



# **Project 3: Online Professional Identity**

ENGL 307: Digital Writing

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## **Executive Summary**

Technical writers deal with many different technical documents to produce documents, which can be distributed to others. Technical writers work in many different industries and are required to have many different skills and many years of education before moving into the position. This report discusses how I discovered the field of technical writing, the skills and requirements needed to obtain a position in this field, and my online identity. The conclusion goes into more detail about my online identity and what my online identity says about my education, skills, and how it represents me professionally. At the end of the report you will find three appendices; appendix A, which displays my different online identities, appendix B, which displays the job positions and professional identities which I analyzed, and appendix C, which discusses the formatting used in this report.

## **Introduction**

What do you want to do when you grow up? When I was younger this question seemed so simple, but as I got older the question became much more complicated. Details of jobs such as income, location, and the availability of jobs became something to consider, which was often overlooked as a child. During my time in school I've been able to assess my strengths and weaknesses and have also been able to find out what I enjoy doing. Now that I'm a semester away from graduating it has become clear that I've finally decided to lock in what I want to do when I grow up. In about six months time I will be holding a Bachelors Degree in English which I plan to use to secure a job in the field of Technical Writing.

## **The Future Professional Me**

Technical Writing is not a very common profession, but throughout my time in school I've discovered that I'm not a very strong creative writer. When I choose a major in English I knew for sure that I would not be doing anything in the creative area, but wasn't sure of much after that. After several papers in many different courses I discovered that I liked to deal with straight facts and numbers to develop a piece which will inform the reader rather than require them to use their imagination. One course specifically, ENGL 111, opened my eyes to the type of writing that I enjoy most. During my time in the course I was required to write an argumentative piece or position paper, which required me to conduct research and find facts to support my argument. The act of collecting information, facts, and numbers is appealing because it gives me a chance as a writer to inform the audience of something that they may not have been aware of before.

This led me to do some research and talk to some advisors and professors to discover the field of Technical Writing.

Technical Writers can be found in many different fields, but mainly work in fields that deal with computers, communication, or engineering. In these fields technical writers work to develop manuals or other documents in order to communicate technical information more easily to readers who many not be familiar with the material. Since most of these fields have a technical background many companies are looking for candidates who have had some technical experience, rather that be in school or from past employment. Although most technical writers will find themselves working in these industries, some technical writers may work outside of the normal fields of computers and engineering. For example, there is a MOP Writer position listed on LinkedIn, which requires the writer to work in a telecommunications field dealing with scopes of work and methods of procedures for the company. This position also requires the writer to develop notices to deliver to customers in the event of power outages explaining what the problem may be and an estimated time service may be restored. Therefore, some experience in communication or even public relations would be beneficial so that the notice released to the public would be easily understood no matter what the reader's background may be. Other positions such as, the API Technical Writer position, requires its' candidates to be fluent in Japanese and also some computer languages which include C++, C#, and Java. Although some jobs require lots of education and experience others also require the candidate to be able to obtain a certain level of security such as the position of Technical Writer II at CACI International Inc. Therefore the qualifications for this position are not just the normal education background and past experience, but obtaining a security

clearance requires the candidate to have a clear background check and no criminal history.

## **Skills and Requirements**

Since all of the positions have different requirements and qualities listed, what are some of the most common requirements or skills listed in technical writing positions?

The first requirement, and most obvious, is that employers are looking for candidates with an education background relating to technical writing in some way. Some employers are simply looking for an English degree where others allow this education requirement to be overlooked with technical school. Sometimes the education background can be satisfied with past employment if it deals with technology or development of technical pieces. Either way, education is key when trying to obtain a position. A skill that often goes hand in hand with education is the ability to use a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word. Word processing programs are often used by writers and their companies to create, edit, and share documents with others. Another highly sought after skill that most employers are looking for is the ability to communicate effectively and concisely. Since the main part of a technical writers job is to be able to develop documents that communicate technical information to others, which may include information that can be hard to understand at times, the writer needs to be able write clearly and effectively. Otherwise the reader will be lost and the document will not have served its purpose. Most technical documents contain background information and specifications, which need to be explained in great detail using formal language. Along with communicating effectively comes the task of being able to research and gather information. Technical writers often deal with blueprints, sketches, specification sheets,

and other documents in order to develop pieces. Therefore writers must be able to take the information from these documents and be able to interpret the information and include it into a piece. The final skill that I've seen in several profiles, specifically in professional identity one, that I've reviewed has included the ability to successfully incorporate technical documentation into pieces. Technical documentation is when the writer includes items such as patents, data sheets, or material lists into a piece. These skills and requirements listed above are sought after by many employers and are thought to be skills that will make a successful technical writer.

