Chapter 1

Introduction

Someone that has never won a proposal cannot really teach a course on the theory and application of proposal writing. It's that simple. This is a learned skill as much as a practice. And most engineers and scientists discount the value of proposal writing; they learn economics and practice project budgets; but you don't have a budget to work with until you have a project. And project funding is scarce, and getting scarcer every year. With inflation, the pool of money for most research is reduced in value year over year. That means only best will continue to get the most money year over year.

Proposal writing is competitive process, and the competition pools gets larger every year.

Since proposal writing is a learned skill, the only way to get better is to learn an effective process, jump right in and write some. Rejection is also a learned skill. Think of it this way, your first attempt may kill two birds with one stone.

Here is the basic truth: whether you like it or not you cannot not do serious science and engineering without winning a project proposal competition, at some time in your life. And if you want to reach the higher levels of management this skill will be an essential one for senior management.

This microbook lays out a tried and true process to follow, the principles that you should consider, and gives some of my successful examples to prove that I have the *bona fides* to back up my claims.

And if winning project contracts is an important prerequisite for an author claiming to know how to do it, I also setup contract proposals to tender and mark bidders. So I have experience on both sides of the process working through and reviewing what is important in a bid.

Whether you are writing for an open competition, a tender to bid on a contract, or your boss wants you to plan out/ forecast office activities for the next quarter or year, they all require the same things: they all require an outline plan or design, they require a budget, a people allocation, and time line. What sets the good ones from the bad ones isn't how many degrees you have on the wall or how many people are in your company; it's how well you understand what your client is asking you to do and how well you get to the point explaining