

Why You Need a Technical Writer

What company or non-profit today isn't looking for ways to reduce fixed costs and payroll, and eliminate non-performing or non-essential resources (expenses), while continuing to maximize efficiency and output (income)? The answer that many organizations and enterprises have come up with, as promoted in the classic business book *In Search of Excellence* by Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., is to focus on what they do best (Chapter 10, "Stick to the Knitting"). By concentrating on their core competencies, companies can excel at what they do best while delegating or outsourcing other non-core functions to others who have the skills and expertise to better fulfill those needs efficiently and economically. My own research supports this observation, with many companies no longer considering technical writing and documentation as a core expertise requiring on-staff resources. *(continued on the next page)*

Why You Need a Technical Writer

However, while many organizations have correctly adopted the first part of this strategy (concentrating on core competencies), they often either misunderstand or ignore the second part (delegating their non-core functions and needs to outside experts), and assign the technical writing duties to remaining staff members. The consequence of this decision is the assumption of technical writing responsibilities by engineers or other technical personnel. And while many engineers, scientists, and technicians can indeed write "technical" articles or reports, the customer focus, audience awareness, and communication skills that are essential to a successful, effectively written document are frequently lacking. This would not be the case if the services of a properly trained technical writer were used. Being able to communicate the technical message in an efficient and cost-effective manner, and using language that is appropriate for the intended audience, are examples of the many benefits that a trained and experienced technical writer can provide.