



Customer Success Stories

# How small business BVTI used VisibleThread to win a multi-million-dollar proposal

Enabling small businesses to punch above their weight class.

Head Quarters  
Washington D.C, USA

Size of Company  
50+ employees

Industry  
Government Contracting

[VisibleThread.com](https://www.VisibleThread.com)



# Introduction

Chances are, if you've worked in a small business, you have worn many hats. So. Many. Hats. Imagine how many of those hats you could discard if you had a means of automating manual processes. You could also win lucrative contracts in the process...

For this Case Study, VisibleThread's Aoife Keane sat down with Cheryl Warner, VP at Best Value Technology Inc. They discussed how the platform helped her small team win a multi-million-dollar contract.

**"One day, we're not going to be small, so we need to be good at competing."**

It highlights the challenges small businesses face when competing for contracts against larger corporations. Through VisibleThread, BVTI overcame challenges in their proposal writing process. These included improving quality reviews and automating manual steps.

In short, VisibleThread helps small businesses leverage solutions to compete (and win) pivotal contracts. It can also improve your standing within your chosen sector.

**"After one year of using VisibleThread for bidding on three proposals, BVTI won all three."**

## About BVTI

Based in Washington D.C, USA, BVTI is a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB for short). Certified by the SBA, BVTI has a national presence in 15 states. Operating for two decades, they describe themselves as "a small mature business" providing best value solutions to government clients. These include the US Intelligence Community, Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Veteran's Administration, and Department of Transportation.

# BVTI

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## Cheryl Warner

Vice President of  
Business Development

Vice President of Business Development, Cheryl started with BVTI in 2007. Kicking off her career there as a Business Development Manager, she then progressed to Director of the department. Now VP of BD for over a decade, Cheryl's agile team of four handles a range of tasks. These include capture and proposal management, plus writing and editing. As BVTI's internal change agent, Cheryl introduced the use of VisibleThread to the Operations Team on all things VisibleThread, which utilizes VisibleThread to support quality assurance and monitoring for their Government customers.



# Challenges for BVTI

Multimillion-dollar "niche" contract opportunities are a once-in-a-decade occurrence for BVTI. In short, there is no room for error when honing a proposal... In 2017, one such chance presented itself – a sought-after deal worth in the region of \$50-70 million.

Pursuing and preparing for this moment for over a decade, BVTI knew this proposal would mean competing alongside larger corporations. Therefore, they needed to devise innovative strategies – and fast.

With this in mind, Cheryl and her team identified three key challenges to their goal of effective competition.

## 1. Improve their quality review and business writing process

With Cheryl involving BVTI's Operations Team, her four-person biz-dev team needed to outline the process. After all, Ops already had their day-to-day workload to contend with, so planning was key. Another issue was onboarding other subcontractors with BVTI's existing proposal process. Objective feedback was essential for internal and external stakeholders throughout multiple areas of the proposal writing process.

## 2. Automating manual steps

To call BVTI's initial proposal process laborious would be something of an understatement. For context; Cheryl and her team would often find themselves working in the wee hours to get it done. It required several manual steps, including...

- Developing a Compliance Matrix
- Preparing annotated outlines, including sections C, L & M for writers
- Creating Kickoff Packages to incorporate and get partners on board
- Getting down with the whiteboard process to ensure a clear and unified understanding of the solicitation requirements

## 3. Helping a small business compete with larger businesses

BVTI was the only small business invited to take part in a Multi-Step Advisory process. How were they supposed to compete with larger companies with ample resources? They had to think smarter, devising a solution that could aid several stages of the proposal process.



# The Solution

With the revised draft solicitation released, Cheryl turned to VisibleThread instead of making the manual changes. Using the VT Docs Compare Docs function, they quickly pinpointed any changes. Given there was a two-week submission deadline after the release of the final solicitation, this was a critical improvement.

Four key stages where VisibleThread helped BVTI in their capture and proposal process include:

## 1. Capture Process: Validation and compliance check before proposal kick-off

After months of working to shape the solicitation requirements, VisibleThread enabled Cheryl's team to validate these capture efforts and assess a final bid/no bid decision. Utilizing VisibleThread, the team tracked word usage frequency and consumer patterns. From this analysis, Cheryl's team constructed a starter compliance matrix to cross-check all items.

## 2. Proposal Development Process: Proposal kickoff

At this stage, VisibleThread was providing direction to BVTI's writing team, plus the reviewers. With sub-contractors onboarded, Cheryl's team benefited from the VT Docs reports when incorporating their Ops Team and subcontract partners into the proposal process. This brought alignment both internally and externally, a critical factor in proposal success. A shared understanding of proposal direction and partner roles improves collaboration.

## 3. Proposal Review: Final compliance check

The BVTI team used VT Docs to conduct a final compliance check. With numerous writers onboard, VT Docs enabled BVTI to do a one-voice compliance review. Here they looked at the grammar and content quality of the final proposal itself before the white glove review.

