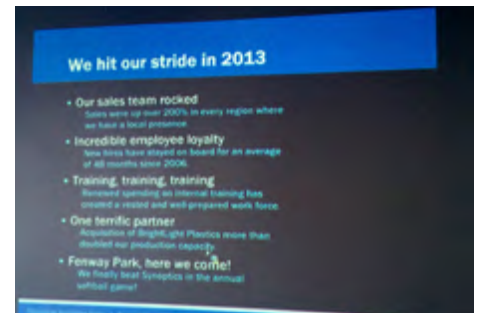

Figure 6. Say it first; show it second. (The text below each bullet was shown *after* he expanded on the bullet points.)

It all boils down to this:

1. What are you going to say?
2. What are you going to show?
3. What are you going to give?

And finally: Words of wisdom from the guy who thinks "most PowerPoint presentations suck."

- Don't explain (or read) the slide; share (speak) your ideas.
- Most important—you are the presentation (not your slideshow).

- Take the 3-word challenge—turn each bullet list into 3 words or less.
- Say it first, show it second. (Expand on your bullet points, and then you can show the words you just shared with them, but the text should not be lengthy.)
- You must create two different things:
  1. What you are going to show (the PowerPoint you created)
  2. What you are going to give your audience (the handouts you created, which contain the details).

Test Your Marketing I.Q.

1. Target market selection is most effective when based on:
   a. SWOT analysis and desires of principals.
   b. Acceptance within the industry structure.
   c. Financial potential for long-term stability and organizational growth.
   d. Political changes affecting an industry.

2. What is the most effective way for a marketing professional to prepare a presentation team for the question-and-answer part of a presentation?
   a. Brainstorm answers to potentially difficult questions and practice the delivery of the answers.
   b. Ask each presentation team member to prepare a list of questions and develop answers.
   c. Have the marketing professional develop a list of questions and answers with review by presentation team.
   d. List potentially embarrassing questions and develop strategies to address them by referring to the firm's strengths.

3. A communication program may include a number of approaches, such as direct mail, seminars, and press coverage. The advantage of press coverage over the other two strategies is that it:
   a. Generates recognition of principals and staff.
   b. Generates interest from clients and prospects.
   c. Provides third-party endorsement.
   d. Reduces the need for advertising.

4. When a professional services firm sponsors special events, the goal is typically to:
   a. Familiarize prospective and current clients with the firm and its personnel
   b. Display the trophy projects completed by the firm.
   c. Give something back to key clients.
   d. Impress prospective clients with the firm's services and clients.

5. What is the most important reason for relationship redundancy with clients?
   a. It encourages more people to sell to that client.
   b. It allows you to assign the best employee to the client based on the situation.
   c. It makes it easier to organize group activities with the client.
   d. It minimizes the potential of losing a client upon the departure of a key employee.

The above are examples of the types of questions that are covered on the CDFA Certification Exam. From the SDA National website: "CDFA certification recognizes an individual who has met a rigorous standard of experience and expertise in design firm management and administration and who has demonstrated their knowledge of the practice and related disciplines through a thorough examination of management and administrative competencies." Visit www.sdanational.org for more information about CDFA certification. Get certified today!

Answers: 1. a, 2. a, 3. c, 4. a, 5. d

Create SEO-Friendly Press Releases

Increase buzz for your releases by boosting their ranking in search engine results. Include primary and secondary keywords and phrases throughout for search engine optimization. Follow these steps:

1. Choose one subject to write about so readers understand the main purpose of the press release. Your topic may introduce a new product or service, cover a special event, outline a case study about a product, or explain technical or legal issues.

2. Determine what you want to achieve with the release. Decide if you want to increase sales, create awareness, build a brand, or improve a colleague's reputation.

3. Focus on the objective as you write. Rather than beginning with a preamble to build the drama, start with the news. Repeat a primary keyword in the first paragraph and throughout the article. Choose two secondary keywords or phrases that relate to the primary keyword, and use them in the first paragraph and several additional times.

4. Write a short synopsis (no more than 300 characters) of the press release. Include the primary and secondary keywords and phrases.

