

D i g i N e w s

Technical Writing and Communication | Technical and Science Writing
Professional and Technical Editing | Information Design | Publishing Institute
Programmer/Writer, Programmer/Editor | Professional Tester and Product Support Specialist

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Write a Press
Release for
Your Company

Technical
Communicators
in the Gaming
Industry?

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For Immediate Release: Your Company is Newsworthy, Media Seeks Story

By Elizabeth Short

There's no debating that media attention is a cost-effective marketing tool for any business. Publicity via the airwaves or printed word is far-reaching; it targets a wide audience, and, best of all, is absolutely free. The only problem is getting it.

When it comes to our perpetually scoop-driven media, you might think nothing short of a Pulitzer Prize, a visit from the Queen of England, or a billion dollar NASA contract will induce journalists to point a pen in your direction. Right? Wrong!

Media organizations are constantly mining everyday events for the next headline. And you can give them one, in the form of a good press release.

Think of the art of writing press releases as technical writing with a twist. A press release brings together these three elements: a topic supported by the five journalistic "Ws" (Who, What, When, Where, and Why), a few well-tuned quotes, and that little something extra that grabs a busy editor's attention and doesn't let go, namely, an angle.

See *Press Release*, 11

The Gaming Industry: A Growing Market for Technical Communicators?

By Jeff Barber

These days, anyone who has children or teens or spends time with them, knows that interactive games (gaming) have become a way of life for them.

What you may not know is that middle-aged women are one of the fastest growing market segments for gaming. Or, that in 2003, for the second year in a row, revenue from sales of games and related equipment (\$11.4 billion, according to NPG Group) exceeded the box office receipts from motion pictures (\$9.3 billion, according to PriceWaterhouseCoopers).

The popularity of gaming is nothing short of a cultural revolution. New

consumer behaviors will emerge and cultural trends will continue to change as today's children and game-playing adults have children and grandchildren of their own.

So, what does this mean for our careers as technical communication (TechComm) professionals?

To begin answering the question, I surveyed friends and fellow BCC students to see what they knew about the gaming industry. Everyone was aware that Microsoft (makers of X-Box) and Nintendo (makers of Game Cube, Game Boy, and DS) are based in this area (Redmond).

See *Gaming*, 8

Marketing Communication: Finding the USP

By Mike Klassen

What makes you unique? While most of us grew up being told that there was no one else like us, it might take us weeks to uncover something truly unique about ourselves, something that we're confident no one else in the world shares with us. It might not be one thing in particular, but a combination of traits that separate us from others.

In marketing, finding this unique aspect of a business, product or service is crucial. As a Marketing communication (Marcom) writer, don't be surprised if the task of discovering this invaluable piece of information falls in your lap. What we're talking about is the Unique Selling Proposition (USP). We touched on this in the last issue of DigiNews, when we covered sales letters. Successful sales letters always highlight a USP. But you'll find a USP in other types of Marcom, too.

Why is a USP so important?

A USP is important because there are very few truly unique products or services. That's great for us as consumers; we have plenty of choices. That's difficult for a business. How do you get someone to buy your widget when there are a dozen other businesses selling the same or similar widget? This is where the USP comes in.

Your widget may come with a three-year guarantee while your competitors only offer a one-year guarantee. If that's the case, you want to make sure you stress that in your marketing messages. Maybe your customer support team wins annual awards for quality offering customer service that your competitors can't match. That could be your company's USP.

Searching for a USP

So why does this search for a USP sometimes become your responsibility as the Marcom writer? If the product or service is new, you may be a part of the marketing process from day one. You might even help research the USP of a competing product.

But as a writer with an ad agency or through your own freelance work, you may be asked to help out a business that has been selling its products or services for years, but has never tried to separate itself from the competition with a USP.

While talking with the business owner, you might discover he or she has no idea what makes the company unique.

So how are you supposed to figure it out? The short answer is lots of questions and a healthy dose of curiosity.

Discovering a USP (a classic story)

There's a classic story about discovering a USP. The story comes from a book called *Scientific Advertising* by Claude Hopkins. Hopkins tells the story of an ad man who was walking through his beer client's brewery. A machine that used steam to sanitize beer bottles fascinated the ad man.

