

The Independent Perspective

Newsletter of the Consulting and Independent Contracting Professional Interest Committee



C&IC PIC Announces Personnel Changes

C&IC PIC Manager Christopher Juillet announced at the 1992 STC Annual Conference in Atlanta that he has named Charley McWha as his new Deputy PIC Manager. Charley has been Editor of the *Independent Perspective* for the past two years. In her new duties as Deputy PIC Manager, McWha will work to strengthen the role of the Area Coordinators within C&IC PIC. She also plans to improve communication and cooperation among the Chapter-level Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

Juillet also announced the appointment of Susan Witter as Editor for the *Independent Perspective*. Both McWha and Witter will need your help in their new posts. If you have any suggestions for them, or if you can help with either project, please call or write:

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CMC Consulting
27 Kings Road
Morgantown, WV 26505
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Ms. Susan Witter
65A Albany Place
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518-477-2564

1991 C&IC PIC Survey Released

The results of the Business Practice Survey for Independent Consultants were announced by Cathi Kolecki at the 1992 STC Annual Conference in May. Of the 1200 surveys sent, 310 were returned. The results show that the typical IC has been in the technical communication field for 14 years and has worked independently for seven years.

ICs in this survey derive most of their business from writing manuals for which they charge an average of \$47 per hour. In the other top income generating categories, ICs are charging an average of \$41 per hour for brochures, \$38 per hour for technical editing, and \$51 per hour for

script writing. ICs working in related areas are charging \$50 to \$65 per hour for promotional writing, \$20 to \$200 per hour for desktop publishing, and \$500 to \$4000 per day for training seminars. The average hourly rate for all categories is \$45 per hour.

Conference attendees received copies of the survey results in Atlanta. Look for your copy as a special insert to this issue of the IP. Next year's survey will include questions related to graphic specialists as well as the groups covered in this year's survey.

Spectrum '92

The Rochester, New York, chapter of STC holds its own annual conference. This year's conference, held for two days in early May, featured sessions on a wide range of topics: interface design, hypertext, visual effectiveness of publications, presentation graphics, typography, and conflict resolution. Interesting news to us is that Spectrum '92 also included a collection of topics for running a consulting/contract business.

Several large companies in the area (DEC, Kodak, Xerox, and Mobil) seem to foster contract writing, and there was much interest in related presentations. Some samples:

- creating effective proposals, presented by Denny McElroy of Carousel Media Works, Inc.

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- a practical picture of starting out in the freelancing world, given by Gretchen Stahlman, of The Write Angle.

Applicable sessions in other stems included dealing with contractors and building teams. At \$115 for STC members, this conference was a good value. Keep it in mind for 1993.

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Documentation Plans: Without Focus, You Can't See!

by Mike Lujan

Have you ever tried to see something through a microscope without first adjusting the focus? It's tough, if not impossible, to see anything. Developing, implementing, and monitoring any project requires focus. You must first make a roadmap—a plan incorporating a schedule—from which to work.

Although you might finish a project without a plan, it won't be complete. It is especially important as a consultant to convince the client that developing a good, well-focused plan is crucial to the success of the project. Developing a documentation plan helps centralize and provide focus to ideas from different groups such as management, engineering, and technical support. Since different groups usually have varying ideas about how documentation should be done, the plan helps provide a layout for fundamentals and format. The most successful documentation plans are based on a thorough analysis of resources, product schedules, budgets, and tasks. The documentation plan needs to include definition of project scope and content, an assignment of responsibilities, a list or description of dependencies, and a schedule of activities and related milestones. Most important, the documentation plan must be aligned with the overall product plan.

Scope and Content Definition

The Scope and Content includes a description of the organization, content, format, page count, dependencies, and schedule for the specific document. It also can have a statement of the objective of the document and a profile of the intended audience. An example of the scope and content might be:

The XYZ Manual is intended to be used by engineers to develop integrated circuit designs and will consist of information about how to use the design system. The XYZ Manual will be an 8-1/2" by 11" spiral bound manual in FrameMaker format and will be designed to make it easy to locate information quickly for using specific design features.