5. Include the primary keyword in your title. Keep the title fewer than 100 characters.

Remember: Send the press release to the editors of relevant websites and magazines. Boost your campaign by sending additional copies to leading industry blogs.

Adapted from "SEO Checklist for a Product Press Release," Paul Barstow, Advertising in Construction, advertisinginconstruction.com.

Assign Three Separate Webinar Roles

Don't try to do everything yourself when you manage an online presentation. To run a webinar smoothly, divide the duties. Assign people to these three roles:

1. Technical expert. Devote one person to ensuring that the audio and video streams are working, prioritizing questions that participants submit online, and providing immediate feedback about how things are going, such as if people are dropping out.

2. Moderator. The person in that role welcomes the guests, introduces the expert who is featured in the webinar and poses questions to that person. As the hub between the audience, technical expert and topical expert, the moderator steers the content.

3. Topical expert. With others to handle the technical aspects and keep the session moving along, the speaker can concentrate on providing compelling content.

— Adapted from "Puzzled About How to Host a Great Webinar?" Jim Gray, www.jimgray.ca.

Three Bad Habits that Distract Audiences

Don't allow your motions to detract from your message. Public speaking expert Alex Rister warns against these three common mistakes:

1. The Rocker sways side to side or front to back. Move with purpose around the podium or through the audience to connect with people.

2. Happy Pockets fiddles with change, keys or other objects. Empty your pockets before you speak.

3. Lady Macbeth wrings her hands together. Videotape yourself speaking, and check whether your hand gestures are emphasizing key points or betraying you by revealing that you are nervous.

— Adapted from "First Impressions: Nonverbal Communication Tips," Alex Rister, http://alexrister1.wordpress.com.
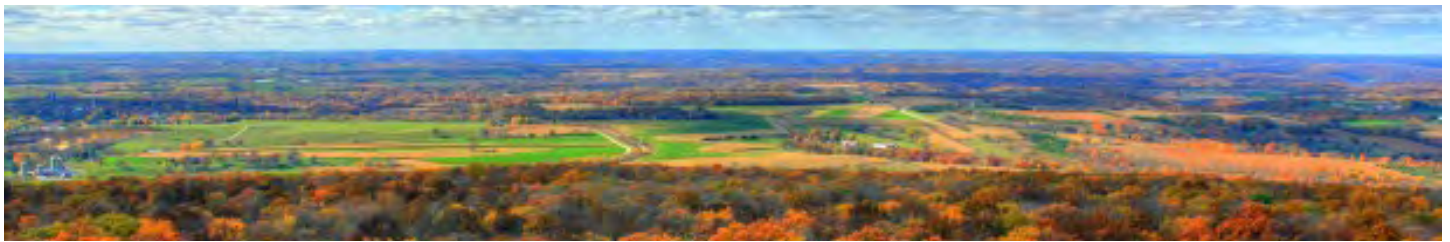
## Creating Captions That Attract Attention and Get Read

The function of a caption is to explain a graphic, explain its connection to the adjacent text and persuade the reader to read the rest of the copy. Studies show that readers read captions immediately after they read the headlines. Here are some tips for creating captions. Remember that your treatment of captions must fit within the overall design of the document.

- Reduce the type size. It can be two sizes smaller than the body text, but no smaller than 9 pt.
- Keep them proportional.
- Experiment with location and alignment.
- Be consistent once you decide on location, alignment, and distance between picture and its caption.
- Leave plenty of white space around the caption.
- Consider making the first capital in the caption slightly larger and of a slightly different font.
- Use a color that will stand out.
- Box or accent the captions to set them off.
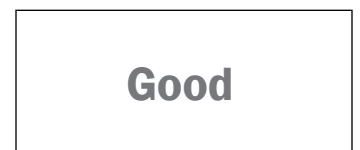- Use a kicker or teaser with a caption

A caption should fit the graphic.

Good

Bad
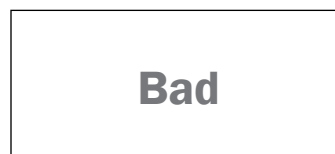
This caption is too long for this size graphic.