The brewer told the ad man not to bother mentioning that fact in the advertising because every brewer did the same thing. The ad man replied, "Maybe, but I had never heard of it before and neither has the beer-drinking public."

And that led to a successful ad campaign for a beer advertised as, "so pure the bottles are washed in live steam."

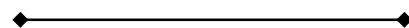
Choosing an Effective USP

So as you're searching for a USP, focus not only on the truly unique qualities of a product or service, but also explore elements that may be considered common by people who offer similar products or services, but aren't common to the target market and aren't included in other advertising.

Copywriter and author Bob Bly has these three guidelines for choosing an effective USP:

1. It has to have a direct or implied benefit. It must say, "Buy this product and you will get this particular benefit."
2. It has to be an important benefit, important enough to "move the masses" (or at least move your prospect).
3. The benefit must be one that the competition either cannot or does not offer.

The better you can address these points, the more likely your advertising copy will be a success.



DigiNote—

Back issues of *DigiNews* are available for download in PDF format from the BCC Continuing Education Web site at <http://www.conted.bcc.ctc.edu/techcomm/tcnl.asp>

Instructor Profile: Susan London, Science Writing

By Marilyn Williams-Jordan

Susan London is the first of two instructors who share the Instructor Profile spotlight in this issue of *DigiNews*. Susan is one of the instructors in BCC Continuing Education's Technical and Science Writing program.

Marilyn: What courses do you teach at BCC?

Susan: “*Becoming a Science Writer* is the only class I teach. The class is offered three quarters each academic year. It is a one-day class. Annette and I co-teach the class and we are both there throughout the class. We alternate teaching elements and try to make as smooth a transition as possible. My background is in biomedical science and Annette's is in environmental science, so we bring different experiences and perspectives to the class.”

Marilyn: How did you become an instructor at BCC?

Susan: “Annette had talked with Gloria Campbell and Adele Becker about the class, then Annette approached me about co-teaching with her. She and I had met through the American Medical Writers Association.”

Marilyn: How long have you taught at BCC?

Susan: “Four years. The first session of *Becoming a Science Writer* had five students. Annette and I weren't sure the class was going to fly. But it did.”

Marilyn: Can you give a summary of your experiences in science writing?

Susan: “I earned a Masters degree in physiology from Georgetown University, then did a research fellowship in neurosurgery with the Statue University of New York. After that, I worked in research labs for a number of years, most recently at the University of Washington. In my second to last year at the UW, I completed their nine-month *Technical Writing and Editing* certificate program.

After I left the lab, I went into the high-tech writing field for about one year. Although there was some overlap—the passion for detail and methodical approach—between the science and high-tech fields, I felt I still wasn't optimally using my science background. I then went out and got a business license and started my own freelance business (Biomedical Writing and Editing).”

Marilyn: Tell me about the type of clients you have in your business.

Susan: “I'm not sure how you would classify my clients, but the types of projects I work on include the following:

- Patient education materials
- Medical news stories (For example, a study is published in a professional journal; I read the study and write a news story about it.)
- Coverage of medical conferences and meetings
- Web content
- In-depth feature articles
- Profiles of people in the medical field
- Manuscript editing (I edit manuscripts that are to be published in science and medical journals and put the materials in the formats of the journals.)”

Marilyn: What traits do you think are necessary to be successful in the field of science writing?

Susan: “You must have an absolute passion for the subject matter. That is the only real requirement. Everything else can be learned. If you don't have a passion for the material, writing about it will become drudgery over time. With that said if your goal is to write highly specialized documents, such as manuscripts for journals or regulatory documents, you will need some background in the field.

For areas that may be more accessible to people without a strong science background, I encourage people to look into writing for magazines or Web sites geared to consumers, and writing science news. Another avenue might be writing for health care organizations. There are many niches in science writing and many ways of getting your foot in the door. We discuss these in the class.

Annette and I also talk to students about joining professional associations. A number of these organizations offer classes and networking opportunities. The two main organizations that come to mind are the National Association of Science Writers (the local chapter is the Puget Sound Science Writers Association) and the American Medical Writers Association (which also has a local chapter).”

Cont'd on page 4

Susan London

Continued from page 3

Marilyn: Would you like to share some of your experiences teaching students in the BCC Technical Communication Programs?

Rather than citing specific experiences, Susan offered her general experience.