Here is a simple example chapter outline for the XYZ Manual:

Chapter 2 Using the Design Menu Features

- 2.1 Accessing the Design Menu
- 2.2 Using the Editing Facilities
- 2.3 Saving a Design
- 2.4 Exporting a Design

The chapter outline can be enhanced by including a brief description or overview of each chapter—key pieces of information. A list of estimated page count by chapter will help provide a clearer understanding of the magnitude of the project as well.

Assignment of Responsibilities

The consultant needs to be closely associated with all members of the product development team. When assigning responsibilities, show that all efforts are interrelated, not separate tasks that come together magically! Identify responsibilities by original input, writing,

See Focus, page 6

Earning What You're Worth

How to make eighty bucks an hour as a technical communicator and save your customer money at the same time.

by Solon Economou

In my last article, *The 250 Percent Solution*, I outlined how an Independent Contractor (IC) must earn about 2.5 times what a salaried person earns at a corporate job in order to support himself in the manner to which he has become accustomed. I also pointed out that, working billable hours 60 percent of the normal workyear, an IC must make about \$80 an hour to achieve this goal.

I'm sure I left some of you wondering what type of drugs I was on when I said you can make \$80 per hour as a Technical Communicator, not only in New York or in LaLa Land, but in your own location of East Podunk. You ask how, when you currently bill at \$25, \$35, or perhaps \$45, per hour. What if I told you that I consistently win bids against competitors who charge in that range, that I charge up to \$80 per hour, and that my customers claim I cost them only half as much as the competition?

Go FFP.

Drugs? New math? No. The answer is the bane of most of my competition—firm fixed price, or FFP. Most people are afraid to charge FFP. They are more comfortable with an hourly rate, in case a job takes a lot longer or turns into something quite different than anticipated. If that is your situation, fine. But your prospective customer may not be comfortable with an hourly rate—for the very same reasons that you are comfortable with it. He would rather know exactly what something will cost him.

What are the advantages of your bidding FFP? First, from your customer's viewpoint, he knows exactly what he's getting and for how much. From your viewpoint, here's where you can make \$80 an hour. Let's say your customer wants a new product brochure. You've evaluated the

See Earning, overleaf

situation and scoped out the typical charge for something like this. A \$2500 FFP might be an acceptable fee. You've also estimated that it will take you 25 to 30 hours to do it. Tell your customer that you want to charge him \$80 to \$100 per hour for the job and he'll throw you out. Tell him instead that you'll charge \$2500 FFP, and you've just bid yourself at \$80 to \$100 an hour. And he won't have to worry about little Joey or little Susie, who charge \$35 per hour, eating up 100 to 200 hours to do the job.

What are the disadvantages? Let's say your estimate is way off and it takes you 100 hours to complete the job. In this case, you will have bid yourself at \$25 an hour. Catastrophe? No. You do your best professional job, take your lumps with a smile, and put the experience gained into your mental or electronic database for the next job.

How do you know what to charge? I read a lot and try to get a good picture of typical fees and what the market will bear. I highly recommend *Writer's Digest* and *Home Office Computing* for useful, enlightening information. I also talk with other ICs, but take what they say guardedly because I find too many who are still thinking in the \$25-an-hour range.

How do I consistently underbid this low-fee competition? I've made myself very good at what I do. I calculate that in some areas I am about 400 percent as efficient as my competition. On one typical product, for example, it takes me four hours to complete a job that would take my competition two days. Bidding a FFP at half their fee gives me double their income and saves my customer half the cost. The customer and I both win.

So you have to be good at what you do. You have to practically develop a formula approach to it. This approach will differ for each person and each type product.

Work smart, not hard.

Automate as much as possible. Reduce your keystrokes. Use macros or style sheets for recurring items. Get a scanner. Scan your customer's source materials into your word processor. Let your computer do the work. That's why you paid

From the Editor

This will be my last *From the Editor* column. "Goodbye" doesn't seem quite the right thing to say as I'll still be active in C&IC PIC, but I do want all of you to know what a great adventure this has been. I also want to thank you for making these two years so productive and so much fun. I've really enjoyed editing this newsletter. I've spoken and written to many new friends who I would never have known. I've learned more about our profession than I ever imagined. I especially want to thank the many writers who've contributed articles and the *IP* production team: Susan Witter, Kevin Sunderman, and Hugh Templeton. You have each made my job easier.