## **The Current Me**

Along with having required skills and prior experience a person also has various online identities especially in this day and age of social media. Some examples of social media sites are Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, or Pinterest. It is very important for a person to be aware of what their online identities reveal about themselves and to know what is public and what is actually private. Most people do not realize that what is posted online can be reviewed by colleges and future employers and they should be cautious of what they choose to post. The most common way to discover what your online identity consists of is to do an online search of yourself.

The first online search I conducted was completed by using Google where I simply input my name into the search bar and was immediately presented with pages of results. The first two results did not actually belong to me. While evaluating my results I discovered that they not only reveal information about my personal and sometimes social life, but they also reveal skills that I possess and may have learned in school. One skill that is revealed is my ability to research and organize information. On the third page a

link to a bookmarking website Diigo can be found where I have bookmarked several books, articles, and websites relating to different topics addressed during my time in ENGL 307 Digital Writing. A little further down the same page another one of my skills is revealed through the use of Tungle.me which is a website used for scheduling meetings. This website reveals that I have the ability and desire to communicate and collaborate clearly and concisely with others. Using a word processing program can be seen by visiting the link to 'Meaghan Barnes's Employment Webpage,' which displays some of my other pieces developed in past courses. These pieces were developed using Microsoft Word and then I used Google Sites to develop the website to showcase my past works and other resumes. After looking through several more pages of search results from Google I decided to do another web search using a different search engine. For the second search I used Bing. Bing did not produce as many accurate results as Google did. On the first page there is a link to my LinkedIn profile, which displays my education and other past employment. Besides the link to my LinkedIn profile Bing did not produce any other results of any importance.

At this point my current online identity is actually pretty boring. It displays some public accounts that include Pinterest, Blogger, Diigo, Wordpress, LinkedIn, and Twitter, but my private accounts, which include Facebook and Myspace are nowhere to be found on a Google or Bing search. My online identity does highlight some talents and skills that I possess, but does not say much. There are some links that point to my ability to work with technology by scheduling meetings and developing websites. Other links point to my past education and employment that can be helpful if someone is looking for requirements.

## Conclusion

As you can see, one of the requirements that is displayed is my education background. My profile in LinkedIn goes into detail about my degree I will be obtaining while the online blog kept for a previous course displays some coursework. One way I could strengthen this strength would be to include more detailed information about my education on other social networking sites. Another strength that is displayed is my ability to research and gather information. This strength is seen in the Google Site that was developed for a previous course that displays the position paper, which originally got me interested in Technical Writing. In order to continue to keep this area strong the best course of action for me to take is to continue working on pieces that require research. One of my major weaknesses is with technical documentation. Unfortunately, I have not had much experience with technical documentation in school or in past employment so it is definitely an area I should try to improve in. The second weakness I hope to get more practice in is the ability to communicate effectively. Although I feel like I can do this when working solo and when getting my ideas out on paper, I could improve in this area when working in a group or team. In the end my online identity is in the right place as far as it does not display anything, which can be damaging to my reputation, but on the other hand there is not much showing about what I have to offer.

## **Appendix A: Current Digital Identities**

Public:

[Linkedin](#)

[Pinterest](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Diigo](#)

[Blogger](#)

[WordPress](#)

Private:

Facebook

Myspace

## **Appendix B: Works Cited**

[MOP Writer Position](#)

[Technical Writer II at CACI International Inc](#)

[Professional Identity 1](#)

[Professional Identity 2](#)

[Professional Identity 3](#)

## **Appendix C: Formatting**

For this project I decided to take the formal report route. I choose to gather the information before hand and then organized it from beginning to end. I started with how I choose to persue the career of Technical Writing and then lead into what companies are looking for writers and the requirements they want their writers to posses. I choose the

end the report analyzing my online identity, strengths, and weaknesses and how I plan to continue with my strengths and improve any weaknesses. This setup worked best because it had a sort of 'chronological' flow. The reports starts with explaining what a Technical Writer is goes to what companies hire and what they want and ends with my own abilities and education and how they relate. The appendices at the end of the report give extra information to the reader that was mentioned, but was not cited in the actual report.