# Technical Writing as a Service

## Understanding the Value Proposition

The role of a technical writer is to compile technical information provided by experts into content that is specific for the *context* of the reader/s.

This often includes words on a page, but invariably requires the ability to discern prioritisation of content, create order and organisation from the details, and synthesise essential information into concise synopsis. It also requires an understanding of how design and layout influence information retention.

To gain the most value from such Technical Writing, it is beneficial to characterise it more as a "service" implemented from within a Business Unit that is regularly exposed to the entire organisation, not just select projects.

This allows every team and project to gain from the service in a cost effective manner.

## Risk Prevention

Among the ways, that such a service can add value is the often-overlooked role technical writing has with regard to project communication and risk prevention.

Some overt examples are:

- The Three Mile Island nuclear accident of March 28, 1979, which resulted in a partial core meltdown. The technicians failed to manage the shutdown process due to poor documentation and limited procedures. Better technician documents now prevent a recurrence of such a failure.

- The AMTRAK train derailment, in 1993 at Big Bayou Canot, which killed 47 and injured 103. New and completely revised bulletins and guides now provide engineers with clear emergency procedures.

- The Space Shuttle Challenger disaster of January 28, 1986, resulted in the death of seven astronauts, including the first teacher in space. NASA enhanced communications between engineers and management through improvements in documentation and document methodology.

These examples evidence why technical jargon, complex engineering data, and limited summaries can potentially lead to fundamental project failures.

Technical Writing as a service

The following table summarises areas where Technical Writing offers a benefit:

| Service | Summary |
|---|---|
| Content development | A technical writer offers the ability to interview subject matter experts, research additional details with regard to relevant technology, and write comprehensive content.<br><br>A technical writer needs to learn and understand technologies as they apply to each project situation, such as JAVA 2EE, IBM WebSphere, SUN Solaris. |
| Graphics and design | A technical writer offers the ability to improve the value and effectiveness of architecture and infrastructure diagrams, as well as graphics for documentation.<br><br>A writer must be able to take engineer or architect sketches and refined them to incorporate client context details and a professional final look.<br><br>The writer uses numerous tools including Visio, Paintshop, Photoshop, and GiMP to create final professional designs and diagrams. |
| Document management | A technical writer offers proficiency with numerous publication and print tools and document management technologies that can help improve the final client deliverables.<br><br>A technical writer uses numerous tools for improving process and delivery of documentation. |
| Content editing | Technical writing may also focus on content editing, exclusively or in addition to the other services.<br><br>The ability to provide consistent tone, verb tense, context and grammar are essential for professional documents. |

| Research | Often even the subject matter experts do not have the time or option to research material for more complex or large documents.

A technical writer is adept at performing research on a broad spectrum of subjects to provide the most comprehensive content for clients. |
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| Training | A technical writer transforms information into concise content for a spectrum of audiences. Often this includes user training for small group, one-to-one and large audiences.

The ability to provide training also requires knowledge and experience with multi-media tools and presentation techniques. |

Our technical writing services can provide a cohesive set of professional writing, editing, and graphics solutions for all technology communications.

As a service, technical writing can therefore improve the value of both internal documents as well as client deliverables.