I'll be moving into a new slot, Deputy PIC Manager. I'm going to need help from each of you as much as I ever did as the *IP*'s Editor. I know I can count on each of you, so I'm looking forward to my new job with confidence that you'll make it as much fun as this has been.

Susan Witter has graciously agreed to take over as Editor, starting with the Fall issue. I hope you'll give Susan the same help and support you've given me. Good luck, Susan!

I have deeply enjoyed my term as the *IP*'s Editor. Thank you all.

Charley McWha

big bucks for it in the first place. But more importantly, have a pretty complete mental picture of a job before you start. Don't waste time wandering around in your material. Get right to the core and do it. Many large corporations are now tracking keystrokes on their employees' computers to see who is doing how much. I think they are totally wrongheaded. They should be rewarding those with the fewest keystrokes and firing the others.

Try to get it right the first time.

How many times have you heard some one say, "I'll fix that later. I have to redo this anyway." As George Bush (or, more likely, Dana Carvey) would say, "Not prudent." If you know that something needs fixing, fix it. Don't save it till later. No matter how smart you think you are, our old friend Murphy will always come up with something you did not anticipate. So immediately take care of the things you know must be fixed, because Murphy will add an additional burden later and you may end up missing something.

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Editor—Charley McWha
Copy Editor—Kevin Sunderman
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Fall issue—July 25

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Invoke the Kuwaiti clause.

Now, there is another downside to FFP. Making an estimate of effort and setting a fee, accurate or not, are elements within your control. What may not be within your control is the behavior of the customer. What if the customer doesn't really know what he wants and you end up revising the job *ad infinitum*? What if his personality is such that he will make preferential changes *ad nauseam* until your masterpiece resembles something you did in kindergarten with a crayon? In such cases, you may be lucky to end up making minimum wage if you ever finish the job at all.

To preclude this type of situation, I invoke "the Kuwaiti clause". This name derives from a clause included in all bids and contracts by a Fortune 100 company with which I am associated. They started

You can bet the customer will get down to business and adopt your goals—getting the job done right as quickly as possible—if it will cost him more money to do otherwise.

using it after a job they did for Kuwait (long before the horror of the Iraqi invasion). No specific limitations were set on customer approvals and work revisions for that contract, on the assumption that the job would proceed much as it would in the United States. That was a major mistake.

First, the customer would wait an inordinate amount of time to comment on work done; and then, the comments were not sufficiently specific. The first comment may have been, "Too small, make larger." The next one: "Too large, make smaller," and so on. After a seemingly interminable amount of time reaching some accord, the Prince's cousin or uncle would look at it and want something else changed. As a consequence, job completion for the customer went far beyond schedule, and the company took a financial beating. Both lost.

Now this company uses "the Kuwaiti clause," which specifies in the bid exactly what will be done, and how many days the customer has to review a certain piece of work and to make specific comments.

At the end of the review period (e.g., ten days after submittal), if no comments are received, the work to date is considered accepted by the customer and the project continues to the next step. If comments are received, the company will make the changes specified, and the revised work is considered accepted by the customer. Anything beyond that costs the customer more money.

You may want to put some type of Kuwaiti clause in a Letter of Understanding with your customer. You may want to incorporate specific review periods that will ultimately help the customer in that they will help you meet his deadlines. You should also specify the number of revisions your fee includes and what the cost will be thereafter. For example, you may include in your fee one revision and \$50 per hour for any additional work. (You don't want to quote too high here and scare the customer. Your purpose is to minimize revisions, not to make an additional project out of them.) You can bet the customer will

get down to business and adopt your goals—getting the job done right as quickly as possible—if it will cost him more money to do otherwise.

Listen up, and good luck!