Susan: “My overall impression is that it is so gratifying to teach people who are there because they are so jazzed

about the subject matter. Annette and I get word now and then that one of our students has made it in the field of science writing and that is gratifying too. We hope that we have helped them along their career paths.”

Apart from her teaching duties and running her own business, Susan has, from time to time, participated in science outreach programs that are aimed at elementary and middle school students.

With Susan’s help, current and future science writers are learning how to achieve success in the field. Thank you, Susan.

What is Content Management?

By Jeff Barber

In the previous issue of *DigiNews*, on page 11 in my article “Software Tools for Technical Writers and Editors,” I listed Microsoft Excel a tool for content management. I would like to elaborate on this point and provide you with a resource for learning more about content management.

First of all, to clarify the data point in last issue’s article, Microsoft Excel is used by Content Coordinators to track file lists. These professionals use Excel as a tool to manage content.

What I want to make sure you understand is that there is a much bigger world of content management, one that is directly relevant to the future of technical communication as a profession.

So, what exactly is content management? The term means different things in different industries and contexts, and I won’t attempt to describe all the variations here.

In simple terms, what you need know is that companies around the world have implemented, or are implementing, various flavors of Content Management Systems (CMS) to handle their increasing quantities of digital content.

Wikipedia, a free encyclopedia available on the Internet (visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Content_management_system for more information) defines a CMS as “a system used to organize and facilitate collaborative content creation. Recently, the term has been associated almost entirely with programs for managing the content of Web sites.”

Technical communicators are called upon to author and edit content “chunks” that are ingested by a CMS. These chunks of content are then available for use in various electronic documents (such as HTML or PDF) for specific audiences, either by the company’s technical publications group, or by authorized employees in other groups or in remote offices.

If you want to know what content management and CMS mean to your future employment as a technical communication professional, the man to talk to is Bob Bobko.

Bob is a Seattle resident and an internationally recognized expert in content management. He is the author of the *Content Management Bible*, an instructor at the University of Washington, and founder of Metatorial Services, Inc.

Bob spoke at this month’s STC meeting and those who attended were challenged to rethink how they view the future of technical communication and themselves as technical communicators.

If you want to learn more about content management and the future of your profession, be sure to pay a visit to Metatorial’s Web site (<http://www.metatorial.com>)!

DigiNote—

Changes to the Science Writing certificate program

BCC Continuing Education will be renaming the Science Writing certificate program to Technical and Science Writing.

The Technical and Science Writing certificate program will require 120 class hours to complete. The first 90 hours will consist of the same core courses included in the Technical Writing and Communication certificate. The remaining 30 hours will consist of Science Writing courses.

For more information, please contact Gloria Campbell via e-mail at gcampbel@bcc.ctc.edu or Gcamp2965@aol.com, or by phone at 425-564-2943.

Instructor Profile: Annette McCully, Science Writing

By Sonali Hegde

Annette McCully is the second instructor sharing the Instructor Profile spotlight in this issue of *DigiNews*. Annette is a 17-year veteran of technical and science writing. She has co-authored three books on international standards and has written 75 case studies and articles on the environmental management systems of international corporations.

Sonali: What courses do you teach at BCC?

Annette: “I co-teach *Becoming a Science Writer* with Susan London. I also teach *Science Writing for Lay Readers*, which is not offered currently, but will be offered in the future.”

Sonali: How did you become an instructor at BCC?

Annette: “Adele Becker met me at a Society for Technical Communication (STC) meeting and asked me if I could teach at BCC. I asked Susan London to teach with me. Susan comes from a medical background, whereas, I come from a writing background. This blend helps the students get the whole picture.”

Sonali: How long have you taught at BCC?

Annette: “Four years, I think!”

Sonali: Can you give me a summary of your experiences in science writing?

Annette: “I was working as an Assistant Library Supervisor in the King County Library and I completed a Management degree while working there. As part of my degree, I did a project on healthcare cost containment for the City of Renton. It was here that I began my career in science writing. The City of Renton hired me as an editor of their Wellness newsletter. I worked on the newsletter for five years and had the opportunity to write on healthcare related issues.

Then Boeing wanted to write their safety health policies and I was interviewed to do this. I was hired as an author/editor of the Corporate Safety Health Policy and Procedures at Boeing. I worked there for three years and it was a great experience. After Boeing I started my own company and I worked part-time as library manager.”

