

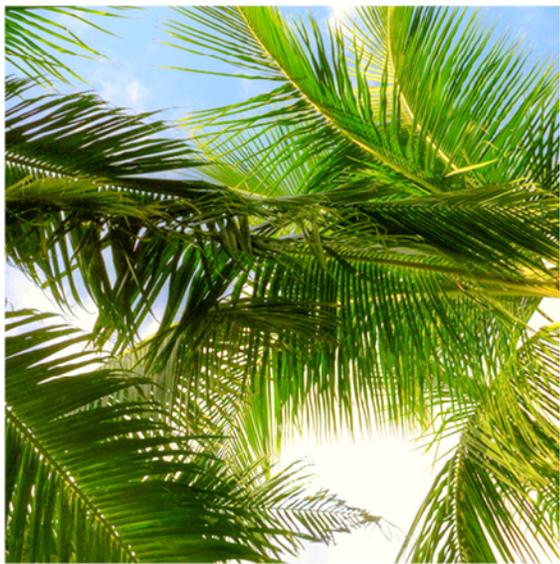
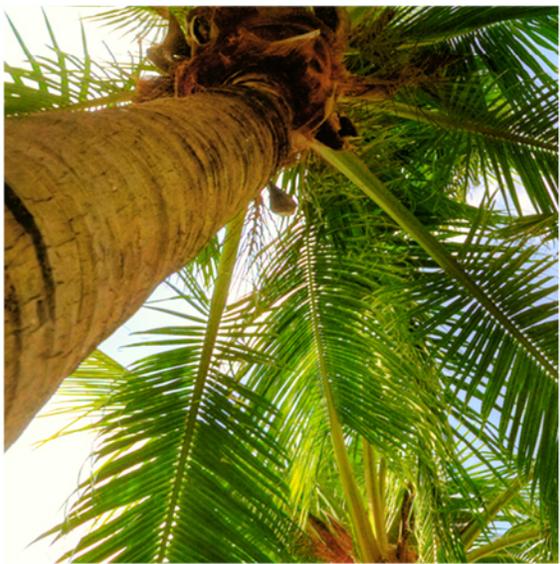


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# Effectively Growing Your Proposal Support Infrastructure with Subcontractors

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Structuring a business arrangement beneficial to both you and your subcontractors

Improving collaboration between your customers and subcontractors

Addressing issues before they escalate into problems

Using subcontractor best practices to advance internal processes and capabilities