Obviously you will do better at some FFP jobs than others. But if you want to break out of the \$25 to \$45 hourly range, that is the way to go. In summary, I recommend the following:

1. Bid all work firm fixed price. That is the only way you can make more than the person hiring you. But you have to be good, and you have to be efficient, or you will end up making minimum wage.
2. Work smart, not hard. Make your computer do the work. And envision the entire job before you start. Not necessarily like Mozart envisioning an entire concerto note-for-note, but in a more general sense.
3. Try to get everything right the first time. Murphy will add enough problems without your help.

4. Invoke the Kuwaiti clause. Otherwise you may end up wishing you had gotten a higher-paying job asking, "And would you like fries with that?"

Solon Economou is an independent scientific/engineering writer who has completed over 1,000 assignments for work originating at over 100 of the nation's leading agencies, corporations and universities. He is also a video scriptwriter and interactive courseware writer for a Fortune 100 company.

Help Wanted

We need your help. If you're a dedicated, driven professional who can do good work fast, for free and have a great time doing it, consider signing on with the IP.

Layout Coordinator. Responsibilities include: DTP layout on Ventura Publisher; schedule coordination with the Editor, Copy Editor, and Production Coordinator. This position usually entails 15 to 20 hours quarterly.

It's time to update the IP's image, so we're also looking for a graphic designer.

Graphic Designer. Responsibilities include: designing a new nameplate, working with the Editor and Layout Coordinator to make style changes, and working with the Editor to select graphics and graphics-related articles. This position is brand new; you can help design it. The time commitment will be greatest at first and will then settle into about 15 to 20 hours quarterly.

For more information or to offer your much needed talents, contact Susan Witter at 518-477-2564.

Independents' Issues

The question posed last issue concerned estimating projects. An excerpt: "The bottom issue is, really, how do you estimate your costs and give quotations? [...hourly, per page, package price, other?...] In particular, it would be useful to hear about strange, anomalous, misleading, crafty, or worse situations where a bid can get you burned, how to spot them coming, and how to deal with the pitfalls."

Responses

I found myself working on Subject X one long, hot summer. I hadn't been very long in the consulting field, and it shows in how I left myself open in contracting for Subject X.

The project was a single document, to be reworked from raw material thrown together by a new engineer. My client wanted a fixed price bid, so I looked at the material, estimated how long it would take me to rewrite it, and offered a price that reflected the highest per-hour charge I had ever made up to that point. They finally accepted, we wrote up a contract based on our negotiations, and I left there feeling great.

I found that I was pretty close in my estimate of the time it would take me to finish the project, including a thoroughly redone second draft. What I hadn't counted on were five more drafts. What should have been done in late May dragged on into late July. It seems the new engineer wasn't quite up to speed on this project. But I was stuck, since the contract specified payment upon delivery.

Partly from talking to colleagues in STC, I now make sure I include these stipulations in any contract:

1) For anything but the smallest jobs, I am to be paid half up front and the remainder on delivery (for longer jobs, I sometimes break it down into thirds);

2) My agreed-upon price refers to two full drafts; anything beyond that will be considered extra, and will be renegotiated (at a higher rate).

I did learn some things from working on Subject X. And my price per hour still turned out to be one for the record books. Unfortunately, though, not the record I wanted to set.

*Kevin Sunderman
Pittsburgh, PA*

Quoting jobs is indeed a challenge. Estimates are based on your specific mix of pricing, product, place, and positioning in your specific market. Rather than just quoting what the market will bear, examine how this job will enhance future business. Will you succeed? Is the price fair? Will your quality of service enable you to use this client as a future reference?

Start at the local level to gain insight on how to quote the 30-page report. Quote types are often standardized by industry, if not specified by the client. You obviously want the quote type which is to your advantage—without gouging the client. Get written details on the scope and schedule of the project, accessibility of the principals involved, and payment terms. Issue a contract.

Inevitably, you will be burned once. After you rise from the ashes, it's important to be a mentor to other independents and prevent this from happening to them. Share your experiences within your C&IC PIC and chapter newsletters. Revise your prospective client mental checklist, as new and unusual contracting horrors surface.