Annette recalls that, when she was writing a series of articles for *Quality Digest*, she was approached by the

American Management Association to write a book.

Annette has been a writer as long as she can remember. She grew up in family where writing letters was very common. She also wrote poetry and gave poetry workshops while working at the King County Library.

Sonali: What traits are required to be successful in the field of science writing?

Annette: “Good storytelling is an art that can be used in science writing to make the subject matter more interesting.”

Annette also suggests developing the following skills and abilities:

- Get reliable resources for subject matter information
- Know your target market well; know whether the audience is technical or lay
- Use lots of quotes in your writings to make it more interesting and credible
- Learn negotiation skills; they are a key to getting paid for your work
- Practice good project management skills; they are essential to organize your work and finish it on time
- Recognize key turning points in your career
- Learn to solve problems when they arise

Sonali: Would you like to share some of your experiences teaching students in the BCC Technical Communication Programs?

Annette: “I remember in my first class we had a huge course handout and during the class the students didn’t say a single word. When we asked the class if the course was okay, the students said, ‘There was a lot of information to absorb.’ Later we made the class more interactive. Susan added some interactive exercises that got the class more involved.

Students attending the course come from different backgrounds. Most are here to make a mid-career change. It is unrealistic to assume that completing the course alone will get them a job. It would help the students to work on different freelance projects, along with the course, to make job prospects better.”

Excellent advice, Annette. Thank you.



BCC Goes to South Korea

By Adam Van Leuven

Last fall, Gloria Campbell received an inquiry from South Korea about BCC's Technical Communication programs.

"International requests are not uncommon. Still, I was impressed that this student was willing to travel from his home in Seoul to Bellevue to complete his certificate," Gloria remembers.

"After additional communication, and with the help of a Seattle-based contact, Seung-Hag You (familiarily known as Sam) attended BCC this past Winter and Spring Quarters. We designed a program that allowed him to meet the Technical Writing and Communication certificate requirements in two quarters. He returned to South Korea ready to start his own technical communication business."

DigiNews contacted Sam to see how things are going. We thought you might be interested in his response.

Adam: Why did you come here to learn about technical writing?

Sam: "There are no courses in technical communication in Korea. Most Koreans do not understand what technical communication is all about. I went to Seattle/Bellevue to take specific technical communication courses which would help me start my business. Frankly, the BCC program was really helpful."

Adam: What are you doing now?

Sam: "Since I got back from Seattle, I have spent most of my days setting up my company. This week all legal issues will be resolved."

Adam: Tell us more about your company.

Sam: "International Technical Communicators, Inc. (ITC) is located in Seoul. It is the first South Korean technical communication company with professionally trained technical communicators."

Adam: Can you give our readers some background on the Korean business climate?

Sam: "With increasing opportunities for business with international entities, businesses in South Korea—big or small—need to communicate efficiently with international audiences. Recent developments in computer technology have accelerated this trend, leading to the growth of the field of technical communication. Despite

this trend, the technical communication industry in South Korea is in its infant phase compared to the U.S.

A number of South Korean engineers feel frustrated when trying to communicate their skills and knowledge to their intended audiences. Many businesses in South Korea need to communicate with international customers but confront various kinds of difficulties.

Translators lack the ability to address these difficulties; in fact, they add to the communication problem by only providing word-for-word translation. In many cases, a company's failures in communication eventually lead to difficulties in sales and sometimes to failure in the marketplace.

Untrained technical writers and translators are managing to communicate their employers' ideas and knowledge to international audiences, but they do not understand how to express the ideas and knowledge from the audience's viewpoint.

Word-for-word translation does not meet the standards for successful localization. Many essential concepts and methods of technical communication are ignored by these technical writers and translators. This is a primary reason for the failures in communication."

Adam: Will you describe your business?

Sam: "ITC will provide international business owners with solutions in four service categories:

- **Consultancy and Improvement:** ITC will assess the communication system of the business. We will assist the owners in improving the system and we will manage the system, partially or completely.
- **Project Development and Management:** ITC will create, or help a business owner to create, a system of technical communication within or outside of the business.
- **Training:** ITC will provide opportunities to work with and learn from professional practitioners in the field of technical communication.
- **Research and Testing:** ITC will conduct research and tests to evaluate a business's ability to communicate about its products and services to customers or other intended audiences."