Good

Bad
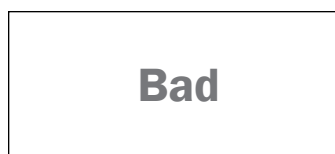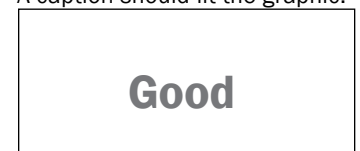
A caption should fit the graphic.

This caption is too short.

Tech Transfer: Create a List of Appendices

If you know how to create a Table of Contents, you can easily create a list of appendices. The steps and screenshots were created using MS Word 2010 (there are only slight differences if you are using MS Word 2007).

1. Create a style for the appendix headings. In this example, we created the style "Appendix Heading." The appendix number and the title is right aligned, and in bold font.

2. When you type the appendix headings, make sure the appendix number and its title are on the same line, or make sure they are separated by a manual line break (Shift + Enter). Don't forget to apply the new style you created (Figure 1).

3. Put your cursor where you want your list of appendices to show. Refer to Figure 2 for steps 4 through 6.

4. Click References / Captions / Insert Table of Figures to open the Table of Figures window.

5. In that window, click Options, and select Appendix Heading from the Style drop-down box. click OK to close that window.

6. Uncheck Show page numbers. Click OK to close the Table of Figures window (if you see the message "do you want to replace the selected table of figures," click No).

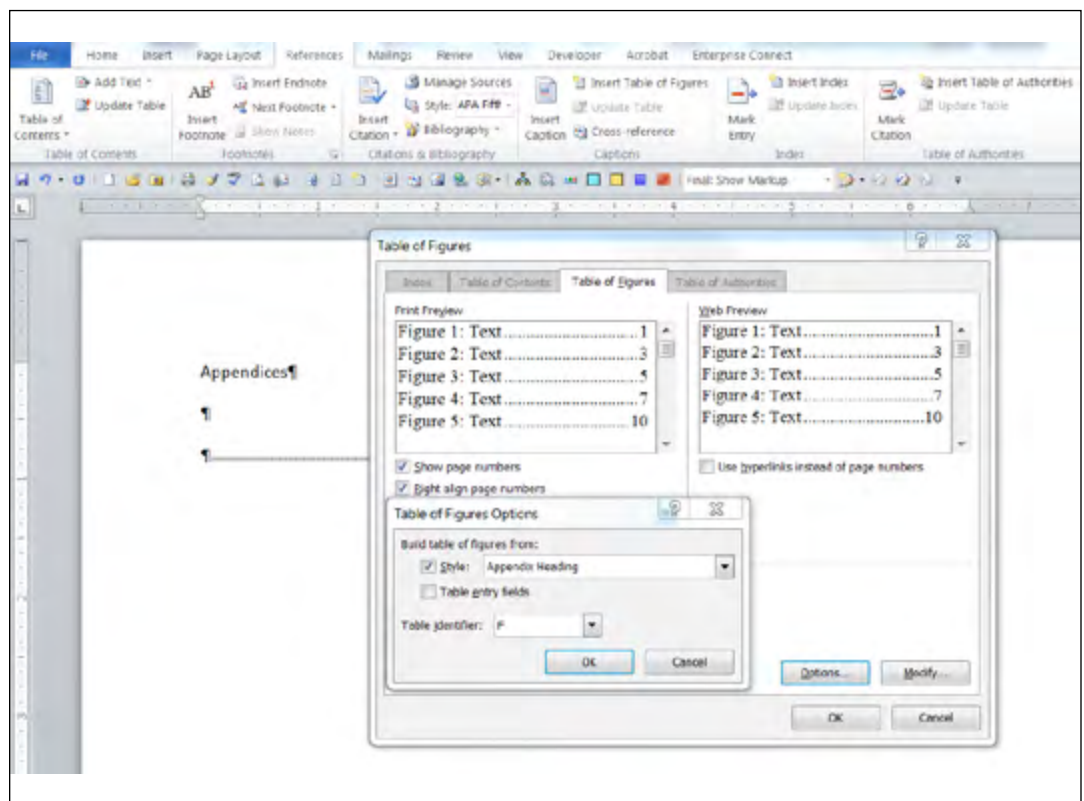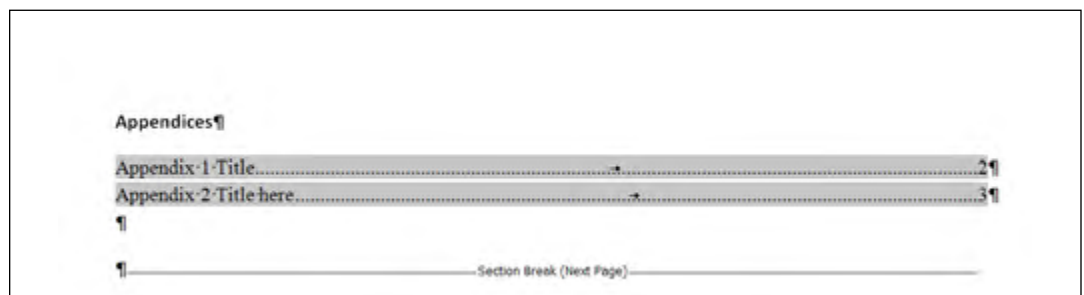Your list of appendices is now displayed (Figure 3).