One former client refused to return my phone calls yet still expected me to ferret out missing information and complete the project. From our first conversations, the client gave me vague answers and couldn't locate relevant information. Reading between the lines of your question, I think that you suspect the client of misrepresentation. So why do business with them? Looks like *deja vu* to me.

You'll never know everything about the project before the estimate is due. That's why it's called estimating.

You must have an hourly rate for estimating. It's found by adding your salary (S) to overhead (S/2), then multiplying that

sum by 2 because you will work only half time. The other half you'll market your services and you'll need money then, too. At today's rates, that's $(S+S/2) \times 2 = 3S$, about \$45-\$60/hour. Total the hours you'll need for meetings, writing, editing, etc., and multiply by your hourly rate to obtain your initial estimate.

Don't tell the client your hourly rate. Your client will assume it's your salary; that will sour the deal.

You'll need fudge factors. Multiply your initial estimate by 1.5 for each of the following: Client unclear about project's purpose. No one clearly responsible. Multiple sources of input to you. Client difficult to work with. Rush project. Etc. Do not itemize. Quote only the estimated total.

Both you and the client are entitled only to what's in the written contract. Discussing the project prior to signing the contract is free; that's marketing cost. Your pay begins when they sign your contract. Your estimate, when signed by both parties, becomes the contract. In it, you and the client agree upon objectives, schedule, conditions of work, what each will contribute, what each will receive, etc.

Contracts can be renegotiated. The contract should state that either party may initiate renegotiation if: the conditions of the contract cannot be met; or if the status quo changes, e.g., the client's company reorganizes and that changes the amount of labor needed to meet contract requirements.

Estimating is a life-long learning process. Each time you estimate, you'll improve.

*David R. Young Communication Services
Rochester, New York*

Reference: David R. Young, "Marketing Your Services," *STC Technical Communication*, May 1988; page 123.

Watch for Dave's article on how to write your contract, coming soon in this newsletter.



Results of the 1991 C&IC PIC Business Practice Survey

310 Consultants and Independent Contractors (C&IC) PIC responded to the Business Practice Survey. 49% were women, 51% were men, a small number (11) did not respond to the gender question. Not all answered all the questions. Some also gave multiple answers. We used mean values as a way to calculate the averages. We also rounded the figures to the nearest dollar. Rates were averaged on a per hour basis. A small number charged rates by the pages and projects. We didn't use these figures because we didn't have a large enough sample. Another survey published by the national STC office provides additional information in the "1991 STC Member Profile" where both mean and median values were used to determine yearly income for independent consultants.

Consultant and Independent Contractor Profile

Average rate charged: \$45.00

Majority of business came from writing manuals that included instruction manuals, user guides, and reference guides.

Years ranged from 6 months to 40 years.

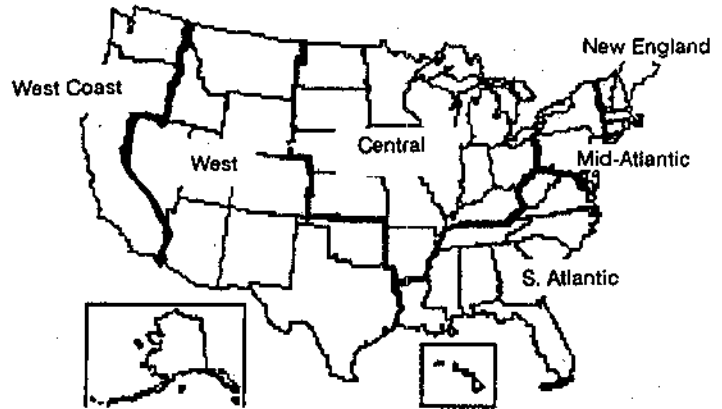
Average years as an independent contractor: 7

Average years as a technical communicator: 14

80% were full-time C&IC
20% were part-time C&IC

The majority of responses came from the Central region (see map) with the least amount from the West Coast. There was also a small sample from Canada where we gave a range of rates.

Rates by Geographic Location:



West Coast	\$41
West	\$37
Central	\$46
So. Atlantic	\$43
Mid-Atlantic	\$47
New England	\$40
Canada	\$40 - \$70

A map key is provided on page 4.

