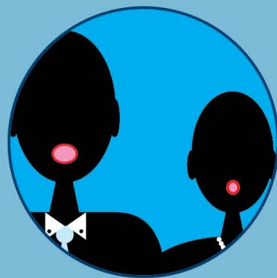


What is a Technical Communicator?

*A Guide by
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Introduction

Looking around, there are so many products that we use on a daily basis. Stereos, VCRs, cell phones, computers...the list goes on. Each of these items has a multitude of capabilities that are too hard to memorize. And in each box, there is a book that talks about the functions and instructions of that device. This book is your bible for understanding and using the machine that you are holding in your hand. And if you think that documentation is not vital, just think about how many people can actually program their VCR without the help of their children!

In the past, these documents have been given a bad reputation for inaccurate or incomplete information, unfriendly presentation, and mistakes that usually lead to the customer service call. But in these times of fiscal tightening, many companies are only beginning to realize the many assets of great documentation. Documentation is the foundation of knowledge that assists in the daily lives of consumers as well as corporate personnel. And as the employee numbers begin to dwindle, their knowledge also leaves when they do. It is vital to capture the information for future growth, as well as current understanding.

What is a Technical Communicator?

Technical communicators are professionals who use their skills to create manuals, business collateral, instruction packets, packaging, electronic help databases, websites, and much more. They are trained to find the proper presentation of technical information, using words and images that help people to understand a specific topic.

Technical communicators are also well-versed in a multitude of software programs that assist in the overall production of documentation in its variety of forms. Whether the information is presented for printed or electronic distribution, these professionals use these tools to create a communication platform that is meant to bridge the gap between manufacturers and their customers.

Because this industry utilizes so many different types of software for so many varied uses, the technical communicator has to be an expert at rapid cross-training to get the required knowledge that will meet the expedited needs of the client. This strength also helps in rapidly educating themselves with your product, so that they can write the best documentation that will reach your intended audience.

Today's technical communicator is also known as a technical writer, graphic illustrator, web designer, editor, and many other variations of this discipline. The main common link is that their technical abilities are being used to create the communication's platform that you'll need to succeed.

Benefits of a Professional Technical Communicator

Unfortunately, many companies do not understand the significance of having dedicated technical communicators on their staff. In order to be competitive in today's business environment, companies have had to cut their resources to meet ever-tightening profit margins. But when these companies choose to eliminate their documentation department, then they are only increasing the stress for their customer service and marketing departments. Maybe if that company was to equate the presentation and content of publicly distributed documents with their public image or professional integrity, then they would change their thought processes.

These professionals not only provide a valuable service in creating knowledge bases for the company's personnel and consumers, but they also allow each staff member to concentrate on a specific job without the need of completing a task that they are not qualified to handle. Perhaps the term "qualified" is a harsh word, but it provides a tone that must be understood by those people who do not work in this field. All in all, having these technical communicators on staff will lead to increased productivity and decreased costs.

What Is A Technical Communicator?

The knowledge that a good technical communicator holds has been obtained through many years of interactions with the staff and products. The skills are honed through years of training and usage, including skills such as:

- Interviewing a wide spectrum of people to obtain a well-rounded knowledge base,
- Providing insights to other organizations to further improve product development and documentation,
- Creating a unified presentation for all forms of corporate document,
- Targeting information and its delivery to particular venues or audiences,
- Understanding pre-production needs to limit production costs and improve quality,
- Assisting in the creation of a powerful corporate identity.

The tasks that are completed by these professionals are infinite in their possibilities, but unified in their purpose. The sole purpose of a technical communicator is to provide true understanding on topics, either commonplace or specialized, to a wide audience. A good technical communicator will always find the tools and skills necessary to create a product that is customized for a particular audience. If those skills are not available, then you can be assured that this person is educating herself to keep up with the cutting edge of the documentation envelope. By maintaining a staff of technical communicators, a company will always put their best face forward to the world. And in this world of ever-changing players, your knowledge can be the defining factor for the major market share of consumer confidence.

What to Look For In A Technical Communicator

There are some typical characteristics to be found in most technical communication specialists. Remember that no two professionals have the same career path, but don't discount a professional because they lack a specific industry's experience. In no specific order, some traits are:

- Writing and design styles will differ, but the need to communicate is their driving force.
- An unquenchable desire to expand their knowledge base.
- Research is in their blood.
- They will be interacting with your products and your people, so that they get a complete picture of what they're writing about.
- They can provide valuable insight from a user's point of view to improve your product development processes and information.
- They are training off-the-job to be prepared for the next project. And it's not always at a school.
- They will adapt to just about any situation.
- They are proficient at many types of software, and can usually learn a new one without impacting your project.
- They complete their projects in steps, with each step focusing on a different aspect (e.g. design, writing, editing, etc.) of the completed product. Don't expect a finished product on the first try.
- When their project management skills are combined with their communications expertise, then your project is sure to reach a successful conclusion.

How To Reach Me

My name is **Carolyn S Brajkovich**, and I'm a technical communicator.

If you want to find out more about what this technical communicator can do for your communication needs, just reach out and find me.



I'll be more than happy to help you find a customized communications solution that will fit your needs.

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