Technical Communication:
A Solid Career Choice For The New Graduate

JPG & Associates, Inc.

Presenter:

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- ◉ Full-service technical communication firm providing:
  - Staffing options for providing technical communication resources.
  - Consulting services to support tech. comm. projects.

Over the past 27 years, JPG has served more than 150 companies and completed more than 5,000 projects, along with filling hundreds of requisitions.

JPG
Services for:
- Technical Writing
- Training Development
- Graphic Design & Illustration

Consulting
to Support
Tech. Comm.
Projects

Staffing
of
Technical
Communicators

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Technical Communication Is Expanding

- The future looks very bright for the technical communication profession, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

- "Employment of technical writers is projected to grow 15 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations.

- Employment growth will be driven by the continuing expansion of scientific and technical products and by growth in Web-based product support.

- Job opportunities, especially for applicants with technical skills, are expected to be good."

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Compensation Rates

- ⊙ Employee--Annual Salary:
  - U.S. Annual Mean (2015): $73,350

- ⊙ Independent Consultant:
  - Consultant compensation (hourly rates) are typically 15-20% higher than salaried positions because consultants usually do not receive any benefits.
  - Compensation well into the $six figures is attainable for senior-level technical communication consultants—especially those with a niche skill.

* Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

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Starting out, a new graduate may want to keep all the options open to gain the experience. Some of the choices include:

- ◉ Traditional "technical writer"
- ◉ Instructional designer
- ◉ Content strategist
- ◉ E-learning developer
- ◉ Use experience analyst
- ◉ Proposal writer
- ◉ User interface specialist
- ◉ Social media specialist
- ◉ …and so on…

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…And Many Industries

- Medical device*
- Bio-tech
- Healthcare
- High-technology
- Banking and finance
- Engineering
- Software development
- Manufacturing
- Web-based (cloud) applications, commerce
- *Note: Minnesota is near the top of the list for number of medical device companies.

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- Medical device and bio-tech.
- Software application development.
- Web-based commerce.
- Internal policies and procedures.
- Compliances (FDA, ISO, Sarbanes Oxley, global import standards.)
- Training (employee, sales, customer, distributor).
- Global economy expansion.
- Compliance, translations, training.
- Retirements.

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- Hardware documentation
- Software documentation
- Operator's guides
- Troubleshooting guides
- Maintenance manuals
- Installation manuals
- Paper-based
- On-line
- Web-based
- On-line help (local)
- Web-based help
- Remove-and-replace procedures
- End-user (external) documentation
- Internal documentation
- Field service notes
- Installation notes
- Test plans
- Test procedures
- Proposals
- Newsletters
- Reports
- Manufacturing procedures
- Process documentation
- White papers
- Trade journal articles

- Quick reference cards or guides
- Help desk tip sheets
- Functional specifications
- Product descriptions
- Feature/benefits marketing sheets
- Technical brochures
- Interactive technical manuals
- Equipment technical manuals
- Video scripts
- IFUs for medical devices
- Templates for formatting
- Research studies
- Style guides
- Medical device labeling
- Quality assurance documentation
- Training documentation
- Classroom training
- E-learning training
- Compliance documentation
- Sarbanes-Oxley compliance
- Motivational
- ISO
- FDA clinical trials documentation
- Intended-for-use statements
- Work Instructions

- Compliance documentation
- Procedural
- Descriptive
- Persuasive
- Standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- Step-by-step
- Policies and procedures
- Disaster recovery documentation
- Military spec.
- Parts lists
- Change management documentation
- Knowledge management documentation
- Software development/life-cycle documentation
- Business process requirements
- Software/system requirements
- Design documents
- Workflow documentation
- Presentations
- Network infrastructure doc.
- Cloud-based documentation
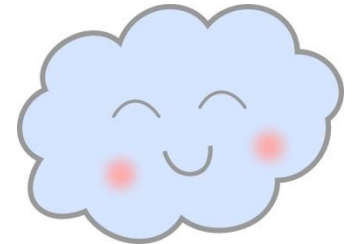- Wiki authoring
- Mobile device delivery

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Common Titles Of Technical Communicators

- Technical Writer
- Technical Communicator
- Technical Communication Specialist
- Documentation Specialist
- Technical Editor
- Editor/Proofreader
- Hardware Writer
- Software Writer
- Proposal Writer
- Specification Writer
- Parts Catalog Writer
- Technical Marketing Writer
- Independent Consultant
- Freelance Writer
- Contract Writer
- Temporary Writer
- Staff Writer
- Lead Writer
- Senior Writer
- Writer/Manager

- Principle Writer
- On-Line Help Developer
- Information Architect
- Information Developer
- Content Coordinator
- Content Strategist
- Content and Digital Marketer
- Content Marketing Specialist
- Web Content Writer
- Creative Learning Designer
- Web Content Editor
- Course Developer
- Courseware Developer
- Instructional Designer
- E-Learning Designer
- Interactive Learning Specialist
- User Experience Designer
- On-Line Content/Social Medical Editor

- User Experience Specialist
- User Experience Strategist
- User Experience Architect
- User Experience and Usability Specialist
- Usability Analyst
- Proposal Writer/Coordinator
- Proposal Development Analyst
- Information Developer
- Information Analyst
- Labeling Specialist
- Technical Labeling Specialist
- Medical Writer
- Training and Communication Specialist
- Social Media Coordinator
- Social Media Specialist
- Social Media Strategist

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Content Development Software Matters

- Knowledge of software tools for content development are important for launching a technical communication career.

- Long-standing traditional tools still matter:
  - Adobe Suite®
    Adobe InDesign®
    Adobe Acrobat®
    Adobe PhotoShop®
    Adobe Illustrator®
  - Adobe FrameMaker®
  - MS Office®
  - XML, content management systems (CMS)

- Other newer tools for technical writing and training development:
  - Madcap Flare®, Adobe Presenter®, Adobe Captivate®, Camtasia Studio®, Articulate Storyline®, and so on.

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Sources Of Software Education

- Lynda.com

- Science Museum of Minnesota (Computer Education Center)

- Hennepin Technical College

- New Horizons

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Hiring Options Available

- Temp—typically through an agency. Note: Also referred to as "contract".

- Temp-to-hire.

- Fulltime direct.

- Consulting—aka: freelancing, independent consultant (via an agency, or direct with the client).

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- Establish LinkedIn profile—and continue to update it regularly.

- Put in place necessary communication tools—cell phone with voice mail, e-mail (also mobile email), all stated clearly on the resume.

- View your resume as a "work-in-progress"—always continue to review, update, and modify a necessary (and when submitting resumes to job postings, be sure to attach a letter of introduction.).

- Build an effective portfolio (hard-copy and on-line).

- File samples (digital)—via your on-line portfolio hosting site, or on a flash drive.

- Consider memberships in professional organizations (i.e., STC, AMWA, etc.)

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- Attend networking events.

- More importantly—do good old-fashioned networking (it still matters who you know).

- Watch on-line job posting sites.

- Consider temp-to-hire or temporary as options.

- Consider well-established agencies (locally-based), and make sure they are those who have a good reputation with the tech. comm. community. Especially consider those firms who specialize in recruiting and hiring professional communicators.

- Be pro-active (but don't overly communicate).

- Be accessible.

- Be responsive.

- Be methodical.

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The Future Looks Bright🙂

- Opportunities will continue to expand for at the next 10 to 15 years.

- Compensation will remain strong.

- Part-time, flexible, and telecommuting will become more common.

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