

The Perspective

Newsletter for the STC International Consulting & Independent Contracting Special Interest Group

Documenting a Year 2000 Project

by Donald Saxman

Companies all over the world are engaged in a multibillion dollar effort to make sure that their computer systems continue to work after December 31, 1999. The so-called "Y2K crisis" is simple to understand but difficult and expensive to correct. Much of the world's software code cannot distinguish between the year 2000 and the year 1900.

Companies take a three-phase approach to the problem. First, they identify and correct Y2K problems (either by remediating, retiring, or replacing). Second, they test all systems to verify that no Y2K related defects are present. Finally, they document the first two efforts and preserve the documentation as auditable evidence. Most companies are addressing the problems using a combination of in-house employees and consultants.

Many companies have only recently realized the tremendous potential for Y2K litigation. Some industry experts anticipate over \$2 trillion worth of lawsuits being filed worldwide. There is even the remote possibility of criminal suits regarding privacy issues like the Fair Credit Reporting Act. Documentation will play a critical role in defending against these suits. Technical writers should be employed to help their clients prepare documentation as evidence to defend against suits filed.

Technical writers and librarians should be involved in planning the Y2K project from the very beginning. The Y2K crisis has created a shortage of software coders, programmers, and testers, and has sparked record-high salaries for these disciplines. Whenever possible, document-related duties should be shifted from these more expensive, harder-to-retain professionals to document creation and management professionals.

Document Management Plan

The first step in documenting a Y2K project is establishing and following a document management plan. The plan must contain document authorization, revision, and archiving processes. Each Y2K-related document must be logged into a database and assigned a document tracking number and a revision level. A hard copy log is recommended because it is easier to audit. If a document is revised, earlier versions of the document must be retained.

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FINALLY!

by Kelly Burch

This newsletter is finally going out. What a relief! Sometimes things just keep happening, you know? I made a commitment to publish on schedule and we set firm dates to follow for each issue. I wasn't far off on the first issue, but this one? Yikes. I apologize to all of you for the delay. You can look forward to seeing the next issue on schedule—I promise!

But, good things come to those who wait, and I think you'll find this issue was worth the wait. We have included some very informative and entertaining articles. I'm very happy to announce that we have some new columnists and contributors. Jodie Gilmore has volunteered to write a humor column and she's starting off right with her entertaining piece, "What, No Documentation?!!!" I think you'll enjoy that one and I look forward to her next. Tom Lenzo has agreed to continue as The Computing Consultant and his column this month, "Protecting Your Consulting Business Against Crime," covers a topic that is rarely discussed, but concerns all of us.

Attention:

Columnists and Contributors

The copy deadline for the Winter issue is **November 30**.

Ken Mauro has also agreed to continue with his column, On Being Independent, with a topic we can all appreciate, "Writing Manuals: Seven Steps to Understanding the Process." He certainly "hits the nail on the head" with this one and I'm sure you'll get at least a chuckle or two from it. I also have had a couple of other people express interest in writing a column or contributing articles. You should hear from them in the next issue.

And, we have our last column from Janice King, our Marketing Master, regarding "Selling Your Services with a Web Site." We will miss her tremendously, but I'm hoping someone out there will consider taking up the reins. Marketing our services is critical for all us. If you are interested, please contact the editors.

We've reprinted two other timely articles. The first is our cover story concerning Year 2000 documentation by Donald Saxman and the second is a book review by our favorite reviewer, Judy Skinner, about a book on marketing information and who uses the Internet.

We're sure you'll find something that interests you here—at least that's our goal.

We still hope to publish some local CICSIG news and photos. If you have news to share about your local group, please contact us. We're anxious to hear from you.

That's about it for this issue. **FINALLY!** Enjoy. Until next time... ❖

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We encourage you to send comments, suggestions, and opinions regarding *The Independent Perspective* or the CICSIG to the editor at the address below.

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SUBMISSION

Articles and news items should be submitted to the editor by the first of the month prior to the month of publication. Please submit files by e-mail to kburch@dallas.net.

Make the Most of Your Efforts

by Dr. Thomas Barker

Often when you're working on a project you can generate more business by piggy-backing your next contract onto the current one. Sometimes you can even piggy-back consulting work onto your usual contracting work. As I'll show, that process can generate a chain reaction leading to increased marketing, increased professional awareness, new clients, and more income.