Gender Rate Comparison:

Women:	\$43.00 per hour
Men:	\$47.00 per hour

Negotiation and Rate Policies

1. Fees are determined by: (many answered more than one)

self	56%
client	12%
negotiated	50%

2. You consider your rates:

High	14%
Low	18%
Average	66%

3. Your clients consider your rates:

High	26%
Low	3%
Average	66%

4. When you fail to negotiate a higher fee after an inadequate offer, do you accept the original offer?

Always	3%
Sometimes	39%
Seldom	36%
Never	13%

5. When you raise your rates, do you:

Maintain for current clients, and raise for new clients	37%
Raise across the board	49%
Raise for current clients and use lower rates to attract new clients	6%

6. When will you accept fees below your standard?

Establish new clients	38%
Nonprofit group	45%
Need the income	48%
Not at all	11%

7. Do you ever work on speculation?

Yes	28%
No	68%

8. What percentage of time do you spend on a project before requiring payment?

<15%	32%
15-24%	24%
24-40%	14%
>40%	21%

9. What percentage of your profits come from clients who have you on retainer?

0-19%	84%
(a few noted 0 as their response)	
20-39%	2%
40-59%	2%
60-79%	3%
80-100%	5%

Billing Practices

10. How do you charge your clients?...preferred way?

per hour	84%	preferred?	46%
per day	10%	"	5%
per week	3%	"	3%
on retainer	4%	"	-
fixed project fee	56%	"	14%

Other preferred structure?

monthly, biweekly, upon completion.

11. Rank the importance of these factors in determining rates.

Market will bear	43%
Education and experience	45%
Income you need	15%
Undercut competition	1%

12. For lengthy projects, do you generally bill in installments?

Yes	84%
No	10%

otherwise:

upon completion	42%
after 2 weeks	18%
set day of month	28%

13. What are your usual terms of payment?

Net 10-15 days	33%
Net 30 days	56%
Other: (ranked in order of frequency)	

20% advance, 1/3 up front, 1/3 draft, 1/3 completion, 10% advance, weekly, 2% in 10 days with net 30 days, determined by client(!), when "they" issue check(!), no terms set (!)

14. Do your clients normally pay per your billing request?

Always	23%
Usually	63%
Sometimes	7%
Seldom	3%

15. How do you follow-up on past due bills?

Phone 71%
 Rebill 42%
 Collection 37% (last resort)

16. Would you or have you turned down business because..

Client has a poor reputation for working with t.c.'s?

Yes 60%
 No 37%

Client has a poor payment reputation?

Yes 78%
 No 16%

17. Have you seen evidence of discrimination against independent writers?

Yes 27%
 No 70%

Note: Although some answered no, they mentioned other factors such as being "outsiders", or mistrust by permanent employees.

18. If so, what type of discrimination have you seen?

Gender 10%
 Age 8%
 Race 3%

Other: 15% (IRS fear, favored larger consultant firms, not specialized, outsider, disability, general mistrust of profession)

19. What are your rates for each of the following?

Travel time a. 0% b. 44% c. 11% d. 29%
 Meeting time a. 0% b. 81% c. 4% d. 6%
 Research a. 2% b. 85% c. 0% d. 2%
 Rush jobs a. 54% b. 35% c. 0% d. 0%

a. Premium b. Standard
 c. Reduced d. No charge

20. Do you add a service charge or late payment fee to past-due bills?

(The sample was small, however a range is provided.)
 1.5% - 21%

21. The following are used as income sources.

Publications	18%
STC chapter employment	8%
PR firms	3%
Direction solicitation	66%
Former employer	33%
Consultants	27%
Other STC sources	7%
Literary agents	-
Training firms	13%
other:	
referrals	23%
agencies	8%
subcontractors	3%

Rates

Rates varied from a low end of \$10.00 per hour to \$200.00 per hour. These were not driven by the years of experience.