Sounds like another BCC success story is in the making in South Korea. Congratulations, Sam!



Student Success Story: My Career, Part II

By Dave Bell

My name is Dave Bell and I have just completed three Technical Communication certificate programs at Bellevue Community College's North Campus. My recent experiences have taught me some valuable life-lessons, and I've been asked to share them with you.

My story began a little over a year ago at Boeing's Everett assembly plant.

Life at Boeing

During my seventeen years working in the Payloads Color & Material group, I had seen many faces come and go. Hired originally as a technical illustrator, my role over the years had morphed into a technical writer of sorts, producing a variety of color and appearance documentation for engineering groups and our customer airlines.

After the 9/11 tragedy and the subsequent decline in the airline industry, Boeing was laying off employees by the thousands. My group had reduced its head count and I had seniority, so I felt relatively safe. Even when my supervisor called me into a closed door meeting, I *still* felt safe (despite a few butterflies); I thought I would be asked to take on more responsibility. Then I spotted the pink slip (Boeing calls them 60-Day WARN notices) with my name on it. My heart sank.

The clock ticked down as I tried to find another job within the company. I remained hopeful until the end that I would somehow dodge the bullet. On the last day, there was a thoughtful gift, a goodbye lunch, and a nice card. My ID badge was collected. After a few hugs from co-workers, I carried my

personal things to my car and drove through the guard gate for the last time.

It was one of the worst experiences of my life.

Being Unemployed

I drove straight to the WorkSource Aerospace Center at Paine Field to file for unemployment benefits. While I was there, I learned about a government-funded retraining program for displaced aerospace workers.

I did not attend college and my only education outside of high school had been art school, so the idea of returning to school (at forty-plus) was intimidating. And besides, I wanted to go back to work.

After a few fruitless weeks of looking for a job, I decided to enter the retraining program. I concluded that technical writing was the most logical career path for me to follow. After speaking with prospective employers and researching my education options, I chose the BCC Technical Communication program. BCC's comprehensive curriculum and short duration (nine months to complete three certificates) fit my goal to get back to work quickly.

Life at BCC

At first, I felt a little anxious about leaving behind my old routine. But I quickly made new friends at BCC and began to enjoy my new routine of classes and homework. Rather than chasing down job leads, my days were spent learning new things and meeting new people. Nearly every class was educational and enjoyable. I even attended a class at BCC taught by one of my old art school instructors.

Months passed, and as my time in the Technical Communication programs drew to a close, those anxious feelings returned. I encouraged myself with the knowledge that I was surviving a layoff, I had done good work at school, and I was ready to face my job search with new credentials and a renewed sense of self-confidence.

The Value of Continuing Education

A layoff can be a good time for soul-searching. Here's what I found out about myself.

My experiences since leaving Boeing have taught me the importance of keeping my skills current. At Boeing, I had become complacent, and I missed the opportunities they offered to improve my skills (Boeing has an excellent employee training program and an education reimbursement benefit) while I was still employed.

At BCC, I discovered that school is a good thing and certainly nothing to be afraid of. While the Technical Communication classes were a challenge, they were also rewarding and even fun.

Also, my layoff from Boeing taught me that the days of staying with one employer my entire professional life are gone.

Despite being unemployed, this last year was positive for my family and me. I've grown as a person. My schooling was paid for. And most importantly, I have been blessed with a very supportive—and gainfully employed—wife.

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My Career, Part II

Continued from page 7

Looking Ahead

With my three brand new certificates—Technical Writing and Communication, Professional and Technical Editing, and Information Design—in hand, I am back to looking for work.

When an employer finally does give me a chance, I have promised myself that if I have any say in the matter, I will not be laid off again. I must strive to make myself too valuable to be let go.

Continuing education will be as much a part of my professional life as my paycheck is. I now understand how connected the two are.



Gaming

Continued from page 1

I was surprised to discover people were not aware that:

- the Puget Sound area is a major center for all types of gaming companies
- there are gaming applications beyond home entertainment
- the gaming industry employs technical communicators

This article will give you an overview of emerging gaming applications and how the gaming industry employs TechComm professionals today.

