



Reasons for Technical Writers to be Involved Early in the Development Process

By Jerry Grohovsky

Copyright 2009. JPG & Associates, Inc.

Savings in terms of dollars and time:

- The most obvious advantage is in the face-value savings realized by using technical writers, from development through product delivery. Hour-to-hour comparisons show that: Technical writer billing time is much less costly than engineer billing time (possibly 30-50% lower, especially on the higher end for contract engineering).
- Because an engineer's time is freed from documentation tasks when involving technical writers at the start of a development cycle, the engineer can then apply the majority of his or her time to engineering development, and not have to share any of that time with the writing obligations (other than the usual minimal role as SME, as required by a writer assigned to a development project). This time re-allocation should in turn accelerate development cycles.

Other advantages:

- Because technical writers are not engineers, they have the unique advantage of “stepping back” from the engineer viewpoint, which allows writers to ask the right questions, fill-in otherwise omitted information, and simply write from more of a “user point of view.”
- When engineers write the majority of the documentation content, it most likely inherited by a writer or editor who has to go back and re-organize the information, fill in omissions, and “word smith” the grammar. Often times this “fixed” or “re-organizing” can be more time consuming than if a technical writer was involved with development team meetings from the “get go”, and was able to plan the document properly, with a pre-determined outline, etc. A technical writer is trained to do this much more effectively than an engineer.