## 4. Continuous Process Improvement

As part of their new continuous process improvement plan, performing a post-submission proposal review was key. After a welcomed two-week post-submission rest, the BVTI team used VT Docs to do a proposal analysis. This analysis helped to spot areas where they could improve their proposal writing process. Knowing what went well, and what didn't, allows the BVTI team to become better writers and reviewers. This, in turn, increases their chances of winning future bids.



# The Impact

There were many ways in which VisibleThread made life so much easier for BVTI's pivotal proposal writing...

## 1. Tight deadlines became achievable

When a request for "Final Revised Proposals" was issued as the last multi-step advisory phase, BVTI noted that it contained strategic challenges and several new additions. They had seven days to complete five revised RFP volumes and deliver the proposal – in person. With the evaluators challenging them in a scrutinized effort to find deficiencies, BVTI had a near-impossible task.

Using VisibleThread, Cheryl's team generated compliant and detailed 'changes reference matrices' for every new RFP volume request. The Compare Docs feature meant the team could collate their initial submission and final revised versions. In fact, they noted the feature had undertaken more than half of the work with ease. The result? They were able to delete identical entries, formatting the document to highlight volume sections, subsections, pages, and paragraphs.

**"If we didn't have VisibleThread, it would have been impossible to have a compliant on-time submission."**





## 2. BVTI made savings

After submitting the proposal, the team looked at the time saved by using VT Docs. Creating four cross-reference matrices took just 10 hours. Doing this manually, using MS Word Compare, would have involved a line-by-line comparison that would have taken days. Using VisibleThread, the team saved a total of 18 hours on this bid.

VisibleThread reinforced the existing processes that Cheryl had in place, adding an extra layer of rigor. The team could now invest in diving into the analysis of the requirement and strategizing for improved solutions.

**“It’s saving us so much time and brain power. It allows us to focus on what matters for achieving a win and making those business decisions. Before VisibleThread, we were having to manually take care of the mechanics of getting the proposal done.”**

VisibleThread reinforced the existing processes that Cheryl had in place, adding an extra layer of rigor. The team could now invest in diving into the analysis of the requirement and strategizing for improved solutions.

**“VisibleThread has helped us become quicker. It allows us to focus more on the business bid decisions and on the content of the proposal. It helps us make sure that we are compliant – and gives us the confidence that we’re compliant.”**



### 3. Improved writing quality and proposal process

With a tight 7-day turnaround, a manual process would have generated a basic 'C grade' level 'changes reference' table. VisibleThread enabled BVTI to take things next level. It helped them produce an 'A grade' level table, complete with side-by-side content comparison and changes made. VisibleThread provided a 100% accurate recap, with zero human error.

BVTI have integrated VisibleThread into their organization's processes. When the biz-dev team wins proposals, they can distribute tasks companywide using a responsibility matrix, ensuring delivery commitments.

VisibleThread facilitates continuous process improvement by providing objective feedback. Cheryl found this hugely helpful as they had to borrow staff from other departments for proposal writing. Her team was able to show colleagues how to write to a target tenth-grade reading level. This highlighted the need for shorter sentences.

**"We use VisibleThread as part of our internal development of our proposal reviewers and our external stakeholders outside of the BD team... No tool is a silver bullet. You still have to do the hard work. VisibleThread reinforced the existing processes we have in place and added a depth of rigor. It supplemented our limited BD staff resources. By removing the manual process, we were then able to spend more time diving deep into the analysis. We're able to strategize to develop better solutions."**

### 4. Enabling small teams to take on big organizations

BVTI was the only small business bidding on this multi-million-dollar proposal. Their BD team of 4 had to be resourceful, maximizing the solutions they had at hand for optimal efficiency.

**"VisibleThread is like adding two more people to our team – that we don't have the luxury of adding. It has saved us time, and money. We're more efficient at what we do. The bottom line is that it helps us, as a small business, to compete at higher weight levels than normal."**



# Conclusion

VisibleThread has helped BVTI grow. After landing this substantial bid, it gave them incredible standing in their particular vertical sector. In fact, Cheryl's team were informed that their proposal was streets ahead...

**“After we won the contract, members of the Government Source Selection Team told us that the quality of our proposal was better than most large company proposals that they see.”**

VisibleThread helped them at various stages of the proposal process including:

- ✓ The compliance check
- ✓ Proposal development
- ✓ Final compliance check
- ✓ Post-submission proposal review

**“VisibleThread was an important part of our being able to fight above our weight class with large businesses. The Government Source Selection Team literally reviews thousands of proposals – so they know what they’re talking about!”**

We hope you found our case study helpful! To see Cheryl discuss how much VisibleThread helped BVTI win big proposals, do make your way here...





# Are you interested in learning more about VT Docs?

Register for our no-obligation  
live demonstration.

Live demo

**Need help or  
have a question?**



Talk to us by mailing [info@VisibleThread.com](mailto:info@VisibleThread.com)  
to find out more about the core capabilities  
of VT Docs