I learned this lesson on a contract job for an engineering manufacturing firm in New York. I had an insider friend with the company and, through him, I learned that the company needed its process manual revised. But the committee in charge of the revising had gotten bogged down in minutia of editing, and the whole project was starting to get frowns from the boss.

I got the contract because I promised that not only could I take over the revision project, but that I would upgrade the word processing technology they were using for the document in the bargain. Although I contracted as a writer, I realized that I also could offer them expertise in manual maintenance and electronic document production. So I threw in a style guide and a set of maintenance procedures as part of the contract deliverables. I knew I would have to develop a style guide as a part of my editing anyway, and, because I was upgrading the document from the WordPerfect program version 5.1 to version 7.0, I knew I'd be scratching out procedures for myself. So why not create a complete package, I thought.

The complete package eventually consisted of an extensive style guide and 10 pages of well tested procedures for

moving document sections around and re-numbering the figures, paragraphs, table of contents, index, and list of figures automatically. My insider friend at the company suggested I go for another purchase order just to come in and train the engineer who would take over the manual when I left. This extension of my stay made sense, so I figured I'd go for a few more hours and I offered my friend a dollar figure.

He winced and said, "Look. Triple the figure and call it a class. I don't think anybody will balk at that." Well, needless to say a little light went on in my brain. For one thing, the dollar figure I finally came up with for the "class" amounted to almost twice the original contract price for the entire revision of the manual. The lesson: companies pay bigger bucks for training than they do for sweat. For another thing, my overhead for the class stayed low because I already had the raw materials (the style guide and the maintenance procedures) as a result of my own writing and editing practices.

Here's my point: if you implement you should train. In any development project maintenance represents a large, often hidden, cost. If you can convince a client that you have a solution to the problem of unseen maintenance costs eating up the profit on a project, you can extend your project by including training.

Offering training along with a manual can deliver a number of advantages to both you and your client.

Forestall troubleshooting problems.

You'll be gone from the client's site by the time anyone gets around to changes in the current document. Adequate

training can help the client's people troubleshoot the product.

Leave some expertise.

By training on the manual product (or other type of document), you multiply the benefit for the client who sees the training as bringing expertise in-house.

Offer a complete service.

Supporting your products rounds off your service. Your client won't perceive you as creating more problems than you solve.

In the case of my process manual revision project, I could sell myself not just as a contract writer but as a consultant. The sponsor of the project wanted to look as good as he could after I left and I convinced him to invest in his own image. Besides, I knew that, once I dropped off the manuscripts and disks, they would probably mold with age before anybody had the incentive to tackle any upgrades—which was the whole point of re-designing the document in the first place. But my real challenge lay ahead for me: what format should the training take?

I had had extensive experience in giving seminars, university courses, and conference presentations, but how to package training for this company offered a real challenge. I explored my options and realized that any format brought with it the following trade-off: more elaborate packaging takes more effort but more elaborate packaging makes the training more portable. The following formats, for example, range from less to more planning and up-front packaging, and from less portability to more portability.

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State of The 'Net: The New Frontier

a review by Judy Skinner

State of The 'Net: The New Frontier

by Peter C. Clemente
Published by McGraw-Hill
Copyright 1998
ISBN 0-07-011979-1

Are you an aspiring entrepreneur looking for a market and thinking "Online?"

If so, *State of the Net: The New Frontier* by Peter C. Clemente is a "must read" for you. The book is devoted to informing the reader about Internet users—who they are, where they are, what they do online, and what motivates them to go online—everything about the Internet population and how to reach them effectively. The information in the book is based on research developed by the Emerging Technologies Research Group (ETRG). More information is available from ETRG's Web sites:

<http://www.cyberdialogue.com/> or
<http://etrgr.findsvp.com/>

Early on, Clemente addresses the question "Is the Internet a fad?" He states, "as evidenced by the phenomenon that is the Internet, anything is possible." He goes on to say that lifestyles are changing.

A key to the Internet's adoption and use is that knowledge-based occupations are growing. Knowledge and information workers own and use technology, particularly the PC. Additionally, the number of people working at home is increasing.

Clemente talks about the phenomenal growth of the universe of Web users.

