Customer Success Stories

How Cherokee Federal's Proposal Team Boosted Productivity And Improved Quality With VisibleThread

Head Quarters	Size of Company	Industry
Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA	4,200+ employees	Government Contracting

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About Cherokee Federal

Cherokee Federal, the federal contracting division of Cherokee Nation Businesses, is a team of tribally owned federal contracting companies. With more than 60 federal clients they focus on building solutions and solving complex challenges. They serve the nation's mission around the globe. Cherokee Federal has a heritage of ingenuity, coupled with modern business practices. This enables them to serve as a trusted innovative partner that can implement solutions.

Their team manages 2,000+ projects of all sizes, across construction, engineering, manufacturing, and mission solutions portfolios. Cherokee Federal's team of entities includes unrestricted firms as well as small disadvantaged businesses, of many which are 8(a) and/or HUBZone certified. Cherokee Federal companies offer attractive contract vehicles with unique advantages. This results in a streamlined, responsive contract management process.

Marcia Watson
Sr. Director of Proposal Operations
Cherokee Federal

Marcia manages the Proposal Operations for Cherokee Federal. Her team consists of 14 proposal management experts across 26 Cherokee Federal companies with a $2B pipeline. Marcia has 24 years of experience in the communications and marketing industries. This includes 15 years of direct proposal management and 7 years as a department director at Cherokee Federal.

"Cherokee Federal's bid and proposal professionals first learned to use VT Docs to save time in creating starter matrices, acronym lists, compare docs, and annotated readability analyses. The time savings was significant. What took several hours now took 30 – 60 minutes. Next came customization, and what began as a "show-me" exercise evolved into a collaborative incubator relationship. VT Docs showed us how to leverage the AI tools built into the platform, and then we challenged them to render outputs in a more useful way. VisibleThread bent over backwards to accommodate our needs because they knew making a tool work better for us most likely meant everyone else would appreciate the evolution as well. Now that relationship is an open communication that is part-time pragmatic and part-time brainstorm – all of which keeps our team reimagining how to make proposals better, and enthusiastic about applying our skills."

The Challenges

📊 1. Efficiencies and Balance:

The Cherokee Federal team were spending a considerable amount of time shredding RFPs and analyzing documentation for key solicitations. Due to the nature of government contracting, when RFPs come out, the team must turn them around quickly. This would result in a lot of late nights and weekend work that they felt could be reduced, if not eliminated.

☑ 2. Proposal Process Team Quality & Efficiency:

Improving efficiency and quality of proposals was essential for Cherokee Federal. They needed a single solution that would automate manual tasks, to help with all aspects of the proposal process. The proposal process involves many different areas of the business. From proposal writers & managers, business development & capture teams to contract management teams.

🏆 3. Improve win rates:

As a small team bidding on large proposals, it was seldom that there was enough time to review why they lost out on certain bids. Marcia believed that carrying out a past performance analysis could benefit them going forward. However, their resources were already stretched. They needed a solution that could help them quickly identify reasons for losing.

TOP GOVERNMENT CONTRACTOR FY21
Bloomberg
#54

In 2022, Cherokee jumped in rank in Bloomberg's top 200 Government Contractors, from #120 in 2021 to #54 in 2022.

> "The VisibleThread tool is instrumental for our proposal operations. It saves us time and allows us to more effectively manage the significant growth we have encountered."

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The Solution

The Cherokee Federal team began using VT Docs as part of their proposal processes. Marcia's team was diverse in the way that they use VisibleThread. Proposal writers were using the solution to improve their own writing capabilities. Proposal managers benefitted from the ease of creating a compliance matrix. This validated what they already knew from their own professional experience and individual talents.

Each team member was now able to increase their existing skillset. Key features used across the board included readability, thematic discovery, and compare docs. These features allowed them to think more strategically with the time they now saved.

