



Deconstructed

THE RFP/RFQ WORKSHOP

TIPS & TRICKS

To manage proposals and team members more effectively and troubleshoot common technical issues.

→ When you say “daily grind” are you talking about your fabulous cup of morning coffee or your workday?

If it’s the latter, we can help!

One of the biggest obstacles reported by our workshop attendees is **getting what they need in a timely manner**. A little bit of work up front will help your marketing team manage this.

Are your non-marketing staff’s technical copy contributions coming in at the last minute? Rather than wait for people who aren’t comfortable writing—and therefore put it off—**offer to interview them and write the copy yourself**. You can even sign up for an **online service to transcribe the conversation into a Word doc** and edit the interview from there.

Most architects, engineers, and contractors will be relieved to turn the writing over to you and in return will make time for a 10- to 15-minute interview.

Now go enjoy that cup of coffee!

History of the term “daily grind:” Many jobs in the Industrial Revolution were very repetitive. Factory workers often did the same task over and over for twelve or more hours a day. It makes sense that the phrase “daily grind” would become synonymous with the workday during the late 1700s to mid-1800s. The idiom is still common today.



→ Do you feel like you could add Cat Herder to your job title?

If so, we can help!

It can be like herding cats to get the information you need from your project team. But remember, not everyone is the skilled proposal aficionado that you are. Boilerplate writing can be a default for lots of team members or you may receive copy that does nothing to set your proposal apart to get shortlisted.

→ **Creating a Word template that asks for EXACTLY what you need the team to respond to with a summary of the RFP/Q criteria that must be covered is a gamechanger.**

In your template, you are basically telling them what to say.

A requested resume bio might include this direction: please provide a sentence or two about what specific skills you bring to this project based on the RFP/Q criteria I've outlined above.

So, take charge and be the Alpha and your cats will never need herding again!

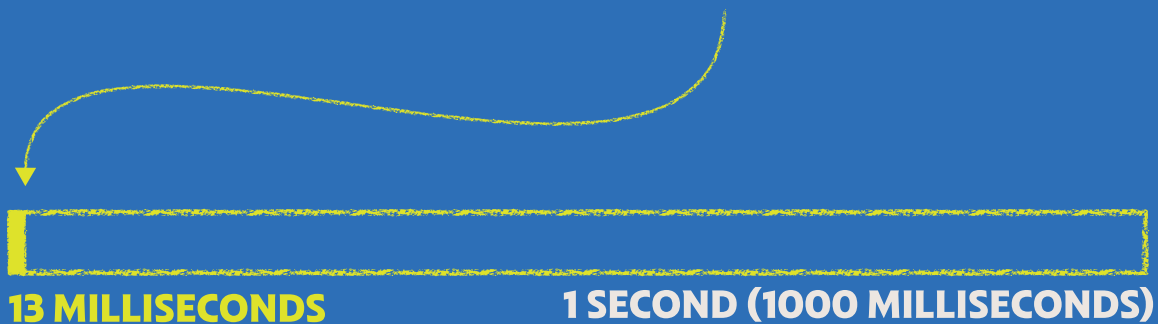
History of the term “herding cats”: This idiom highlights that organizing larger groups of people cannot be done without requiring a great deal of effort and patience. The origin of this expression seems to be recent and has been attributed to a line of dialogue in Monty Python's *The Life of Brian* opening scene.



→ You know how they say “a picture is worth a thousand words”?

That’s true but it’s not quite correct.

So, we’ve updated this idiom to read **“a picture is worth a thousand words... that can be read in less than a second.”** We say this because human **eyes can process visual information in as little as 13 milliseconds**¹. Yep, you read that right. 13. Milliseconds.



Now that you know the human brain can process visual information in a fraction of a second, **consider the visuals in your projects**. When prepping for an important meeting, interview, project, or proposal submission go through your project and **pull out pieces that could be represented visually**. You can turn that bunch of numbers into a graph, use icons to represent a process, or create a diagram to better explain a relationship or connection.

→ **Use visual graphics to convey complicated or abstract concepts and deliver the message simply and clearly.**

History of the term “a picture is worth a thousand words”: Modern use of this phrase was first used in the early twentieth century. It has been attributed to newspaper editor Arthur Brisbane first and then advertiser Fred R. Barnard. However, iterations of this phrase have been around for a long time with attributions to Leonardo da Vinci, the Russian writer Ivan Turgenev, and Napoleon Bonaparte².

→ Are the images you're using in proposals "picture perfect"?

Sure, the image was professionally taken and it looks fine, but is the cropping doing the job it needs to?