# Benefits and pitfalls of subcontracting proposal functions

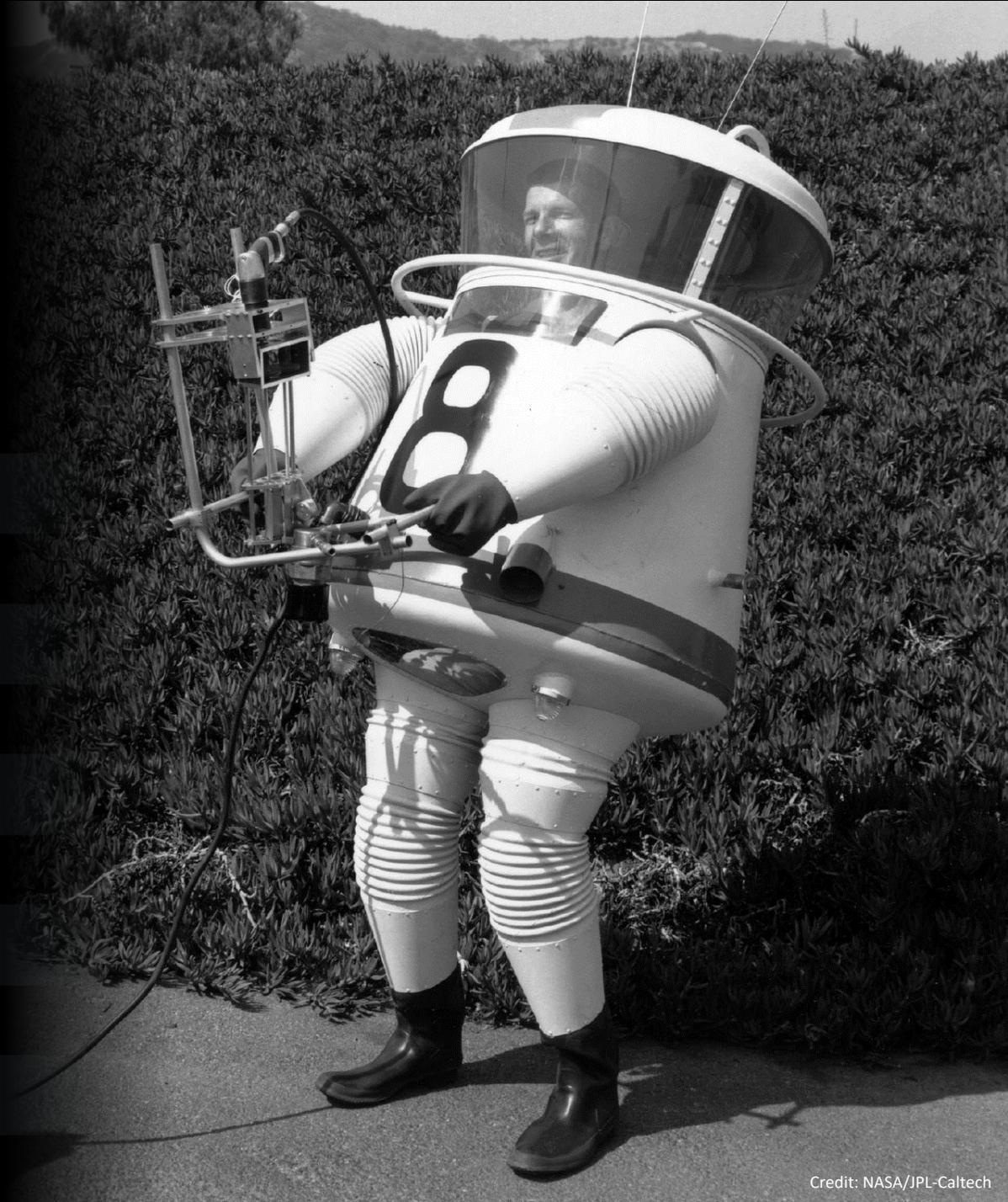
Assessing the need to outsource

Establishing a services subcontract

Managing subcontractor staff

Setting customer expectations

Maintaining the partnership



# Assessing the need

## **Lacked internal resources**

Seven staff to coordinate, edit, and format 26 concurrent proposals across three campaigns