He says 40 percent of households in the U.S. are online. Furthermore, research findings indicate that 40 percent of users accessing from work go online between 8 a.m. and noon, and 41 percent of users accessing from home go online between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. This could be useful information in deciding what is the optimal time around which to organize a Web-based service.

A key to the Internet's adoption and use is that knowledge-based occupations are growing.

Throughout the book are tables, graphs, and charts to summarize and illustrate the data. The graphics are in black and gray tones. I found myself wishing for color; however, that would have added to the production costs of the book, and as the author says, "Reach beats flash."

Demographic data are abundant. User profiles are broken down by gender, household income, individual income, education, household composition, occupation, age, and access location. Personal content preferences are analyzed: News is the highest-ranking category; online banking is the lowest.

Online shopping is becoming increasingly popular. In a survey users were asked to rank the perceived benefits of online shopping. In order of importance users' rankings were: 24-hour availability, access from work, home, or friend's PC; no travel required, time savings, privacy, easy comparison

shopping, lower prices, more informed purchase decisions, greater product selection, and no annoying sales people.

Figure 7.3 is an interesting table on strengths and weaknesses of Internet marketing. Listed first among the weaknesses is that the Internet audience is not very broad. Apart from students, it reaches very few consumers with incomes less than \$40,000.

If you're thinking of marketing a product or service on the 'Net, *State of the Net: The New Frontier* by Peter C. Clemente could be a useful reference. I give it a thumbs up.

Judy Skinner is an Associate Fellow of the Society and long-time member of the Lone Star Chapter. She has worked for Candle Corporation, IBM, Texas Instruments, and Harris Corporation as Information Developer, team leader, and department manager.

This review was reprinted from the October 1998 issue of Technically Write, newsletter of the STC's Lone Star Chapter. ♦



Selling Your Services with a Web Site

by Janice King

As an independent communicator, you may have a Web site that promotes your services. But does your site present the kind of information and experiences that will turn casual visitors into hot prospects? Here are ideas to help you create a site that presents your talents with impact, and encourages prospective clients to contact you for a project assignment.

One reason for creating a Web site is that it's a convenient way to connect with clients who may not easily find you through other means. This accessibility is particularly valuable if you offer specialized services, or you serve clients located out of your area.

Even if you offer typical technical writing services, you can attract potential clients with a well-written, well-organized, and visually appealing site. Use your brochures as a starting point; create Web pages that describe your services and skills, project experience, specialization, equipment, and other relevant elements of what you can deliver to clients.

Presenting an Online Portfolio

If you have created Web pages for clients, link to them as a way to create an online portfolio. For print materials, present a screen shot, scanned page image, or a text sample that has been converted to HTML format. Of course, obtain permission from your client before implementing links or reproducing materials in order to ensure you're not creating any confidentiality or trade secret issues.

If you can't create an online portfolio, make sure that your site serves as a sample of your writing and content

development skills. The site should be clearly organized, presented with an attractive layout, easy to navigate, with text that is easy to read on a monitor. Graphics should be appropriate in number and complexity to the services you are promoting.

Unless you want to obtain leading-edge Web development work, you don't need to worry about including frames, Java script, and other advanced techniques on your site.

Even if you offer typical technical writing services, you can attract potential clients with a well-written, well-organized, and visually appealing site.

Links to Other Sites

Be careful about the number and types of links you make to other sites. After all, visitors who link to another site may not remember to come back!

Place links a few pages away from the home page. Structure the site so that visitors will view the most essential information about your services, capabilities, clients, etc. before they find the links.

Choose links that are relevant to the professional image you want to present, not those that reflect your personal interests and tastes. For example, a visitor will be positively impressed by a link to the STC site, but may be put-off by a link to the fan club site for the Baywatch television series.

Motivating the Visitor to Respond

Visitors come to your site, they like what they see—but do you give them the encouragement and means to take the next step? Include a call to action on each Web page such as: "Call me to learn how I can improve your next online user's guide."

Show all information a visitor needs in order to contact you: telephone number, postal and e-mail addresses. Also, create an inquiry form that visitors can complete with detailed information about their needs or interests for your service. The visitor's responses are sent by your Web server as an e-mail message, giving you an easy, automated way to prepare a complete and professional response.