→ To refine the image, **consider which elements aren't necessary to support your narrative and use lead lines and the rule of thirds.** Lead lines are the major lines in the photo and where they are leading the eye - like the lighting element on the balcony overhang leading to the light reflection on the marble wall down to the media cabinet and brown chair in the seating area. The rule of thirds helps to define the purpose of the composition. Use a grid to divide the image equally into thirds horizontally and vertically, positioning the main subject in either the right or left third of the image.



LEAD LINES



RULE OF THIRDS



For example, take this picture above composed of an entire room. While it's a nice photo, there's a lot going on. Your **eyes are bouncing around the image** and the focus tends to land on the white overhang of the balcony or the reflection of the light on the marbled wall. Is that the focus of your photo? **Does that support the narrative you're trying to convey?**



In this image most of the lead lines will take your eye to the left third, shifting the focus to the black table. There's still enough information visible that the viewer can get a sense of the space, but the image is more balanced and pleasing to the eye.

History of the term "picture perfect:" While the origins of the term date back to the 1850s when photography was laborious and expensive, its use spread quickly in the 1960s because of advertising. "As photography became more sophisticated and accessible around this time, advertisers began promising products that would deliver some picture perfect result or experience."

→ **The author Johnathan Swift once said, “The proper words in the proper place are the true definition of style.”**

We agree whole-heartedly!

Writing isn't for everyone, so it's often up to the marketing team to ensure that all t's are crossed, and i's dotted. Equally important is **consistency within all firm materials**. Have you created standards for abbreviations like sf vs SF vs square foot? Do your proposals sound like they've been written by five different people? More importantly, have you established what your firm's voice is?

→ **We recommend that every firm has its own Style Guide. Not only does it help resolve these aforementioned questions and more, but it's also extremely helpful for people who struggle with writing.**

Deconstructed Workshops can advise you and even help you produce a Style Guide that matches your firm's guiding principles so you can impress both your clients, and potential clients with your style.

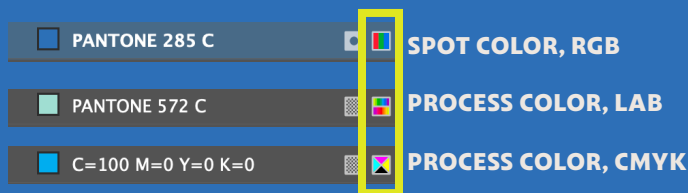
*Swift is remembered for works such as A Tale of a Tub, An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity, Gulliver's Travels, and A Modest Proposal. He is regarded by the Encyclopedia Britannica as the foremost prose satirist in the English language.



→ Colors not looking right when exporting from InDesign?

We're here to save the day!

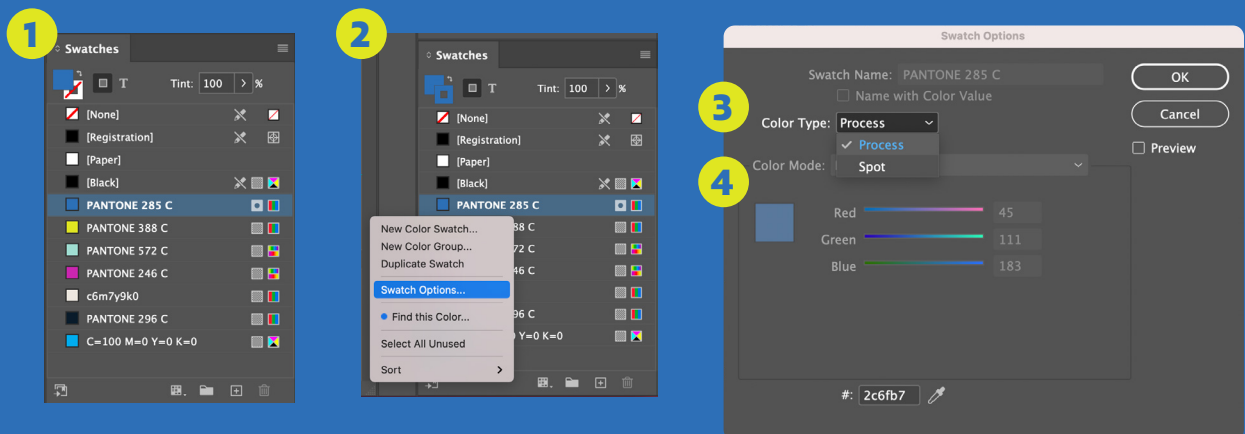
Check the color settings in the swatches panel. Oftentimes Pantone colors are automatically set to be a Spot Color. Change this to a CMYK – Process color and see if that works.



The RGB color space is indicated by the red, green, and blue square on the far right of the panel. CMYK color space will appear as a square divided into four with cyan, magenta, yellow, and black. A process color will appear as a checkered square, and a spot color will appear as a solid grey square with a dark grey circle in the center.