Decentralized graphics support

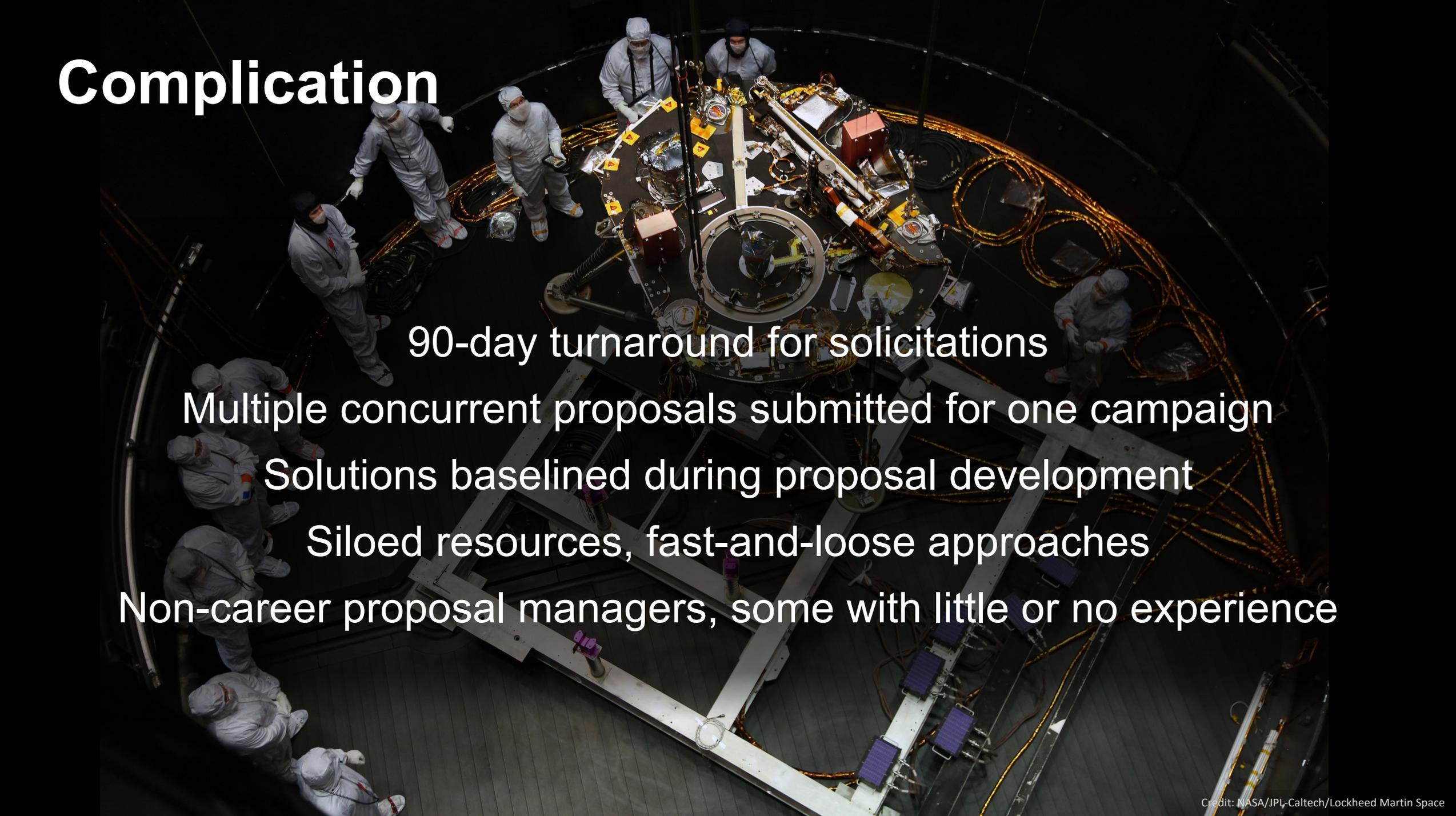
## **Hiring restrictions**

Limits placed on size of JPL workforce

## **Budget constraints**

Staffing with temporary full-time staff costly and high risk

# Complication



90-day turnaround for solicitations

Multiple concurrent proposals submitted for one campaign

Solutions baselined during proposal development

Siloed resources, fast-and-loose approaches

Non-career proposal managers, some with little or no experience

# An opportunity to...

Work more like a proposal shop—JPL staff hired less for their proposal experience and more for their ability to function across multiple disciplines

Infuse new skills and best practices—shift from quantity of ideas to quality of ideas





# Disciplines required

Proposal coordination

Art direction

Graphic design

Illustration

Desktop publishing

Technical writing/editing

Proofreading

# Establishing a subcontract

In addition to a long-established graphics support subcontract, two RFPs were competed...

## **General graphics/documentation**

Largely used for covers and keystone graphics

## **Proposal-specific support**

Encompasses all proposal documentation support

...requiring subcontract work orders (SWOs) for each discrete task

# Rollout 1.0

Subs paired with JPL documentation staff to aid the transition of support





JPL documentation staff struggled to manage subcontractor staff

Subcontractor staff struggled with our decentralized, undisciplined management approaches

Proposal teams struggled to engage subcontractor staff working remotely

# Rollout 2.0

Subs assigned to all documentation-related roles across an entire proposal or campaign