An hourly average is given along with a range (minimum-maximum) for the following types of technical writing:

Brochure	\$41	\$10-100
Article	\$47	\$10-100
Manual	\$43	\$10-300
Online Doc	\$44	\$14-100
Scriptwriting	\$51	\$25-200
Video	\$51	\$25-200
Slides	\$46	\$10-100
CBT	\$44	\$25-125
Tech Editing	\$38	\$10-200

Rates (continued)

In addition to technical writing there were other types of technical communication reported. Consultants ran the gamut of training, desktop publishing, graphic design and indexing. We've provided a range because the samples were too small to average. They are based on an hourly rate unless otherwise noted.

Other Types of Technical Communication and Rates

Training seminars: \$500 - \$4,000 per day
(some quoted \$150.00 per hr.)

Proposal writing: \$25 - \$100

Promotional writing: \$50 - \$60

Desktop Publishing: \$20 - \$200

Newsletters: \$25 - \$60

Graphic design: \$40

Books: varied greatly, rates charged according to project, royalties.

Royalties - 5% - 15%

Advances - \$500 - \$5,000

Project - \$2,000 - \$15,000

Technical Drawing: \$50

Installing software/hardware: \$35

Animation: \$125

Annual reports: \$50

Indexing: \$20 - \$45

Interactive Video: \$1500 per minute

Project Management: \$42

Design Documents: \$35

Translation: 15 - 20 cents a word

About C&IC PIC

The Consulting and Independent Contracting Professional Interest Committee exists under the auspices of the International Society for Technical Communication. There are currently approximately 1200 members throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe. It serves as a forum for independent contractors and consultants. If you would like further information about C&IC PIC or about this survey, please contact:

C&IC PIC
P.O. Box 1725
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

We hope this survey provided you with useful information.

Map Key (from page 1)

West Coast: WA, OR, CA, AK, HI

West: MT, UT, NV, AZ, ID, TX, NM, WY, OK, CO

Central: IL, KY, AR, IA, WI, MN, ND, SD, MO, MI, IN, OH, NB, KS

S. Atlantic: FL, W.VA., VA, NC, SC, LA, MS, TN, GA, AL

Mid Atlantic: NY, PA, MD, DE, NJ

New England: ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT

reviewing, and signoff, for example. This section might include the following and be arranged like this:

Originate Source Material	James Stone, Applications Engineering Robert Tang, Software Development
Writers:	Ed Lang and Bob Wently
Review:	Sue Edwards, Applications Engineering Mike Ness, Applications Engineering Rick Larson, Marketing
Signoff:	Ted Strong, Software Development Manager

List of Dependencies

This section contains areas that might require special attention in order to complete the project on time. The consultant has to be careful to thoroughly identify the possible constraints inherent in project requirements. Dependencies might include: needing a dedicated desktop publishing system, or having a team member dedicate himself/herself to working on nothing else but the documentation until the project is finished. Constraints could be a team member who is very good at what he/she does, but may need some additional training on the product to be more effective.

Schedule of Activity and Milestones

This should be fit into the overall product development and release schedule. At a minimum, include the required tasks or activities and the amount of time needed to complete them. An example could be:

Activity	Duration	Time	Responsibility
Research material and write	8/13-8/27	11 days	James Stone/Bob Wently
Review draft	8/28-9/1	5 days	Sue Edwards/Rick Larson
Incorporate changes	9/2-9/4	3 days	Bob Wently
Sign off	9/5	1 day	Ted Strong

The documentation plan is the source to keep the documentation effort alive and well. The consultant needs to ensure that all team members contribute to writing the plan since all of the members will eventually "live by it." Make the plan the basis of keeping the project in focus. Start by generating an outline and getting agreement before developing the details for the plan. Broader topics are more difficult to change further down the line than details are. However, if details do change, the plan can be adjusted and modified as the project moves along. Use resources and time wisely. When the project team's full cooperation of adhering to the plan is secured, "making beautiful music together" becomes more audible.



Mike Lujan has been a technical communicator for 13 years. He founded Concepts in Print in 1987 to provide a tailored service to companies requiring better perspective to their literature. Concepts in Print specializes in user hardware and software documentation.