

# The Indispensable Writer

COMMUNICATION IS THE LIFEBLOOD OF YOUR BUSINESS.  
DON'T LEAVE IT TO AMATEURS. By Becky Tumidolsky



**It's a whole new world out there** for companies trying to navigate the global marketplace. 📧 Rapid-fire changes in communications technology have completely upturned old ways of doing business. Employees at all levels are placing an ever higher premium on data access, meaningful participation, job satisfaction, and a sense of community in the workplace. Social media have given customers, vendors, shareholders, and competitors a boundless platform of breathtaking speed and power. 📧 These developments mark a **revolutionary turning point** – a make-or-break moment for businesses faced with unceasing demands for greater openness, clarity, flexibility, agility, and accountability, all in the harsh light of the public domain.

In this unforgiving atmosphere, you must rely on communications experts. If you dismiss their importance and go it alone, you'll succumb to the elements. It's as simple as that.

## Just Ask the Fortune 1,000

A 2001 survey of 180 Fortune 1,000 companies<sup>1</sup> revealed the communication functions and priorities of some of the most highly successful organizations. Across the board, respondents cited the fundamental, strategic importance of corporate communications, given the accelerating pace of work, new technologies, increasingly complex media relations, and growing emphases on social responsibility and reputation management. These companies' communication budgets were fairly large (mean amount: \$21.6 million) with advertising, foundation funding, employee communications, and community, government, and investor relations among the largest expenditures. According to the survey's final report, "These figures underscore that playing the communication game at the Fortune 500 level requires substantial resources in professional staff and financial commitment."<sup>2</sup>

THE WORD "WRITER" USUALLY BRINGS TO MIND A WORDSMITH WITH A KEEN KNACK FOR RHETORIC. BUT THIS IS JUST ONE DIMENSION OF A PROFESSIONAL WRITER'S RANGE OF TALENTS.

In the decade since, corporate communications have only grown in scope, complexity, and value. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-2011 Edition*, the demand for professional writers will rise for the foreseeable future as "companies in a wide array of industries are using newer multimedia technologies and online media to reach a more technology-friendly consumer and meet the growing demand for Web-based information."<sup>3</sup>

## Message Masters Bolster Business

The word "writer" usually brings to mind a wordsmith with a keen knack for rhetoric – a producer of strong, succinct, persuasive, grammatically correct prose. Feed writers the information they need, and they'll "translate" it for target audiences.

But this is just one dimension of a professional writer's range of talents. With every keyboard stroke, writers operate on multiple levels, deftly applying operational knowledge, analytical insight, electronic media mastery, image- and relationship-building expertise, audience awareness, problem-solving skills, and

an eye for design to help strengthen their employers' bottom line.

Here's how a professional writer can bring value to your business, in practical terms:

**Strengthen Your Culture.** A strong, unified corporate culture built on open, honest, clear, and frequent employee communication tends to attract and retain top-tier personnel. What's more, recent studies indicate that more engaged employees add measurable value through higher productivity levels.<sup>4</sup> For these reasons, an emphasis on strong internal communication has become the standard for global corporations such as American Express, Boeing, GE, IBM, SONY, and Johnson & Johnson.

**Hone Your Strategy.** Professional writers are particularly sensitive to diverse audiences, cultural contexts, and social trends. They understand the power and immediacy of words in the digital age. They are innovative users of new media. And they internalize company values and goals, harnessing the power of language to advance them. In the professional writer, you've got an invaluable resource for planning and executing a dynamic, multi-front, pitch-perfect communications strategy that proactively engages audiences and effectively conveys leadership, professionalism, integrity, and responsibility.

**Help You Become a "Social Success."** This new era of openness has fundamentally changed the way we conduct business. With so much technological wizardry



*Employment of technical writers is expected to grow 18 percent – faster than the average for all occupations – from 2008 to 2018.<sup>5</sup>*

and power in the hands of the individual consumer, it's time to embrace the many opportunities Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks provide and use them to your competitive advantage. As a team player (within your organization and across the playing field), the professional writer is a committed advocate for both you and your customer base, promoting your company's good-guy image through timely, genuine, relevant, responsive communications that address real concerns and forge relationships of trust. 📧

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> Goodman, Michael B. "Corporate Communication Practices & Trends 2001." The Corporate Communication Institute at FDU. 9 Jan. 2002. <[http://www.corporatecomm.org/pdf/0102\\_goodman.pdf](http://www.corporatecomm.org/pdf/0102_goodman.pdf)>.

<sup>2</sup> Goodman, Michael B. "Current Trends in Corporate Communication." *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*. Vol.6, No. 3 (2001): 117-123.

<sup>3</sup> "Authors, Writers, and Editors." *The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-2011 Edition*. 18 Feb. 2010. <<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos320.htm>>.

<sup>4</sup> Gollen, Paul. "Well-informed employees can add more value." *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia). Business, Opinion & Analysis. 19 Jan. 2007: 8. LexisNexis® Academic. <<http://www.lexisnexis.com.nec.gmilcs.org>>.

<sup>5</sup> "Technical Writers." *The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-2011 Edition*. 17 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos319.htm>>.

Brumberger, Eva. "Visual Communication in the Workplace: A Survey of Practice." *Technical Communication Quarterly* 16(4) (2007): 369-395. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. EBSCO. 8 Oct. 2011 <<http://web.ebscohost.com.nec.gmilcs.org/ehost/>>.

Kirkpatrick, David. "Social Media and the Coming Corporate Revolution." *Forbes* Vol. 188 Issue 5 (26 Sept. 2011): 72-81.

"How Technical Writers Add Value to Your Team." *writingassist.com*. 2011. Writing Assistance, Inc. 8 Oct. 2011 <<http://www.writingassist.com/resources/articles/how-technical-writers-add-value-to-a-team/>>.

"The leaky corporation." *Economist* 398.8722 (26 Feb. 2011): 74. *MasterFILE Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 8 Oct. 2011.