# Instituted campaign orientation

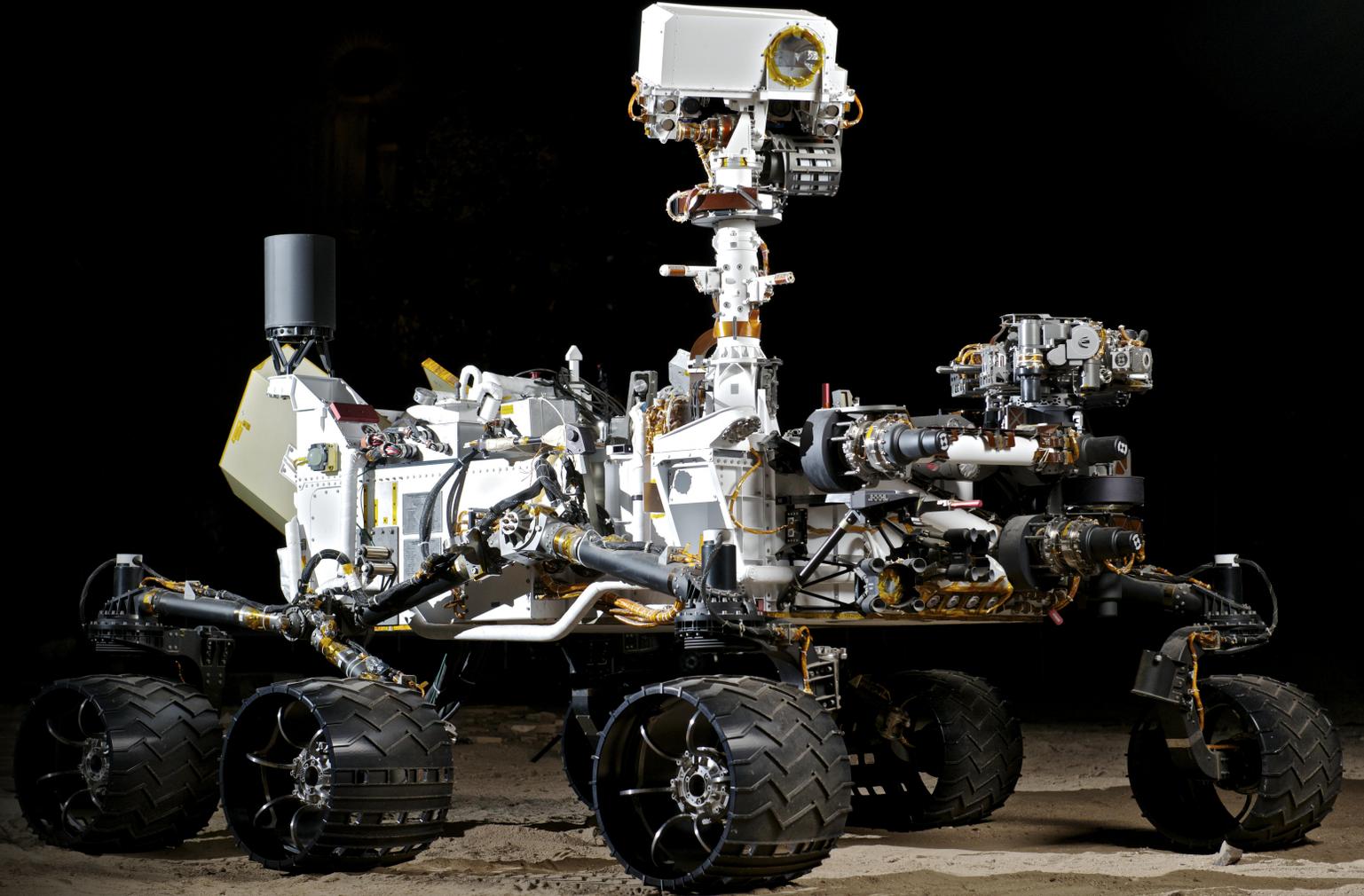
Partnership

JPL vision and culture

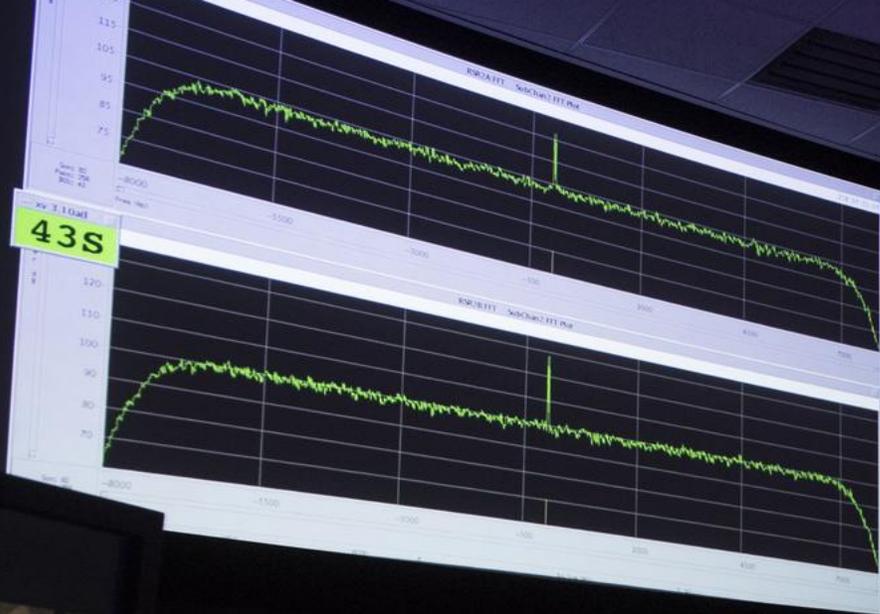
JPL proposal process

Campaign specifics

