



Executive Summary Secrets: Proven Six-Part Formula to Persuade Evaluators to Award the Contract to You

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by: **Jim Hiles**

Olessia Smotrova-Taylor is an outspoken advocate of compelling proposals. Her book *Executive Summary Secrets - Proven Six-Part Formula to Persuade Evaluators to Award the Contract to You* will transform your outlook and approach to executive summaries.

Smotrova-Taylor draws inspiration for an effective executive summary from the best parts of direct response marketing that seek to elicit reader action. Her six steps give the right information in the right order to engage buyers and bring them to a call to action. In her words, “this technique applies to proposals because you are not selling through a dialogue with the government – you are delivering a one-way message, and then waiting for their response. Your task is to make this one-way message as convincing as possible because you may not have another chance to get your customer’s attention.”

She grew up in Uzbekistan and studied art before starting her career as a writer for the *Financial Times* of London, and later as a proposal manager and business owner. Fine examples of her artwork adorn the walls of the corporate headquarters of her company OST Global Solutions and reflect the style of the country of her youth. Her unique combination of artist and business professional shine through in *Executive Summary Secrets*. Original illustrations by the author complement creative and intuitive idea presentations that ensure quick reader understanding

and appreciation of advanced proposal techniques.

Executive Summary Secrets is set up as a workbook; a practical, how-to guide. There are thought-provoking questions with space to record answers, and exercises that build on each other and provide for immediate practical application of the six-part executive summary formula.

Too many volumes, workbooks, and instructional materials have gone the way of less is more. Smotrova-Taylor has gone in the opposite direction. Not by writing an excessively wordy narrative, but by including detailed examples and a rich description of “how” that takes the reader to a deeper level of understanding and includes practical and actionable advice. That advice includes examples from her experiences shepherding busy executives through executive summary completion. A section of *Executive Summary Secrets* is devoted to dangerous misconceptions about executive summaries and includes three specific strategies for overcoming the common danger of the wrong party being responsible for the executive summary. Hint: The correct person probably does not have the term “executive” in their title.

Additional topics covered in this informative book include questions and answers that are keys to preparing a persuasive executive summary, the six-part executive summary formula, advanced techniques, the seventh part of the six-

part formula, and a bonus section on editing tools and techniques.

I purchased *Executive Summary Secrets* on a Wednesday. By that Friday I had used the six-step formula to elicit features, benefits, and proofs from a subject matter expert and incorporate them with great effect into a revision of two executive summaries. The format and presentation of Smotrova-Taylor’s insights were so clear and compelling that the following week I incorporated the six-step formula into a storyboarding workshop with two bid teams. These bid teams completed an in-class exercise where the six steps transformed and refined their messaging. Participant comments from this session included “I immediately applied the 6 Steps to a draft Exec Summary. It definitely tells a much more compelling story! You guys should consider holding more sessions to expose others!”

Chances are high that Smotrova-Taylor is a familiar figure to many APMP *Journal* readers, through her prolific blogging, writing, and presence at APMP events. She has plans to continue book-level publication of her thoughts and approaches for other proposal elements. *Executive Summary Secrets*, the first of a potential series of illuminating volumes from her, contains a number of immediately applicable ideas, tips, tools, and techniques for proposal professionals.