

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

# Bids and Proposals: Trends of 2022

and 8 Takeaways to Win More Business This Year



# Introduction

The first quarter of 2022 is proving to be a year shaped by recovery, opportunity, and evolution. In a recent [webinar](#), VisibleThread (VT) assembled an international panel of business development experts to discuss the emerging 2022 landscape in proposal management. Here are the most impactful trends they see affecting bids and proposals through the end of the year, as well as several tips to increase win rates.

## Digital Transformation and Process Automation

Digitization continues to reshape the industry as organizations look for tools to help them scale to keep up with new opportunities. Proposal professionals are increasingly relying on automation tools such as [VT Docs](#) to save time on compliance-related tasks and to move beyond compliance to increase the quality and responsiveness of their proposals.

VT Docs streamlines tedious and time-consuming yet essential tasks such as [building compliance matrices](#) and identifying critical contract language and flow-down clauses. These two applications alone can save proposal teams a great deal of time that can be invested in other important requirements. As Allison Ritz, Account Executive and SaaS expert at VT says, “If you have eight hours to spend on something, you can spend those eight hours on the highest value tasks.” The time saved allows organizations to do more with less and more strategically invest their efforts.

Many organizations are also automating the more strategic and quality-related aspects of proposal development. These components are more focused on winning over evaluators rather than just complying with requirements. Ritz explains how VT customers are using VT Docs for advanced automation and language analysis capabilities:

### VT Docs document analysis software enables proposal teams to:

- Shred RFPs and create compliance matrices in minutes
- Make faster bid/no-bid decisions
- Ensure alignment with win themes
- Analyze language and readability to reduce complexity and establish a single tone of voice
- Identify critical FARS/DFARS and flow-down clauses
- Extract acronym definitions and occurrences
- Improve proposal quality, reduce risk, and win more business

[Learn more](#)



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“Things like concept tracking, tracking their win themes, matching language, working through all the quality reports and the pieces of the proposal are the most important right now. So it’s beyond the step of just being compliant; matching the requirements is a given. It’s, ‘Are we responding appropriately? Are we matching the customer’s message? Are we really digging into the language and making sure that we’re using the same types of phrasing, the same types of themes? And are we saying this in the most succinct and appropriate way possible and not introducing any level of confusion?’”

The landscape remains competitive in many markets, and improving the readability of proposals is a highly effective tactic for rising above the crowded field.

Automating this part of proposal development with VT Docs also streamlines editing and review processes. Ritz explains, “Just like introducing data into a bid/no-bid decision, automating for readability is introducing data into the quality of your writing.” Rather than the traditional back-and-forth between writers and editors, VT’s software analyzes writing across [four key metrics](#) to improve the writing and establish a single tone of voice. The software also puts data behind the recommendations, removing subjectivity from the process.

Through fully automating simple yet essential tasks such as building compliance matrices, and augmenting complicated analytical tasks such as language analysis and tracking win themes. Organizations are building capabilities to drive up win rates by developing higher quality proposals through much more efficient and data-driven processes.







## Significant Industry Expansion in the U.S.

The government contracting industry exhibited strong growth through 2021 and shows no signs of slowing down. Deltek [reported](#) an influx of small business customers in 2021, indicating particularly strong growth in small businesses, startups, and consultancies. The panelists noted several factors likely contributing to industry expansion in the U.S. — most notably, the disruption and realignments caused by the pandemic and so-called Great Resignation. As Ritz says, “Opportunity brings evolution.”

The industry is changing because the ways that companies and proposal teams work together have changed and, in some ways, become less centralized. Remote and hybrid work arrangements are more common than they used to be in the federal space, and highly skilled proposal professionals have new opportunities. Many of these professionals are choosing to work outside of traditional corporate roles through consultancies, startups, or small businesses, and it’s changing the makeup of the industry in the U.S.

Hayley Watkins, COO of Summit Strategy, describes the growth of consultancy in the U.S. as being driven by growing companies that are ready to compete but don’t yet have all the staff they need in place: “They need that very experienced pursuit and proposal team to help them compete against larger companies, but they don’t necessarily have the funds for a year-round salary.”

The panelists also noted that the 2022 marketplace is highly competitive in both the U.S. and other markets, and that organizations are looking for avenues to distinguish themselves among increased competition from new companies entering the marketplace.