General housekeeping



# Developed JPL guidebook

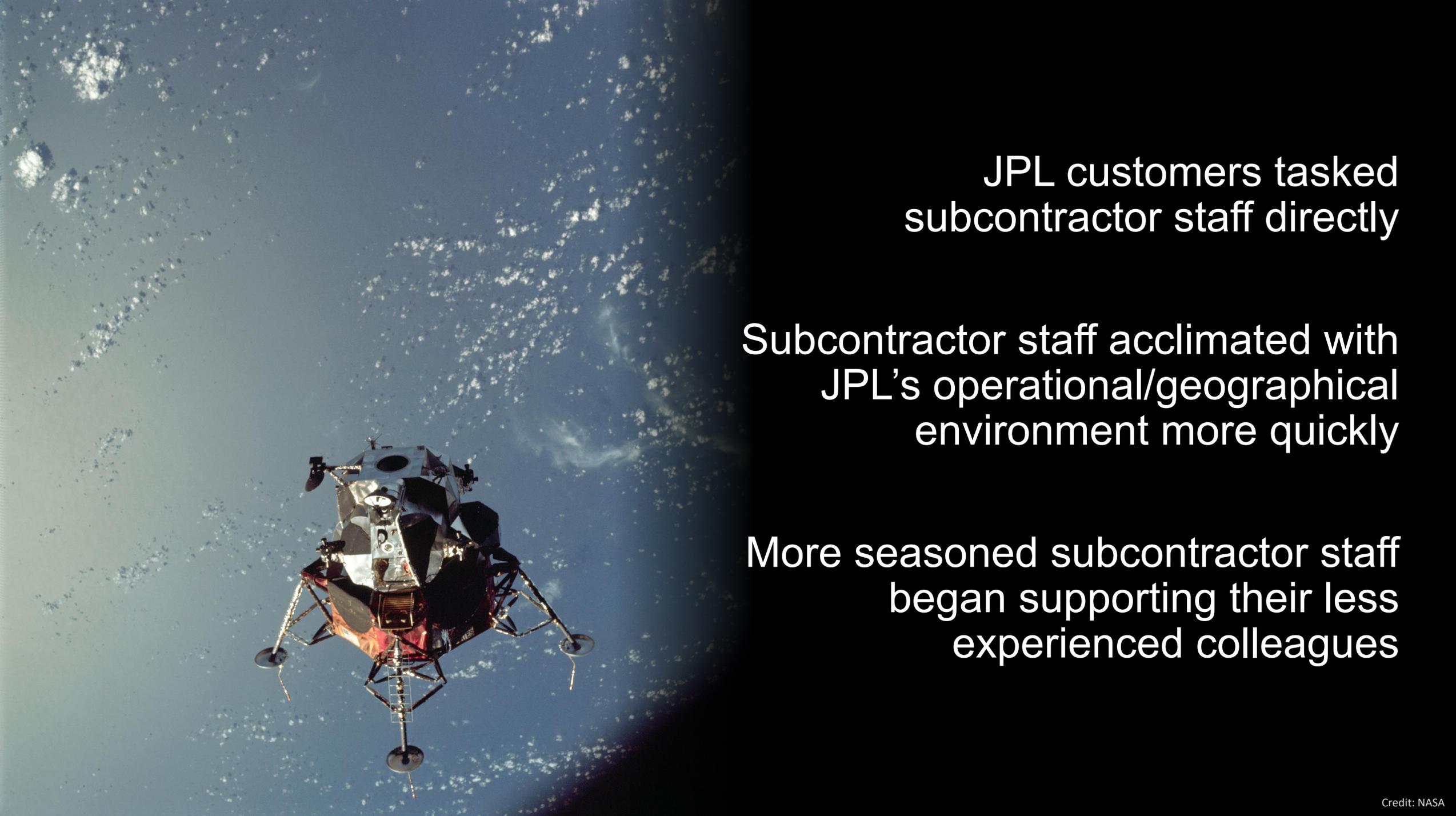


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CHARLES ELACHI MISSION CONTROL CENTER