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

Figure 3.

SDA

My EDConnect Experience *by Shannon Soady, CDFA*

It seems so long ago now that I attended our first virtual conference EDConnect in May. But what a great conference! Coming on the heels of Administrative Professionals Week, I offered up viewing to my entire office courtesy of the office administrators. I was pleased that up to eight fellow professionals, non-administrative and administrative both, accepted the invitation and viewed the various sessions with me.

I believe one of the most illuminating ones was the closer, "Farewell to Death by PowerPoint" by Rick Altman. Rick kept a lively pace while showing us how to make powerpoint presentations exciting. Really! At one point, when he showed how to create handout notes that aren't just copies of the powerpoint slides, I asked my fellow attendees in the room who knew this trick. Not a single one did, so we all learned something new!

Another session that I confess was over my head at times was the "What is the Right Value for Your Firm?" webinar by Owen Mayfield. While to a non-financial administrator it seemed to be CFO/CPA/controller level information, I still found it fascinating to learn what goes into establishing a firm's value. And I have an enhanced appreciation for high level number-crunching.

The format of EDConnect provides lots of education from the convenience of your own office, especially for those who might not be able to attend in person a national conference. And where else can you get so many continuing education credits focused on A/E/C administrative topics at such a bargain rate? Thank you, Seattle chapter, for allowing me to attend EDConnect. I hope it's the first of many.

EdSymposium Scholarship Winners Announced!

Congratulations to Seattle chapter member **Judy Beebe, CDFA,** of WSP|Parsons Brinckerhoff, who was one of the three winners of the Past Presidents Professional Development Grants.

Judy was the Highest Scoring Member from all submissions. She, along with first-time EdSymposium attendees Herb Lentz of Worn Jerabek Wiltse Architects and Liliana Moreno of DRB Engineering Consultants, Inc. will be using the grant to attend EdSymposium October 8, 9, and 10 in Golden, Colorado.

Speaking of Conferences . . .

It isn't too late to register for the SDA National Convention: EDSymposium15!

In her President's Invitation, current National President Natilie Newman urges members to come and "Make a Difference!" Included below is the full text of her invitation.

Please join us for the SDA National Convention - EDSymposium15 and the one-day BusinessTrak workshop in Golden, Colorado. For those of us who manage, market, advance, streamline, protect, and regulate firms in the A/E/C industry, this conference is for you.

Starting off the conference is the BusinessTrak workshop developed for emerging professionals who need to advance their business skills in addition to their technical skills. It is also a great opportunity for new administrative staff in the A/E/C industry to learn how firms run.

That evening is the Networking and Welcome Party hosted by the Denver Chapter. Hope you will join our hosts, guests and Business Partners and connect with other attendees as we kick off EDS15.