Parting Thoughts

This is my last article as a column editor. I hope you have gained many valuable ideas for promoting your business. I won't disappear; I hope to contribute feature articles in the future. In the meantime, you can read my column "Marketing Writing for Technical Products," which appears quarterly in STC's *Intercom* magazine.

Janice King is author of the new Web Marketing Cookbook and Writing High-Tech Copy that Sells (both published by John Wiley & Sons). Her Web site is www.writespark.com.

Janice King is author of the new Web Marketing Cookbook and Writing High-Tech Copy That Sells (both John Wiley). She is an independent marketing writer who serves clients across North America through her company MarkeTech (Bellevue, WA). ❖

Protecting Your Consulting Business Against Crime

by Tom Lenzo

Three consultants I know were recent victims of crime. One had break-ins and hardware thefts at his home office; another's office in a professional building was robbed; the third had his cell-phone illegally cloned.

As consultants, we cannot afford the loss of property and time that results from crime. If serious enough, crime can put us out of business. Based on interviews with the victims and some research, here are my suggestions for protecting your business.

Where to Start

Look at your office from a criminal's perspective, preferably before you move in or set it up. Ask the police about area crime rates and what is being stolen. Lightweight equipment that can easily be taken and fenced, such as computers, fax machines, and telephones are typical targets. According to police, most burglaries occur between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., usually through unlocked doors and windows.

Install a security system with an alarm and response. They work to: deter criminals by their presence, usually indicated by sensors and labels; frighten away burglars attempting to break in; and limit losses because burglars know there is a response to the alarm.

Talk with your insurance agent to determine what your policy and any riders cover. For example, a computer equipment insurance rider may not cover your fax machine. Check Safeware Insurance Agency (www.safeware.net)



for personal computer insurance. By the way, according to the FBI (www.fbi.gov) 90% of stolen computers are never recovered due to a black market for spare parts.

Protect Your Hardware

When you set up your office, don't put equipment where it can be seen from the outside, especially through first floor windows. Since most burglaries are crimes of opportunity, put anti-theft cables, locks, or earthquake straps on your computers and other expensive equipment. That will prevent a criminal from quickly taking it, as well as protecting it from accidents.

As consultants we cannot afford the loss of property and time that results from crime.

Vendors include:

Byte Brothers
<http://www.bytebros.com>

Security Solutions
<http://www2.security-solutions.com>

University Accessories
<http://www.usecure.com>

Kensington Technology Group
<http://www.kensington.com>

Use timers or other equipment to control lights and appliances, giving your home or office a "lived-in" look. Units such as X-10 and Plug 'n Power are available at Radio Shack and other stores. Two good Web sites regarding this technology are:

Home Automation Systems
<http://www.techmall.com/smarthome/index.html>

Electronic House—the home automation magazine
<http://www.electronichouse.com/>

Protect Your Notebook

Stealing notebook computers is a rapidly growing crime with more than 310,000 laptops stolen in 1997. When traveling with your notebook always pay attention to it, especially in airports. Don't check it as luggage and use a carrying bag that won't identify it as a computer. You can also get motion and distance alarms for your notebook; *Mobile Computing and Communications* magazine has ads and reviews of these products. When in a hotel or visiting a client, use cables to secure the notebook to a table.

When stolen desktop or notebook computers are recovered, it is usually difficult to identify the owner. Engrave your name and/or driver's license number on the unit in a visible place and inside the computer, such as in the notebook's battery well. There are several databases where you can contact to register a computer or to check serial numbers on used machines you're considering buying. They include: <http://www.amcoex.com/AmCoEx/Stolen> and <http://celebs.ogrady.com/larceny>.

Protect Your Data

While hardware can easily be replaced, data loss can be more devastating to your business. Store your original application disks and frequently updated backups of your data away from your home or office. Use an off-site storage center, bank safe deposit box, or a small, hidden, fireproof safe.

Telephone Protection

Your telephones can easily be a cause of financial loss. Check your phone bills for costs charged to your number, especially:

- Collect and other calls you did not make
- Telephone services you did not order; that's called "cramming"
- Slamming: a long distance company switches your phone service to their company without your permission

For more information regarding these problems, contact your local phone company, the Federal Communications Commission at 1/888-CALL-FCC (888/225-5322), or the www.scambusters.com Web site.



The consultant with the office theft checked his phone bill: since the thief used the phone, it showed the time of the robbery, and it differed from the landlord's statements regarding building security.

