



Julia Quigley



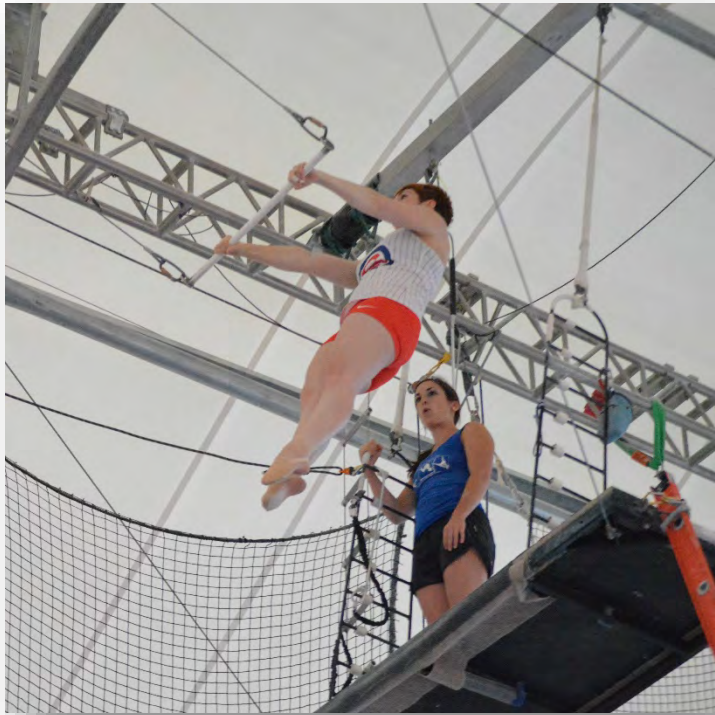
Lessons learned from the circus:
What trapeze culture can teach proposal
professionals about teamwork

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Your speaker



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Agenda

- Trapeze background
- Parallels of circus life and proposal professionals
- Lessons learned from the circus
 - Fostering community
 - Handling mistakes
 - Achieving consistent success



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Roles and responsibilities in circus

The flyer:
performs tricks

The catcher:
responsible for
catching the flyer



Photo Credit: Emerald City Trapeze



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Roles and responsibilities in circus

The board worker: responsible for serving/returning the bar and scooping flyers



Photo Credit: TSNY DC



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Roles and responsibilities in circus

**The lines
puller:** keeps
the flyer safe,
calls timing,
and directs
the moving
parts



Photo Credit: Noah Unsworth



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Trapeze in action

Planche Return



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Parallels between circus and proposal professionals

- Both are a team effort with defined roles and responsibilities
- Team comprises members with varying backgrounds
- There's a lot on the line!



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Characterizations of circus community

- Count on each other for success
- Innovate together
- Collaboration is an essential component to success
- Resolve differences behind the curtain, never in front of the audience



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How community affects performance

Share with the group

- Have you worked on a team with a sense of community?
- Have you worked on a team with no sense of community?
- How did (lack of) community affect the team's performance?



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What research says

Harvard Business Review studied 15 multinational corporations to determine top 8 characteristics of collaboration

- In the most successful collaborative teams, 20–40% of team members already know each other
- Clear roles are more important for collaboration than a clear plan
- Leaders of the most successful groups were task-oriented *and* relationship-oriented



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Proposal takeaways

- Build proposal response teams that combine new and familiar people
- Don't just administer tasks; build relationships and innovate together
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities
- Resolve differences before you meet with the client



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Your takeaways

Write down three things you'll change at work to improve the proposal development community

OBJECTIVES

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.





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Handling mistakes

Share a time when you or a colleague made a major mistake on a proposal





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How circus handles mistakes

- Success and failure are both a team effort
- Individuals take responsibility for their part in the process
- One person designated for final say
- Mistakes aren't punished; they are discussed, understood, and improved upon



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What research says

According to Harvard Business Review,
“Compassion is a better managerial
tactic than toughness”

- Compassion increases loyalty and trust
- Angry responses decrease creativity
- Expressing anger causes employees think of you as powerful, but ineffective



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Proposal takeaways

- Conduct reviews with a reviewer's caucus, and debrief writers on the outcome
- Stop perpetuating the idea that one role in the team is responsible for wins
- Accept responsibility for your mistakes instead of trying to hide them (show yourself compassion!)



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Goof-up scenarios

You're the proposal manager. You send out a notification that the proposal was submitted, and a project manager replies that he forgot to give his contract's POC the past performance questionnaire.

How do you respond?



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Goof-up scenarios

You're a proposal manager/writer who worked exceptionally hard on a proposal. It comes back rated as "Outstanding," but you were disqualified because your price was pennies over the *Not to Exceed* under your master contract.

How do you deal with pricing?



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Goof-up scenarios

You're the director of proposals, and a proposal manager on your team misses a proposal submission deadline. You knew the proposal was having difficulties, but your proposal manager didn't notify you of the possibility s/he would miss the deadline.

How do you approach the situation?



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Your takeaways

Write down three things you'll change when you return to your job to better handle mistakes (yours and your coworkers')

OBJECTIVES

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.





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How circus consistently succeeds

- Communication
- Adaptability





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What research says

7 Questions to Improve Communication by Karin Hurt

- What's working/not working?
- Who are our stakeholders and what do they care about?
- What information do you need from me?
- How will we use email?
- When will we meet in person and why?
- How will we ensure meetings are effective?
- How will we resolve conflict?



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Proposal takeaways

- At kickoff, discuss how you'll work as a team
 - Establish guidelines for communication; draw on Karin Hurt's questions
- Learn to express what you need for the success of the project
- Be flexible as you work with different project teams



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Your takeaways

Write down three things you'll change at work to improve communication and adapt with changing proposal team members

OBJECTIVES

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.





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Share lessons learned

Share with the group a major takeaway for what you'll do differently when you go back to the office



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Questions

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