Using the VT Docs Readability Function, Marcia found that the red team readers were no longer distracted by looking at the quality of the language. They could now focus on the content and the context. By the time the documents reached the gold team review, the writers were confident that they have a well-written product. This allowed the reviewers to approach the process strategically, with a focus solely on the message.
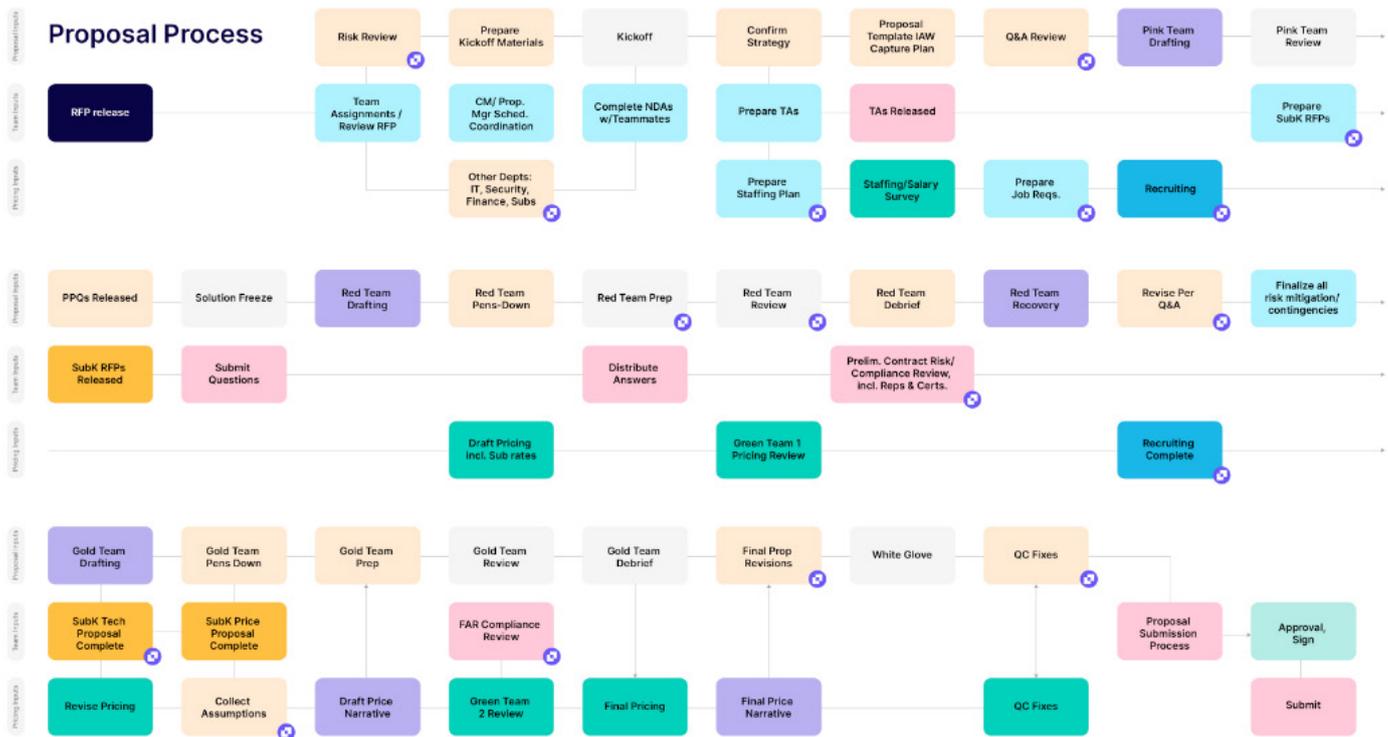
From the business development side, the Cherokee Federal team expanded the use of VT Docs for bid-no-bid decisions. This helped them to speed up their own decision-making process. VT Docs improved the self-sufficiency of the business development team and enabled them to move through opportunities faster. Marcia's team also began creating FAR/DFAR dictionaries to assist the contracts team with the comparative analysis side of contracts.

> "VisibleThread is an amazing company. Everyone I've met inside the organization has been not only friendly, but helpful, and proactive with us."

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How VT Docs is used in Cherokee Federal's proposal process

Cherokee Federal uses a thoughtful and systematic approach to proposal management. They began integrating VisibleThread at key points to streamline their process.

> "We find the most efficiency shredding changed RFPs after Q&As and amendments have been released. For Example, we were in the middle of a 2-day red team review when an amendment came out mid-day on day 1. We immediately paused the red team, assessed the changes in the Amendment and had a revised Red Team document the next morning, keeping our review schedule on target."

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The Impact

Benefits of using VT Docs for Cherokee Federal

☑ **Improved efficiency and productivity in the proposal process**

- Using VisibleThread leads to more collaborative proposal building.
- VisibleThread creates a more motivated and productive team environment.

📈 **Past Proposal Analysis to improve future win rates**

- VisibleThread helps analyze past lost proposals for insights to improve future proposals.
- Language analysis in VisibleThread provides insights to help improve future proposals and win rates.

⏱ **Time saving & removing instances of human error in tedious tasks**

- VisibleThread saves time by checking for poor acronym usage, improving proposal quality.
- Checking acronyms manually is time-consuming and prone to human error. VisibleThread speeds up the process and improves accuracy.

1. Improved efficiency and productivity in the proposal process

VisibleThread has helped to improve the quality of proposals, increased their efficiency, and improved productivity. Cherokee Federal's teams are now more collaborative in building their proposal responses.

> "I can see a spirit change in my team, where they're excited that this platform is helping them do their job on a daily basis. They feel more successful, more empowered and it really helps bring our teams more collaboratively into building our proposal responses."

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2. Past Proposal Analysis to improve future win rates

Marcia's team retrospectively uses VisibleThread to evaluate lost proposals to help them understand why they lost them. This is done by using the language analysis functions within VT Docs. They are able to use these insights to improve the future proposals they write. This will help improve their win rate and build confidence in knowing that their team are writing better proposals to begin with.

> "Our best written materials are what's going to win for us the next time around. How we use lessons learned from our proposal practices drives decision-making for the next opportunities."

3. Time saving & removing instances of human error in tedious tasks

Poor acronym usage in a document reflects the quality of the finished proposal. Prior to using VisibleThread, checking acronyms was a very time consuming process. Often human error can happen in these time-sensitive situations. These types of tedious tasks would previously have taken her team hours, and now since using VT Docs it takes them no time at all. Marcia's teams can now focus their efforts on improving context, carrying out deeper analysis, and increasing proposal quality.

> "Acronyms being the best time-saver. It's a nightmare, it's a project, it's a chore. And now they almost look forward to it. You can see that list come together and you know, you've got a nicely written document"

Conclusion

Since Cherokee Federal began using VisibleThread, the solution has become an invaluable asset to their Proposal Process. They have signed a multi-year deal with VisibleThread and increased their number of licenses to allow their wider team to utilize VT Docs.

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