If you use a cellular phone, get a digital model as they're less prone to eavesdropping and service theft. Don't leave signs that you have a cell phone such as an adapter plugged into the car lighter or a removable antenna. They'll attract thieves for the phone or the accessories. Deactivate your cell phone if you're away and won't be using it, or if it is broken.

Protect your calling card and PIN number. The easiest way to steal them is to watch you use them.

Resources

To learn more about protecting your business, review materials published by police departments, *Consumer Reports* and *Home Office Computing* magazines, and publications by Nolo Press.

I hope you'll never be affected by crime. By the way, my colleagues profiled at the beginning of this article are still in business in spite of the incidents.

Tom Lenzo is a training and development consultant with more than 25 years experience in high technology environments. He is also the Employment Manager for the San Gabriel Valley STC Chapter. He can be reached at tlenzo@worldnet.att.net. ❖

Online Book Has New Authors

by Kelly Burch

As many of you know, our SIG Manager Thomas Barker is editing an online book entitled *Getting Started in Consulting and Independent Contracting*. You can find, and read, the book at the following URL: <http://english.ttu.edu/gscic/>.

As an ongoing project, the book lacks authors for certain chapters. But that is changing. Barker is pleased to announce the addition of three new authors for the following three chapters:

- **Betsy Miller**, Chapter 18 "Setting Up Your Office"
- **Kathryn Acciari**, Chapter 5 "Rounding Up Resources"
- **Linda Gallagher**, Chapter 14 "Moving to a New Market"

These new chapters, currently in draft form but soon to be uploaded, will help round out the valuable advice already offered in the existing chapters.

Consider writing a chapter yourself. All you have to do is write a brief prospectus to Thomas Barker at tbarker@ttu.edu. Once your chapter is ready to post, you will get a user name and password for your folder on the server so you can revise and update your chapter yourself. The Table of Contents page contains a mailto: link to your e-mail address, and you can include your Web site address in your chapter.

Think of the market exposure! ❖

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR EFFORTS

continued from page 3

- **One-on-one coaching.** Because I already had the style guide and the maintenance procedures written, all I had to do for one-on-one coaching was to schedule time with the head of process engineering and walk him through the documents. But this kind of work only pertained to one person's needs. Not much portability.



- **Class or workshop.** To meet the needs of more than one person you need a class or workshop. Workshops work efficiently, say, for the committee that had taken on the revision project in the first place. I thought, "Sure, and I can throw in some tips on how to write collaboratively, share revision tasks, proofread in pairs...." I quickly saw, however, that cranking up a workshop would require transparencies, a lesson agenda, a workbook, an evaluation....more overhead. But, I also reasoned, I could save this material and offer it as part of my next project. Portability increases.

- **Seminar.** Seminars tend to be much more formal and require much more preparation because you have to generalize your material to meet the needs of multiple audiences. But with seminars the portability vastly increases.

When you look at the work you do—your processes, the materials you generate to teach yourself, your records of triumph over this or that technology—you can see a number of ways to

capitalize on your time. You could even take the idea a step further. Why not write an article for a newsletter? I could have written for an industry newsletter (in this case *microcircuit process records*) or for my own industry (in this case *tips for maintaining complex documents in WordPerfect 7.0*). I could do a conference presentation or a presentation for my local STC chapter, offered for the sake of marketing my services.

The work you do constantly challenges you to take things a step further. As you can see, watching your processes can help you make the most from your efforts as an independent. It can take you, as it did me, from the satisfying but less lucrative work as a contractor to the equally satisfying but much more lucrative work as a consultant. ❖

What, No Documentation??!!

by Jodie Gilmore

I recently acquired a new product, and was shocked to find it came with no documentation for the particular model I got. I did find some generic documentation, but much of it was contradictory, or didn't seem to apply to my model.

I should have known things were going to be difficult. When I ordered the product, the Customer Service department couldn't tell me exactly what model I would get, or when my model would be available. It took about nine months for the product to be ready; and when it was ready, no one could give me an exact day or time for delivery. When the product finally arrived, delivery and installation took almost 18 hours—and involved a fair amount of labor. I couldn't get any kind of warranty or money-back guarantee, and there was no maintenance contract. Replacement parts are impossible to get, and the Company does not accept returns for any reason.