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**Hayley Watkins, COO of Summit Strategy**





## Burnout Remains a Serious Challenge

Burnout has been a major problem for proposal professionals for several years, and the challenges were only exacerbated by the pandemic. With 85% of our VT

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webinar registrants noting burnout as a serious concern in their function and team, it's clear that the stress and strain of the last two years have taken a toll on the profession. As was the case in other industries as well, organizations scrambled to pursue new business and must-win opportunities, and proposal professionals were often tasked with delivering winning proposals amid the challenging circumstances.

The roles of proposal professionals have also been evolving, as the pandemic limited face time with clients and caused a significant increase in virtual procurement activities. In many cases, proposal professionals have taken on more strategic roles related to their organization's integrated marketing strategy. While this is a positive outcome for the position in several ways, it comes at a cost to the individual who, in the absence of automation or improved processes, must still carry out the traditional responsibilities of the proposal manager while meeting new expectations.

Panelists pointed out that many organizations are now recognizing the value of proposal professionals and are making efforts to better understand what they want out of their jobs and how to keep them, given the pivotal role they play in providing stability and growth across the company.

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So we've had less face time with clients. We've had to do selling a lot more with clients virtually, so a lot more responsibility. And I think this has been happening for a while through digitization. It's just that COVID-19 has expedited the process, but what it has meant is that gradually there's less and less face time for sales people. And there's more attention being brought around the governance and the controls that procurement processes provide with proposals and pitching.

**Larissa Cornelius**, nFold



# Takeaways for 2022

Our panelists concluded the discussion by providing 8 tips to help organizations improve their proposal processes and win rates in 2022:

## **Allison Ritz**, VisibleThread

1. Look at your process as a whole, determine where you can improve it, and automate steps on a consistent basis.
2. Create a repeatable process that can scale with you as you get busier and have more opportunities.

## **Hayley Watkins**, Summit Strategy

3. Reassess (or implement) your go/no-go process to provide some guideposts and gates, and retrain your capture managers if necessary. This is especially important in the U.S. market, given the number of opportunities to evaluate.
4. Invest in your knowledge library so you have good information to pull off the shelf and tailor for new opportunities.
5. Start building a group of reliable consultants you can call upon in emergency situations.

## **Larissa Cornelius**, nFold

6. Strengthen collaboration between sales teams and bid offices, particularly around gathering and sharing competitive intelligence.
7. Increase the quality and consistency of the collateral in your knowledge base.
8. Get back to basics, and don't overlook compliance. It takes a lot of time and effort. Investigate whether your organization has the basics in place and if it is ready to automate processes.



# Panelists



**Allision Ritz**, Account Executive, [VisibleThread](#)

Allision Ritz is an Account Executive and SaaS expert at VT. She supports VT customers through helping them automate the proposal development process and dissect complex documentation. For Allison, making SaaS personal and creating long-lasting client relationships is always the ultimate goal.



**Hayley Watkins**, Co-Founder and COO, [Summit Strategy](#)

Hayley Watkins is the COO of Summit Strategy, an integrated marketing and proposal consulting firm focused on helping B2B and B2G organizations win more business through strategic planning, proposal development, branding, and training. Hayley has more than 12 years of experience in proposal development helping organizations in a variety of industries win more work by developing forward-thinking marketing and proposal processes and teams.



**Larissa Cornelius**, Owner and Chief Win Strategist, [nFold](#)

Larissa Cornelius is an award-winning proposal strategist and global proposal thought leader. She is a certified APMP professional with more than 12 years of experience in business development. In 2018, Larissa was honored as one of the APMP's 40-Under-40, a global acknowledgement of proposal professionals. She is also the Director and Chair of the APMP South Africa.



# Get your free VT Docs trial today

Through a combination of choosing the right team and the right automation tools, you can give your company the best chance of securing lucrative contracts with reliable government partners. [Start your free VT Docs trial today](#) to increase compliance in a matter of clicks.

## Our Document analysis software allows proposal and contract teams to:

- Shred RFPs & create compliance matrices in minutes
- Extract acronym definitions & occurrences
- Make faster bid / no-bid decisions
- Identify and shred critical FARs/DFARs and flow-down clauses
- Ensure alignment on Win Themes
- Remove ambiguity & confusion
- Ensure compliance by spotting gaps & risks
- Reduce 'scope creep' in RFP/bid responses

[Get Started](#)

### STATS AT A GLANCE

# 1.1m

Dollars saved per year in  
single division

# 71h

Time saved per proposal  
on average

# \$1m

Dollars saved per year  
For 20 users

# 85%

Time saved per proposal  
on average