Gaming applications

Dozens of content and technology companies, in the Puget Sound area and elsewhere, are extending the reach of the gaming culture far beyond the home. Gaming is no longer limited to the established gaming platforms: set-top boxes, PCs, and Game Boy devices.

There are five emerging applications for games

- Online gaming
- Mobile entertainment
- Instruction
- Modeling
- Marketing

To give you an idea of these emerging applications, this article includes a brief description and an example for each of these emerging applications.

Online gaming

Description: Games in which multiple players can play against themselves or each other using the Internet or a network. Game parlors and cyber cafés are popular locations for gamers who don't have the right equipment at home or who desire the social element of gaming.

Example: Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOG) are viewed by some as the next big thing in entertainment. MMOGs are networked games that support thousands of simultaneous users, give players many options for customizing characters, and provide a very big 3D environment with cities and vast geographic areas between them. The game generates an evolving story line that results from the players' choices.

Mobile entertainment

Description: Games that are specially designed—or re-designed—for cell phones, PDAs, pocket PCs, and now, the Nintendo DS (a new portable gaming device that includes two screens, a touch-screen input, voice recognition, and wireless communication).

Example: Game Boys is no longer the only hand-held game device in town. Reaxion is a leading mobile game developer and publisher with offices in Seattle, Los Angeles, and Moscow, Russia. This company offers a library of games that run on popular cellphone models all over the world. You can view Reaxion's game library at <http://www.reaxion.com/games.html>.

Instruction

Description: Games used as a teaching tool or as a primary instruction method.

Example: Kevin Whelan, a born-and-raised Seattle resident who now lives in Santa Barbara, California, works for Cisco Systems as the National Account Manager for a major telecommunications company. Kevin is creating interactive games to deliver sales training courses for his customer's sales engineers.

He explained, "Sales professionals have a competitive nature. We've seen that interactive training games with prizes for the winners engage them emotionally. This results in full participation in the training program and better retention of the subject matter."

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Gaming

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Modeling

Description: Games used to model concepts or scenarios. This is referred to as game-theoretic modeling in academic circles (University of Washington is a research leader in this field). Game-theoretic models use game theory to predict the actions of either cooperative or competitive individuals or groups.

Example: Adaptive Two-Player Hierarchical Holographic Modeling (HHM) Game for Counterterrorism Intelligence Analysis. The HHM game, authored by Yacov Y. Haimes and Barry M. Horowitz at the University of Virginia, is a repeatable, adaptive, and systemic process for tracking terrorism scenarios. An abstract of this game was featured in the *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management* this year and is available for review at <http://www.bepress.com/jhsem/vol1/iss3/302/>.

Marketing

Description: Known as “advertainment,” the use of games as a marketing and branding tool in companies’ advertising campaigns.

Example: WildTangent, a publisher of online games based in Redmond, currently features an “advertainment” case study on their Web site, <http://www.wildtangent.com>.

WildTangent created an online game for Dial Corporation, based on the popular Activision title *Pro BMX*. The cross-media brand marketing campaign for Coast Soap used the game *Coast BMX Full Grind* to drive a 300% increase in traffic to the Coast Soap Web site, <http://www.coastsoap.com>.

Working in the gaming industry

Gian Edmondson, Senior Technical Recruiter with Volt Technical Services in Bothell, told me at the July STC meeting that she has placed TechComm professionals on gaming projects with Microsoft.

Gian said some hiring managers were looking for individuals with previous gaming project experience, but others were open to hiring inexperienced professionals who have a passion for gaming. If you match the latter description, consider listing the games you love to play on your resume!

Here are some specific job titles that TechComm professionals might hold while employed in the gaming industry. Please note that this field is growing and changing rapidly; job titles, skill sets, and responsibilities may vary from company to company.

Content Writer

Everything a gamer hears and reads on the screen of his or her gaming device was written by someone. Yes, the gaming industry employs writers. This is not technical writing in the strictest sense. But as the lines between technical writing and other forms of business writing blur, you might see yourself as a Content Writer for games, particularly if you love games and have experience as a Content Writer for the Web.

Content Coordinator

A typical game title for established gaming platforms can have tens of thousands of content files associated with it, especially if there are international versions of the game. Someone has to keep track of all those files and make sure that all the right files are included in the right installation packages for each version of the game. Content Coordinators need outstanding organization skills, a high level of attention to detail, and advanced Microsoft Excel or database skills.

