

Getting Yourself Hired: *Providing a Sample of your Work*

BY DALTON HOOPER

Do you bring examples of your writing with you on job interviews? Hopefully, you answered in the affirmative. But, did you know that someone sent the interviewer an example of your writing before your interview was even scheduled?

The most important writing sample

Would you expect a candidate applying for a job as a tailor to show up at the interview wearing a suit that did not fit well? Would you expect a candidate for an auto mechanic's job to pull into the parking lot in a car that was knocking loudly and spewing black smoke? Then why would you, as a technical communicator, send a résumé to a prospective employer that was not an example of your very best documentation work?

As a technical communicator you are unique in that you are able to show the interviewer a sample of your work without having to wait for an interview. The person who sent the interviewer an example of your writing before your interview was even scheduled was -- YOU! If you haven't caught on by now, your résumé IS an example of your work! The question is: Is it an excellent example?

What would make your résumé excellent?

Let's think about this for a moment. What is the value that we, as technical communicators, typically bring to the creation of documentation to make it excellent?

Some examples include:

- Identifying the intended audience (*the interviewer*).
- Assessing the needs of the intended audience.
 - (*What is the interviewer looking for?*)
 - (*How can you meet the interviewer's needs?*)
- Understanding how the documentation will be used (*as an aid in deciding who to interview*).
- Determining the optimal method by which to transform the source information into understanding for the intended audience (*creating a resume with the right information, in the right amount, and in the right layout*).

It is appropriate to think of your résumé as a type of job aid, with the interviewer being the user and the objective being to assist in the decision of whether to pursue you further (i.e., interview). Consequently, an excellent résumé would be one that convinces the reader that you should be interviewed.

"...why would you, as a technical communicator, send a résumé to a prospective employer that was not an example of your very best documentation work?"

The right information

Your résumé should contain information supporting your assertion that it is in the company's best interest to pursue you further. Your résumé should only address what you can do for the company – not what the company can do for you. In too many instances, résumés waste valuable space (not to mention the

reader's time!) in relating what a position with Acme Widgets would mean to the candidate's career, livelihood, and self-esteem. Frankly, companies are not in business to serve the needs of their employees, but to serve the needs of the owners (stockholders) of those companies. Filling the needs of the employees is simply a fortuitous by-product.

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The right amount

Your résumé should contain enough information to convince the reader you should be interviewed. No more – no less. That is, after all, the objective of a résumé – to get you the interview!

The right layout

This is very important: Your résumé should be easy to skim, with liberal use of white space. The first thing the reader sees when viewing your résumé for the first time is not the

content, but the layout! The layout sets the tone in the reader's mind before they have even

read the first line. If your layout is very busy, with small point type (less than 10 pt), narrative form (such as a lack of bulleted lists), and too much information (several pages), the reader will dread reading the content. Give the reader a feeling that they will be able to easily glean the information they need

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from your résumé and it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The write stuff

Even if you followed all the advice mentioned above, if your résumé contains misspellings, grammatical errors, non-parallel construction, or any other violation of documentation standards recognized by technical communication professionals, it will rightly go on the "reject" pile. After all, when deciding which writing samples to bring to an interview, you wouldn't dream of including an example that had not been spell-checked, grammar-checked, proofread, and critiqued, would you? Why hold your résumé to a lesser standard? It is, after all, what determines whether there will even be an interview in which to show off those writing samples.

—MIM

DALTON HOOPER IS CURRENTLY THE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT MANAGER FOR WALT DISNEY PARKS AND RESORTS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY. DALTON DIRECTS A TEAM OF TECHNICAL WRITERS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING ALL RELEVANT TECHNICAL DOCUMENTATION DURING THE DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF INTERNAL BUSINESS SYSTEMS FOR DISNEY PARKS AND RESORTS WORLDWIDE. IN THE ACCOMPANYING PHOTO, HE'S THE ONE ON THE LEFT. DALTON CAN BE REACHED AT dalton.hooper@disney.com.



Preliminary Slate of Candidates for Society Office Released

NEWS FROM STC

The preliminary slate of candidates for Society Office are now posted.

According to the *STC Bylaws*, "Additional candidates for the elective offices of nominating committee, director, secretary, treasurer, and second vice president may be nominated by petition of the lesser of (1) four percent of the voting members or (2) 400 voting members. Additional candidates may not be nominated by petition for the elective offices of first vice president and president."

Currently, no candidates have been added by petition. To begin this process, please contact Anita Dosik (anita@stc.org) in the STC office.

The preliminary list of candidates are as follows:

- **President:** *
Linda L. Oestreich (*unopposed*)
- **First Vice President:** *
Mark H. Clifford (*unopposed*)
- **Second Vice President:** *
Cynthia C. Currie
M. Katherine (Kit) Brown
- **Treasurer:** ***
William C. (W.C.) Wiese
(*unopposed incumbent*)

- **Directors:** (Three to be elected, each for a three-year term)
Jonathan W. Baker
Mollye M. Barrett
Nicoletta A. Bleiel
Jackie A. Damrau
Leah Guren
Steven F. Jong
Robert G. Young

- **Nominating Committee:** (Two to be elected, each for a two-year term)**
Rachel A. Jordan Houghton
Suzanna Laurent

* The *STC Bylaws* specify that the second vice president automatically becomes first vice president the following year and president the year after that. Thus, second vice president is the highest office to which a member is routinely elected

** Members of this year's nominating committee are Victoria Koster-Lenhardt (manager), Vienna, Austria; Michelle A. Didier, Washington DC chapter; Constance L. Kiernan, Bowie, Maryland; Betsy M. Maaks, Naperville, Illinois; and Martha K. Sippel, Lone Tree, Colorado.

*** Member of the STC Orlando Chapter!

Information about the candidates can be found at <http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/index.asp>. —MIM

Technical Communicator Spotlight

Want to tell your Technical Communication story? Do you know an exceptional Communicator that wouldn't mind sharing his or her best practices?

Ask for a Technical Communicator Spotlight form, and your submission could be featured in the next issue of MIM!

Contact us at newsletter@stc-orlando.org