Workplace overview  
Onboarding process  
Proposal tools and infrastructure  
Editing/formatting checklist

Weekly reporting  
Travel policies  
Emergency contacts  
JPL nomenclature



JPL customers tasked  
subcontractor staff directly

Subcontractor staff acclimated with  
JPL's operational/geographical  
environment more quickly

More seasoned subcontractor staff  
began supporting their less  
experienced colleagues

# Managing subcontractors

Subcontractors report hours for their staff weekly, which is used to audit invoices

Travel is negotiated with proposal managers and approved by contract technical manager in advance

Status of all activities is discussed with subcontractor management in weekly conference calls

Issues are addressed immediately

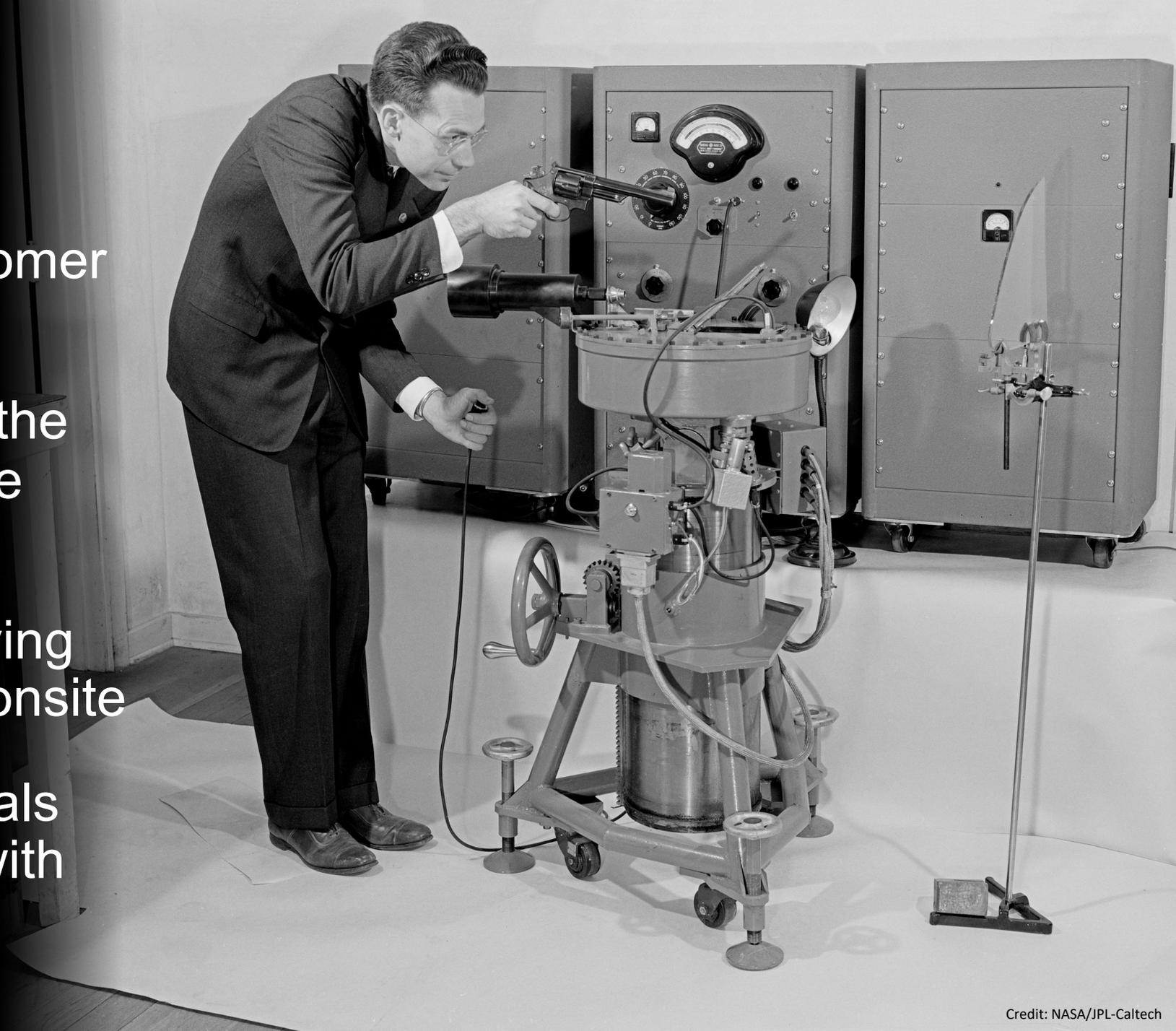
# Challenges

A rough start shook customer confidence

Labor categories lacked the flexibility to react to scope changes

Customers preferred having their subcontractor staff onsite

Short turnaround proposals could not be supported with set process



# Challenges

Hours reported by subcontractor staff did not reflect invoices, delaying payment

JPL's invoicing requirements did not align with subcontractor invoicing system

JPL did not provide adequate instructions regarding travel reimbursement



# Solutions

Provide ongoing feedback to subcontractors

Introduced end-of-proposal lessons learned

Dropped less used labor categories

Increased travel budgets

Added SWO to cover ad hoc support

# Solutions

Transitioned weekly reporting/  
invoicing responsibilities to  
Accounting Manager

Enacted “Pre-audit” process to  
review invoices prior to  
submission

Updated cadence of invoicing to  
within 2 weeks of the previous  
month

Instituted a more thorough travel  
expense reimbursement process

# Setting customer expectations

Services being procured are documented during the budget negotiation process

Weekly reports are shared with proposal managers and stakeholders

Feedback from prior campaigns, including subsequent actions and recommendations, is provided

# Each SWO includes...

Detailed summary of services

Description of deliverables

Milestone/review schedule

Names of subcontractor staff

Breakout of not-to-exceed costs

Travel estimates



# Regular reporting

Weekly reports for every active SWO include breakout of hours worked, hours remaining, and travel expenses

Subcontractor-held weekly meetings with staff provide a channel for identifying concerns