→ **To get the print to look right, try changing the settings for all of the colors to be CMYK process.** To make this change:

1. Select the swatch(es), right click and click on “Swatch Options...”.
2. In the Color Type dropdown menu, choose Process.
3. In the Color Mode dropdown menu, choose CMYK.
4. Hit ok and voila! You might not notice the change in the document – export again and check the colors in Acrobat or do a test print.



/,dēken'strekt/

To reduce (something) to its constituent parts
in order to reinterpret it.



What is Deconstructed Workshops?

Deconstructed offers workshops and skills sharing sessions that benefit both staff and leadership to create more efficient approaches and to streamline processes.



We currently have two types of workshops:

1

Deconstructed: The Art of Proposal Creation

We believe that the most successful proposals are the most relevant ones. But how do you get there? By deconstructing every element of the RFP/Q response to get to the essence of what's important. That's how you set your firm apart. **Over 5 sessions and a private proposal review we break down proposal components and requirements focusing on both the written and visual details.** We deconstruct each piece to help you be more concise and succinct with proposal requirement responses and to strengthen the narrative with targeted visuals.

2

Pop-up 'Shop

These short, one-hour workshops will cover myriad industry topics through interviews and skills sharing.

Interviews: Hear from a variety of industry leaders on subjects such as workplace communication, improving your firm's DEI reach, and how to get your proposals shortlisted.

Skills Sharing: In upcoming Pop-ups, we'll be discussing topics such as The Art of the Cover Letter, Making Everyone in Your Firm a Skillful Marketer, and Graphic Design Tips and Shortcuts.

Workshop Leader Bios



Julie Flattery

COPYWRITER / MARKETING CONSULTANT

Hello, I'm Julie! I teach the verbal communication side of the workshops. I grew up with an architect father who taught me early in life that the spaces we spend time in have a profound impact on how we feel. His influence made me love architecture, and my natural affinity for words made me love writing about it.

I started my career at a large Los Angeles architecture firm. While studying English and journalism, I began assisting the marketing studio with writing bios for proposals. Who knew then that this would be the start of a lifelong career? Over 30 years later here I am, teaching the myriad things I've learned with the goal of helping others to streamline their process and become more successful overall. Throughout the Deconstructed workshops, I'll be focusing on tips, tricks, and shortcuts in addition to honing writing skills and targeting the entire proposal to directly respond to the RFP/Q.

I look forward to sharing the knowledge I've gained from my own experience with proposals throughout my many years in this profession with you!



Claire Schatzle

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Hello, I'm Claire! I teach the visual design portions of our workshop. I'm a graphic designer focusing on AEC firms. Over half of my working career has been within the AEC profession, more specifically putting together proposals and strategically planning photography and photoshoots for AEC projects.

I remember the first proposal I worked on and it was... not great! I wish I knew then what I know now—that, while proposals take serious time management, clear communication with team members, and the development of a solid process with set expectations you can still be creative while adhering to the RFP/Q requirements.

Through this workshop, I aim to help people and firms become more successful by increasing their chances of being shortlisted and keeping their sanity in the process.

Additional services we offer:

Strategic Planning
Interview/Presentation Preparation + Training
Copywriting + Design of All Proposal/Marketing Materials
Ghostwriting Articles
Website Design +Development

Award Submittals
Training Non-marketing Staff on Building + Maintaining Client Relationships
E-blasts, Announcements, + Press Releases
Photography Planning, Retouching, Guidelines

Template Creation - Indesign, Powerpoint, Word
Event + Trade Show Materials
Marketing Materials Writing + Design
Infographics

Printing/Vendor Facilitation
Comprehensive Branding
Custom Branded Maps
Training for InDesign, Photoshop, + Illustrator



From the very first day, Julie and Claire provided insightful tips on how to streamline the proposal process and improve the proposal itself. The proposal review was an added benefit. The individualized feedback was much more in-depth than any debrief we've received. We were able to implement a few changes right away to help bring new life to our proposal package.”

- Alisha Escobedo, CF APMP
Proposal Coordinator/Writer
HFS Company

Contact us for information about the next session of *Deconstructed: The Art of Proposal Creation* or to inquire about a custom workshop.

Follow us to stay up-to-date on our upcoming events!



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www.deconstructedworkshops.com



SOURCES:

<https://www.dictionary.com/e/slang/picture-perfect/#:~:text=The%20term%20spread%20in%20the,picture%20perfect%20result%20or%20experience.>

<https://news.mit.edu/2014/in-the-blink-of-an-eye-0116>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_picture_is_worth_a_thousand_words

Image credit: https://unsplash.com/@huynguyen_pch