The bare product is not very useful. I have had to spend hundreds of dollars on accessories. Because I wasn't sure exactly what model I was getting, I couldn't buy many of these accessories until after the model arrived. Since my model was smaller than the average, finding accessories that fit was sometimes a challenge. The output collection devices are not reusable, and my model uses at least 10 per day. Thank goodness they are available in bulk.

Working with and maintaining the product has been a challenge. The commands are in a foreign language that cannot be translated. What's more,

the commands seem to change daily. What worked yesterday isn't guaranteed to work tomorrow. Even worse, the same command can mean more than one thing—I never know if I'm supposed to provide input, take care of output, adjust the temperature, etc. Sometimes the product issues repeated, monotonous error messages for long periods of time for no apparent reason. While lots of people have similar models, the differences are just enough to make their documentation (if they have any) almost useless. I have not been able to find a service person that makes housecalls, so when there is something seriously wrong with the product, I have to pack it up and take it to a local service office to have it checked out. Scheduled maintenance, such as virus protection, also has to be done at a local service office.

The product requires a lot of attention. Entering input takes at least half an hour, and needs to be performed six times a day. The product will not accept input from just anybody—you have to have the right password. (Currently, the password is "MAMA".) System dumps are also frequent, and the output is often messy. I have to clean the entire product at least once a day, and getting to some of the parts can be tricky. To the best of my knowledge, the product does not come with an OFF button.

After eight months of working with my model, I've become quite attached to it, and have learned to adapt to its eccentricities. Oh—in case you were wondering, the name of my particular model is Naomi Leigh Gilmore.



Jodie is a freelance technical writer in the Portland, OR area. In addition to being a part-time writer, she's a full-time mom and a part-time farmer in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. ❖

Writing Manuals: Seven Steps to Understanding the Process

by Ken Mauro

We've all been there at one time or another, wondering why we put the effort we do into producing a quality product. Here's something I wrote one day in a fit of frustration tempered with the need to laugh at it all.

Step 1: The Selection Process

Not every machine gets a manual. Usually the end user gets one only after sustained whining and griping during numerous phone calls to the machine builder. In most cases, the user doesn't even need a manual, they're just trying to bust the salesperson's chops, for reasons that will never be known to the writer. This external process leads to the next step, the internal request.

Step 2: The Internal Request

The person on the receiving end of the complaints goes to the Engineering Manager to discuss the matter. In a few minutes, a note is left on the writer's desk, who is not there that day. The note simply says, "Need a manual for the widget bender." Or, a call is placed to the writer by the Engineering secretary, who always asks if the writer "knows anything about a manual for XYZ Company." The response requires some judgement. Some writers treat this type of inquiry as authorization to begin billing a new project; others choose to play dumb if they happen to think they already have enough to do that month.

3. Information Gathering and Assembling the First Draft

A reasonable approach would be to go out and observe the machine in operation, assemble all related engineering documentation, and begin to work with the SMEs. Wrong-o. A seasoned professional knows that the

machine shipped three weeks ago, and that the drawings, bill of materials, and spare part lists are still being revised. As for the control logic and electrical drawings, an outside firm was hired for that. This is a bonus, providing an opportunity to hunt someone down off-site for help on the sequence of operation. This someone is a key person in the consulting organization, and is always in meetings or on vacation when you need information.

Nowadays, real writers take their best shot and hope that it's true what they say: No one reads these things anyway.

4. The Review Process

There isn't any. There used to be, when the writer first came on the scene and the client was innocent, but not anymore. Sooner or later, client personnel tire of actually reading draft and marking it up. Nowadays, real writers take their best shot and hope that it's true what they say: No one reads these things anyway.



5. Establishing Priorities

This can be tricky. Internal requestors will buttonhole the writer in the cafeteria, as he sips his coffee and stares at the ducks in the field nearby, and ask how the manual for Colossus Industries is coming. "Are you making it a top

priority, Ken?" Salaried employees might struggle with this one, but veteran independents rarely offer rational explanations about waiting on illustrations, the review of draft material, or other such reasonable niceties. Instead, they develop their own tactics to gently deflect the requestor in another direction. If you don't have any such tactics, borrow this relatively mild one from Dr. Peter. Slowly move toward a window and attempt to light a cigarette by using a magnifying glass to focus the sun's rays on the tip. Borrow the cigarette from the requestor, if possible.