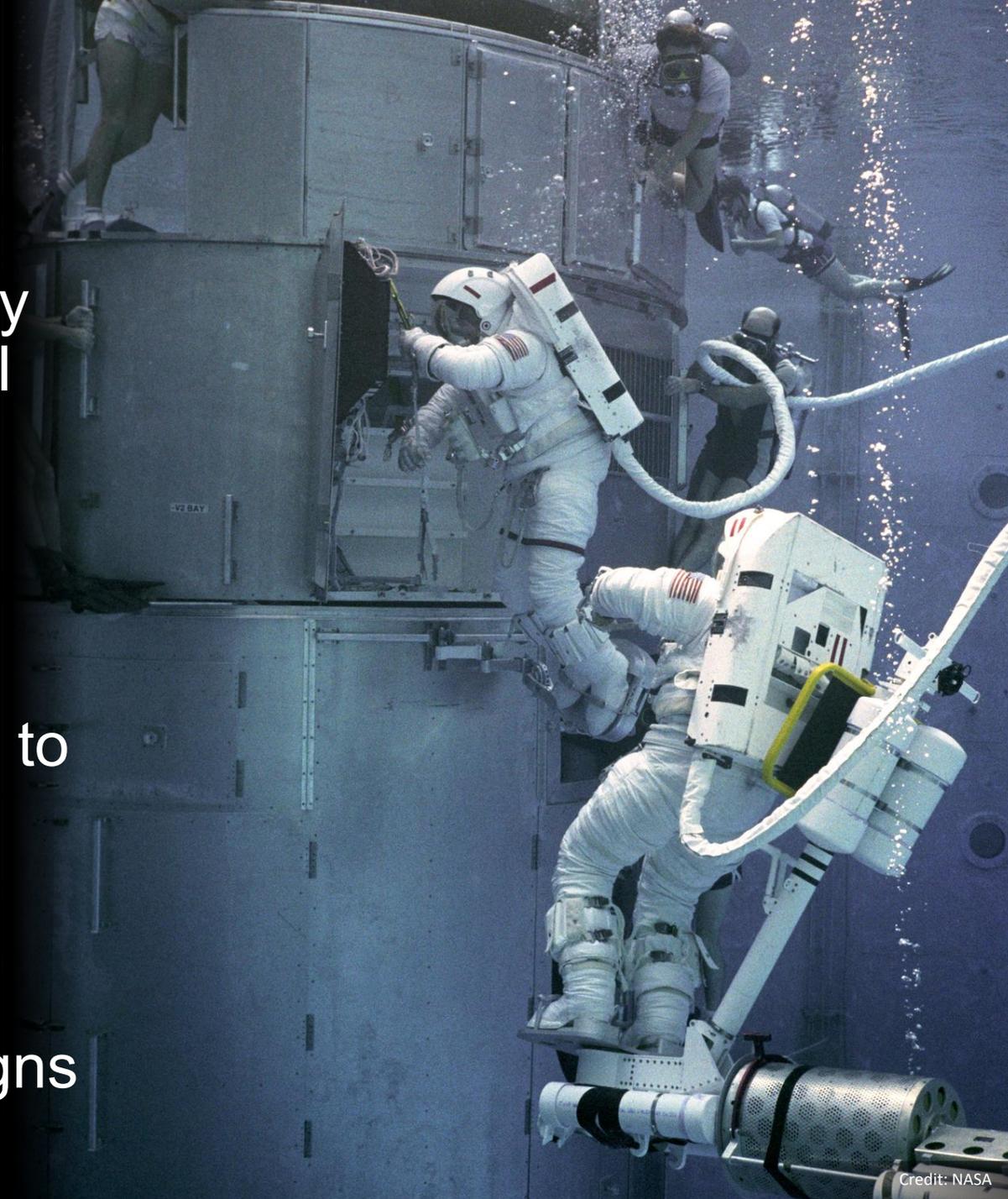
# Lessons learned

Lessons learned conducted after every campaign to discuss what worked well and what did not

Feedback shared with subcontractor management

Individual staff performance assessed to determine whether they will be used again

Recommended process changes incorporated into subsequent campaigns



# Maintaining the partnership

Communications with subcontractors, their staff, and our customers are frequent and candid

Risks are managed through ongoing oversight

Subcontractor benefits are taken into account when making decisions

# Communication

Feedback solicited from subcontractor management weekly

Feedback solicited from proposal manager bi-weekly and prior milestones

Open door policy kept for all subcontractor staff

Subcontractor staff encouraged to contact colleagues with questions

# Managing risks



One-year prime contract with four one-year options

Flexibility to change staffing or cancel SWOs built into the process

SWOs assessed weekly to confirm accuracy

Contingency plans in place for back-up support

