Career and Professional Development in Technical Communication

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Career and Professional Development in Technical Communication

Agenda

1. Technical communication: status quo (basics & figures)
2. Impetus for further development
3. Career prospects
4. Personal goals
5. Opportunities for further development
6. Accomplishment of goals
Technical Communication – Status Quo
• Job profile of a **technical communicator** is internationally popular. Other designations:
  • Technical Communicator, Technical Writer, Technical Author

• Professionals in the field of technical communication in Germany in 2016: about **85,000 people**

• Distribution by sector:
  • 76,000 in industrial and software enterprises
    • Industry: 1.3% of all employees of an enterprise
    • Software: 3.6% of all employees of an enterprise
  • 9,000 in the service sector

• Manpower requirement in the field of technical communication in Germany in 2016: about **3,600 jobs**
Paths Taken to Get the Job

Results of the survey on career start (Sectoral Metrics, 2014)

- 63% of the respondents are lateral recruits without previous training
- 19.1% have completed their studies
- 14.4% have completed full-time training
- 2.1% have undergone an internship in technical writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career start</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After completing their studies</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After retraining (full-time training program)</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After an internship in technical writing</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without previous training, I switched to the technical communication/documentation area within the company</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without previous training, I applied for a job in the technical communication/documentation field</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without previous training, I have built up a service spectrum for technical communication/documentation</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not work in the technical communication/documentation field</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Comparison of Requirements Profiles

**Employee - Executive**

Assessment: very high or high demands on the employees vis-à-vis the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency requirement</th>
<th>Employee without a management function</th>
<th>Employee with a management function</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving ability</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>92.4%</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure-handling capacity and/or resistance to stress</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making ability</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-mindedness</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>68.1%</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion skills</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative, creative thinking</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: tekom survey - Salary and Job Market, 2016*
## Comparison of Working Conditions

**Employee - Executive**

Assessment: very high and/or high motivation in day-to-day work life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working conditions</th>
<th>Employee without a management function</th>
<th>Employee with a management function</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent work</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible work management and planning</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting tasks</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied tasks</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of topics</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making responsibility</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in interdisciplinary teams</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous training</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume of travel</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: tekom survey - Salary and Job Market, 2016*
Job Satisfaction in Technical Communication

- Very satisfied: 35.2%
- Satisfied: 49.0%
- Neither: 12.6%
- Dissatisfied: 2.0%
- Very dissatisfied: 1.1%

Source: tekom survey teccomframe 2017
Impetus for Further Development

How can one measure further development in one’s profession?
What are the possible motives?
External situations/external influences

- Changes in the company
- Human Resources department
- Employee assessment
- The company presents new tasks to an employee (new processes/systems)
- Changes in one’s own situation (e.g., relocation of spouse, birth etc.)
- ...
Intrinsically motivated/self-propelled

- Dissatisfaction
- Desire for personal development/change
- Desire for more financial leeway
- Lack of challenge/boredom
- Overwork/stress
- More competence in task fulfillment
- Reputation of the profession/improvement of own position
- Better visibility in the company
- Formal certificate of a qualification
- Improvement of work-life balance
- ...
Career Prospects

What are the ways to further development in the field of technical communication?
Development Areas

- Classical executive career
- Academic path
- Substantive/functional/geographical
- Specialization
- Industry-related
- Self-employment
Examples: Development Opportunities in Technical Communication

Classical executive career
- Senior Technical Writer, Team Lead
- Group Leader, Technical Documentation
- Head of Technical Documentation Department

Academic path
- Research associate (university/institute)
- Professor/college teacher

Substantive and/or functional change/new job roles/new environment
- Quality Manager
- Localization Engineer/Localization Specialist
- Terminology Manager (Terminology Management)
- Change work place
Examples: Development Opportunities in Technical Communication

Specialization to an Expert
- Service Bulletin Engineer
- Quality Manager, CE-commissioned
- Usability Engineer
- Client Services Manager

Industry-related (new sector/departments)
- Managing Consultant/CE Consultant
- User Assistance Development Architect (software industry)
- Business Documentation
- Technical Marketing

Self-employment
- Freelance Technical Writer
- Self-employed Consultant

e.g., consulting instead of industry
Personal Goals

Possible career paths and definitions
Characteristics of the Classical Path of Professional Development

Classic, quantifiable factors
- Salary/income
- Turnovers
- Budget
- Responsibility of staff
- Size of company vehicle
- Features of the office space/workplace
- Company car parking

Factors that cannot be quantified directly
- Status
- Decision-making scope
- Creative leeway
- Power/influence
- Responsibility
- Privileges
- Competence/expertise
- Satisfaction/fun
- Work-life balance
- Personal fulfillment
- Flexible working hours
Career vs. Professional Development – Determining One's Own Path

Classical definition of “career”
Promotion from one position to another
• with more extensive tasks with more responsibility
• with commensurate enhancement of experience and skills
• associated with growing prestige and higher income

Modern understanding of career development
Planning of career
• taking into account personal motives in life
• with an aim to achieve higher life satisfaction

Question: How can you find out more about your motives in life?

www.reissprofile.eu/lebensmotive
Good chances of realization
• Find out for yourself what you want to achieve and by when
• Take professional and personal aspects into account when doing so
• Consider the changing demands of the job market

Guiding questions
• Which skills will be needed in the future?
• Where is technological development heading?
• Which markets are diminishing?
• What do I need to learn to become/remain desirable to employers?
• What will I need in the coming five years?
How do you find the right training/career plan for yourself?