6. Publishing the Finished Document

At some machine builders, where technology rules but only in the shop, writers turn over a master copy to the engineering department or print room staff for making copies and assembling the manuals. In many cases, however, lucky writers get to make the copies themselves and take them to the local FedEx station. If the end user is a large corporation, getting the copies out is always a rush job. This is because a third party has been hired to turn the manual into a training program and bill the corporation about five bazillion times what the writer charged for the original document.

7. Evaluating Your Work

Good writers want to know if their product meets the user's needs. This is not part of the writing process, and here's why. No one ever really wanted a manual in the first place. That's right! Not the machine builder, the customer

or even the customer's technical people. Everyone knows that given a close working relationship between the manufacturer's service techs and the user's maintenance techs, supported by a generous flow of spare parts air-shipped on a daily basis, there is no need for a manual. Well then, if that's true, why are they requested?

The most commonly accepted theory holds that, many years ago, a very large and crafty corporation buried a requirement for an operating manual into the boilerplate of one of its purchase orders. Back then, it was a stroke of genius. Today, purchasing agents and accounting managers worldwide use this tactic to justify holding back final payment until hapless machine builders can slap together something that passes for an operating manual.

Why is it important for the writer to know this? Only because knowing the true meaning of the manual can help a writer avoid the heartache resulting from misguided attempts to improve quality. Knowing the operating manual is written for accountants, and not for technical people, means you have attained true enlightenment! Sit back in your chair, relax, perhaps enjoy a game of solitaire on your PC. All you can do now is wait for Step 1 to happen.

Ken Mauro is an independent working in Chicago and the Midwest. He loves the phrase "need to" and wishes more people would use it. His e-mail address is kmauro@ameritech.net. ❖

The document management plan must supplement a software configuration management plan that includes version control (a tracking number assigned to each production module), library control (logging all changes) and change control (authorization of all code changes). A continuously updated configuration inventory should be retained in a Y2K repository.

Document Control Center

The second step is setting up a document control center (DCC). The DCC should contain both hard copy and electronic copies of all Y2K-related documents. Letters and nonelectronic media should be scanned and saved as graphics. Access to the DCC should be controlled. It should be possible to copy items in the DCC, but original material should not be removed. The entire DCC should be periodically copied onto a writable CD-ROM, which is retained as an archival backup.

Programmatic and Technical Procedures

The third step is creating programmatic and technical procedures. Technical procedures establish and control all major aspects of the Y2K inventory, remediation, and testing processes. Programmatic procedures establish and control configuration management, project planning, status reporting, quality assurance, communications and awareness, policy directives, and personnel processes.

Documentation of Test Data

Finally, Y2K documentation must identify, recover, and archive all test data, including unit test data (part of the remediation process), regression test data (which should include forward test

results), and acceptance test data (which should certify that the code has passed all required testing before it is released back to production).

Donald Saxman, a consultant with Interim Technology, is currently managing TeleCheck International's Y2K project. He was previously technical communications manager with Interim at a VALIC Y2K project.

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Independent The Perspective

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NEWS BRIEFS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Authors and Columnists Still Needed

After the last newsletter, we had some gracious volunteers offer their time and talents. THANKS!!! However, we still need authors and columnists to contribute to *The Independent Perspective*. (This is supposed to be a 16-page newsletter, not 12!) We also hope that someone can step in to take up where our "Marketing Master," Janice King, left off. If you have marketing tips to share, please contact us. This is a very important topic for all independents and we'd like to continue providing this information in the newsletter.

As always, we need articles on any subject related to Consulting and Contracting as well as reviews of books, software, and hardware. We can "borrow" articles from other newsletters, but it would be great to offer more articles specifically written for our publication.

As always, your ideas and suggestions are welcome. Contact Linda Bell at editricks@aol.com or Kelly Burch at kburch@dallas.net to discuss them. ❖

We Want News!

We were hoping to begin publishing news from the local CICSIGs, but we haven't received any contributions after our plea in the last issue. We want to make this a friendly forum for sharing our news and ideas, so we encourage you to let us know about your activities, meeting reports, group successes, member highlights and achievements, tips and techniques, etc. Just drop us an e-mail with some brief highlights—that's all we're asking for... ❖