Producer/Associate Producer

Producers are responsible for overseeing and delivering the game product. An Associate Producer reports to the Producer and is responsible for a subset of the Producer’s overall responsibilities. These positions typically require at least a few years of experience in the gaming industry.

Game Tester

Game Testers are responsible for executing a test script or procedure and recording bugs. BCC’s Game Tester certificate can prepare you for this job!

Software QA Writer/Manager

People who hold these positions are responsible for designing test procedures and training others involved in the game testing process.

Learning more

To learn more about the gaming industry in the Puget Sound area, consider joining the Washington Software Alliance’s Gaming Special Interest Group listserv at <http://www.wsa.org/events/sig/>.



DigiKnow?

By Marilyn Williams-Jordan

DigiKnow? Save your individual course certificates! Doing so will make life a lot easier for you and for Gloria Campbell. Those certificates are proof that you completed the course. You'll need them when you meet with Gloria at the end of your program to review your coursework and portfolio; she needs them before she can issue your Technical Communication program certificate. If you don't have your course certificates, Gloria has to obtain them from the instructors, and that can delay the issuance of your program certificate by weeks.

DigiKnow? Gloria Campbell, Faculty Coordinator, will be available for appointments during the month of September and throughout Fall Quarter.

- Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Room 277 at the BCC North Campus
- Phone number: 425-564-2943
- E-mail: gcampbel@bcc.ctc.edu or Gcamp2965@aol.com

If you need advising, program applications, or your Technical Communication program certificate, contact Gloria. You can make an appointment via e-mail or telephone, although e-mail is the preferred method.

DigiKnow? *DigiNews* is always looking for new contributors. Here is an opportunity to have your writing published and to gain real world experience working on a newsletter. In addition to writing and researching your own articles, you can apply your editing, visual design, and software skills to the process of publishing the newsletter (we work with all levels of editing and we format the articles into a newsletter layout).

Get in touch with Gloria Campbell to find out more about contributing to *DigiNews*.

DigiKnow? The Society for Technical Communication's (STC) 52nd annual conference, *Experiencing Technical Communication*, will be held in Seattle, May 2005. Visit the STC Web site for a list of upcoming events nationwide: <http://www.stc.org>. For more information about local and regional STC events, visit <http://www.stc-psc.org>.

DigiKnow? The STC Puget Sound Chapter newsletter is looking for article writers. This is a second avenue for getting your work published (the first route, of course, is *DigiNews*). But you'll need to be an STC member to contribute material. For more information, contact Diane Boos, the newsletter manager via email at dboos@drizzle.com, or by phone at 425-277-1878.

DigiKnow? To join STC at the student price, just go to the STC website and print out an application. You must include a copy of your class registration or get an abstract from the customer service staff at BCC. Note: An instructor's signature is no longer required on the application.

DigiKnow? The three-hour Marcom writing class, first offered in Summer Quarter, will be expanded to six hours in Fall Quarter. *Marcom: Adding the Flash and Dazzle* is scheduled for Friday, November 19, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mike Klassen will be the instructor.

DigiKnow? For those of you who want to advance your non-technical writing skills, several new writing classes have been added to The Publishing Institute offerings for Fall Quarter.

- *Crafting the Character-based Novel I*, Item K180, 9/28 – 11/30, 6 – 9 p.m.
- *Polishing the Character-based Novel IV*, Item K183, 9/30 – 12/9, 6 – 9 p.m.
- *Publishing the Character-based Novel*, Item K186, 9/29 – 12/1, 6 – 9 p.m.

All of these classes will be taught by Pam Goodfellow. Pam has been involved in the Northwest writing and publishing circles for many years. For more information, visit the BCC website: <http://www.conted.bcc.edu>.

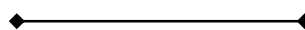
- *Publishing 101: From Creativity to Commerce*, Item K133, 10/23 – 11/20, 6 – 9 p.m.

This course will give you a good look into the world of publishing, from the perspectives of working with a literary agent and self-publishing. The instructors will be Jennifer McCord and Gloria Campbell

- *Publishing Institute Overview*, Item K170, 9/29, 6 – 9 p.m. or Item K171, 10/27, 6 – 9 p.m.