- Speaking with colleagues and friends
- Consulting professional career counselors
- Looking for contact persons in companies/Human Resources department
- Making use of offers (e.g., tekom qualification counseling)
Ways to Achieve Your Goal: What Skills Do You Possess?

Self-reflection: determining your strengths and professional goals

Guiding questions for orientation:

- What am I especially good at?
- What work leaves me satisfied?
- What are my values and passions?
- What do I stand for?
- What would be the best application for what I want and what I can do?
- What benefits can I bring to my company?
- Where can I combine private interests with my work?
Opportunities for Further Development
You can take the following paths:

- Training program (modular structure)/training course
- Advanced professional training/pursuit of studies along with the job
- Learning and training on the job
- Self-study (journals/technical literature)
- Attending events (conferences)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education and training programs used</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional training program</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending seminars/workshops</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending conferences</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading journals/articles</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading technical books</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While working - training on the job</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do you profit from training?

- Improvement of skill sets
- Qualification and formal proof of competence, e.g., the “Technical Communicator (tekom)” certificate
- Better task fulfillment and acceptance of new tasks
- Professional development and career
- Salary hike
- Prospects of finding a new job
- Personality development
- Enhancement of competencies/specialization
What Opportunities does tekom offer?

- tekom competence framework
- tekom qualification counseling
- tekom training offers
- tekom certification
Competence Framework

• Audience: Technical communication professionals (without a degree) & those interested in pursuing a career

• Aims/advantages
  • Overview of the job profile of a technical communicator
  • Definition of individual training contents and objectives
  • Development of individual and needs-based training concepts

• Timeframe: Individual

• Access: tekom website - online profiling tool

• Advantages
  • Determination of competence deficits/possible development areas
  • Orientation of job and workplace requirements

competencies.technical-communication.org/profiling-tool.html
Qualification Counseling

- **Audience:** Technical Communication professionals & those interested in pursuing a career (lateral recruits)

- **Aims/advantages:**
  - Learning the tasks and requirements of the profession
  - Realistic assessment of one's own level of knowledge
  - Counseling for professional and personal development

- **Timeframe:** Preparation: individual – consultation: 1 hour

- **Access:** Online and in-class

- **Advantages**
  - Identification of contents; where knowledge and/or skills can be improved/expanded
  - Development of training objectives

[technical-communication.org/career-education/certification.html](technical-communication.org/career-education/certification.html)

[tekom.de/beruf-bildung/zertifizierung-als-technischer-redakteur/qualifizierungsberatung.html](tekom.de/beruf-bildung/zertifizierung-als-technischer-redakteur/qualifizierungsberatung.html)
• Target group: Technical Communication professionals & lateral recruits

• Aims/advantages
  • Professional & personal further development

• Timeframe: Approx. 6 months with tekom certification

• Access: Online and in-class

• Offers
  • Training: TCTrainNet Online Training
  • Accredited educational institutions: advanced professional training/full-time training

• Advantages
  • Accomplishment of training objectives
  • Proof of qualification
Knowledge Quiz (will be published soon)
Check your knowledge with the tekom knowledge quiz, you can take two short tests, one about basic knowledge in Technical Communication and one about special knowledge in Technical Communication.

Learning Nuggets
Sign up for the tc learning nuggets and get weekly a short learning input about topics of the tekom competence framework.

Certification

- Target group: Technical communication professionals & lateral recruits
- Aims/advantages
  - Formal & objective proof of qualification as technical communicator
  - High practical relevance and a huge diversity of topics
- Time frame: individual - average 6 months
- Access: tests online and on-site
- Advantages
  - Certification is recognized by companies
  - Improvement of career opportunities & general competency as technical communicator

[technical-communication.org/career-education/corporate-training.html](technical-communication.org/career-education/corporate-training.html)
There are many development and training paths

1. Defining personal goals and direction
2. Defining training needs
3. Identifying opportunities and offers
4. Speaking with executives/superiors
5. Making a plan and just do it
Thank you for your attention!

Contact:

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Your opinion is important to us! Please tell us what you thought of the lecture. We look forward to your feedback via smartphone or tablet under http://tekom05.honestly.de

or scan the QR code

Thank you!

The feedback tool will be available even after the conference!
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