# Subcontract growth

Added proposal management and proposal strategist/review labor categories

Career proposal managers and experienced reviewers accessible to our customers

Proposal experts available to support process development

Replaced home-grown training with subcontractor-run courses

Loose proposal processes now baselined against industry best practices



# Benefits

Increase in overall volume of work

Decrease in proposal costs

Better integration of subs

Infusion of proposal best practices

Accurate invoicing data



# Final thoughts

Set expectations early

Integrate subcontractor staff into your organization

Solicit customer feedback

Replace anyone working out immediately

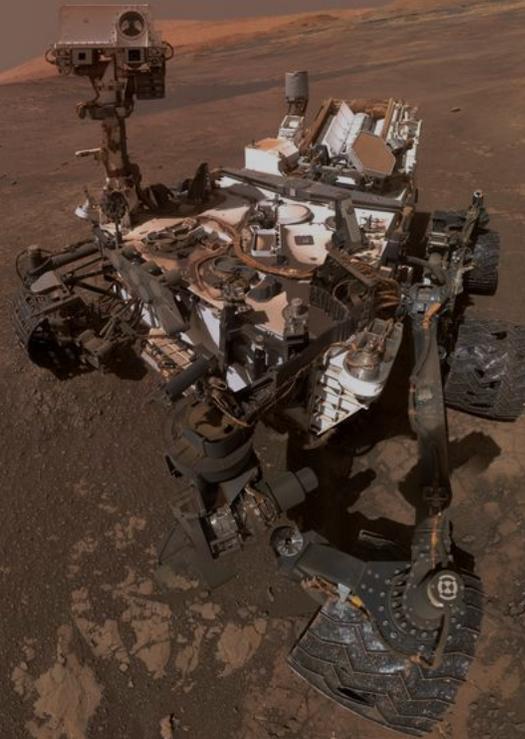
Redeploy those removed for strict personality conflicts

Build a relationship with subcontractor management

Establish a subcontract with adequate cost controls

Don't over restrict yourself with labor categories

Provide inspiration and incentives



**GO TO THE  
APMP APP  
AND RATE  
THIS  
SESSION NOW**  
*(while it's fresh in your mind!)*



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