Want to know more about The Publishing Institute? Attend one of the overview sessions. There is no charge for these sessions, but you are required to register to attend one.

For more information about The Publishing Institute program or individual course classes, contact Gloria Campbell via e-mail at gcampbel@bcc.ctc.edu or Gcamp2965@aol.com, or by phone at 425-564-2943.



Press Release

Continued from page 1

Together, these elements form the bones of a news story, one that might just bring a healthy dose of publicity and fresh business to your company's door.

Finding a Topic

Think your business isn't newsworthy? Your software company, web design firm, or consulting partnership need not experience an earth-shattering event to warrant a press release. Topics are often more ordinary than you might think.

Start by asking yourself these questions:

- Is your company planning a special event?
- Have you received any awards, joined any professional organizations, or formed a new partnership with another business?
- Do any company employees have unusual hobbies or outside interests?
- Does your company engage in any charitable endeavors?

Unearthing Your Angle

Once you've found a topic, it's time to access your inner novelist and unearth your angle, the story behind your story. This isn't to say you'll be fictionalizing any aspect of your business. Rather, you'll be giving the reader more information, in a context that supplies additional meaning. You'll give the reader a lens with a view to wider relevance.

Let's say one of your employees volunteers as a literacy tutor, using books donated by the company. That's a good topic. Now notice what happens when you place this topic in the context of the latest state legislation on standardized reading tests. Suddenly, you have a timely story; a citizen and his employer join forces to help children rise to the challenge of new educational standards.

To find your angle, pay close attention to the latest stories in the media, and ask yourself these questions:

- Does your topic tie in with any regional or national trends?
- Does it relate in any way to a big news story?
- Does your topic share any similarities with stories about a recently publicized celebrity, dignitary, or politician?

Writing an Effective Press Release

When writing your press release, always keep your intended audience—notoriously busy editors and journalists—in mind. Your document should immediately pique the readers' interest but should refrain from overwhelming them with too much information. Keep your press release to a single page and be sure to include the following:

- **Contact information.** The first thing a media representative should encounter on a press release is whom to contact and how to do it. Include your company's name, the contact person's name, a phone number, and e-mail address. Finally, don't forget the all-important words—FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—either just before or after the contact information.
- **A catchy headline.** Along with a strong lead (see the next bullet point), a catchy headline will do more to further your press release than just about anything. Make a study of newspapers and magazines for examples of good one-liners. Then, get creative. Try alliteration, puns, or a focus on benefits to the reader.
- **A strong lead.** Once you've attracted attention with your headline, make sure you keep it. A good lead will flesh out your angle and answer the question, "Why should our readers care?" Again, an emphasis on timeliness is the key to success.
- **A complete body.** The bulk of your press release should offer the Who, What, When, Where, and Why of your story. Use the "inverted pyramid" method of conveying information, writing broadly at the beginning and working down to the details.
- **A summing up.** Always repeat contact information in your last paragraph, accompanied by a two to three sentence tagline that sums up your story.
- **Relevant quotes.** A few good quotes will make a journalist's job easier (quotes are often lifted directly from press releases) and will make your story vastly more appealing. Sprinkle your quotes throughout the body of your release, using them to support and enliven your narrative.

To view sample press releases, visit these Web sites: <http://www.prweb.com> or <http://www.webwire.com>.

The following books provide writing tips and strategies for delivering and following up on your press release: *How to Be Your Own Publicist*, by Jessica Hatchigan, or *Getting Publicity*, by Tauna Fletcher and Julia Rockler.



DigiNews

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*Thank you from all of us for
reading the Summer Quarter
2004 issue of DigiNews.*

DigiNote—

In the previous issue of *DigiNews*, the article "Searching for a Job Online" may have given readers the impression that WASSER, an employer of technical communicators based in Seattle, is no longer in business. To clarify, WASSER is alive and well and doing business as two distinct companies:

1. WASSER Studios is a full-service information design and delivery company that specializes in consulting and experienced project management. For more information, visit <http://www.wasserstudios.com>.
2. Modis IT (formerly WASSER At-Work) specializes in temporary staffing, with offices throughout the U.S. and worldwide. For more information, visit <http://www.modisit.com/specialties/technicalcomm.asp>.

Both companies are very interested in receiving resumes from BCC students. Visit their Web sites above for a list of current job openings!