The educational sessions, networking, and learning opportunities that our dynamic Executive Director has assembled will send you home and back to the office motivated, revitalized, and ready to . . . Make a Difference!

With its warm western hospitality, Golden is ideal for bonding, relaxing, and learning something new with its cultural scene, rugged outdoors and historic downtown where you'll find quaint shops, gourmet foods, clothing, souvenirs, antiques, jewelry, wine, fine art, and more. The backdrop for your stay lies along Clear Creek and the base of the Front Rnage of the Rocky Mountains which was founded in June 1859 during the Pike's Peak Gold Rush.

The weather may be hot right now but in October it can get cold in Colorado (brrrr) . . . so remember to pack accordingly.

Hope to meet you all in Golden, Colorado - Where the West Lives.

YOU! Make a Difference

Conference Dates: October 8 through 10, 2015. Visit sdanational.org for more information and to register.

Member Spotlight: Carol Wanda Spradlin, WSP|Parsons Brinckerhoff

How long have you been with WSP Group? How long in the industry?
I've been with WSP for 3 ½ years, and in the industry for 18 ½ years. I must love those engineer types. (I work with engineers, my best friend is an engineer, and for a while last year, I dated a mechanical engineer from Boeing . . .yikes).

What motivated you to join SDA?
I heard about SDA several years ago from a co-worker/friend and I went to several events here in Seattle. It wasn't until I came to work for WSP and bumped into Patricia Leyden that I finally decided it was time to join. Then our company acquired Parsons Brinckerhoff and was introduced to Judy Beebe and the rest is history. I had actually met Judy several years ago at an SDA event. She remembered me....that was really impressive.

What do you do at your firm?
I'm the Office Manager which is another name for "Jack of All Trades." I make sure the office runs smoothly and keep all the day to day headaches off my manager's desk. I also manage the admin staff.

What challenges you with respect to work/life balance?
I think I keep my life pretty well balanced right now. Luckily I like who I work for and with and that makes my life a bit easier. I have the average amount of stress, but not the "over the top" amount of stress.

If there was one class (or seminar or workshop) that you could take that would allow you to perform your job more effectively, what class would that be and why?
Something that would help with deciphering personalities. I seem to have two managers: one is auditory and one is visual. Mr. Auditory responds to interruptions and never seems to answer e-mails. Mr. Visual responds to e-mails and hates to be interrupted. I think this sort of info is invaluable when dealing with people. Since most of us in my type of job know how to get things done, knowing how to communicate and get a response is sometimes the biggest issue.

What activities or hobbies do you enjoy in your spare time?
I walk, am a voracious reader, love movies and going to see small theater groups. I'm one of those crazy Disney fans and love Disneyland. I just got back from a Disney convention in Anaheim (D23 Expo) for four days, followed by five days at Disneyland (my boss says it would be his idea of hell).

What are some of your goals with respect to SDA?
To go to more events, volunteer more; since I was never much of a "joiner," I've only begun to dip my toe in.

PowerPoint Q&A with Expert Melissa Esquibel *Microsoft Certified Trainer and editor of Office Technology Today*

Q: Is it better to use a dark or a light background in PowerPoint?

A: You'll hear a lot of opinions on this topic. My opinion is based on delivering programs in auditorium, classroom and conference room settings. The answer: It depends. In a large room, like an auditorium, a very sparsely populated screen with a white background is like a witness interrogation room. So, in that environment, I'm inclined to use a black background. In a classroom or conference room setting a light background may be easier to read.

Q: How do I achieve a hanging indent on a bulleted list inside a PowerPoint text box?

A: A hanging indent doesn't seem to behave in the paragraph formatting setting. However, you can achieve the look of a hanging indent by using Shift+Enter to insert a soft line break and a Tab key on each line to indent. It's not ideal, but it will produce the end result.

About SDA

For over 50 years, the Society for Design Administration (SDA) has promoted education and best practices in management and professional standards of design firm administration. SDA membership stretches across the United States and Canada, and is composed of personnel working in the design industry for architectural, engineering, construction, and related industry firms.

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