ENGLISH 206

Technical Communication

- **Definition**:

Technical communication is the process of managing technical information in ways that allow: *information to flow*, and *people to understand it, use it, and act*.

- **Factors**:

✓ Audience
✓ Purpose
✓ Document

- **Characteristics of Technical Communication**

✓ It addresses particular readers
✓ It helps readers solve problems
✓ It reflects the organization's goals and culture
✓ It is produced collaboratively
✓ It uses design to increase readability
✓ It consists of words or images or both

- **Measures of excellence in Technical Communication: (*HP2A4C*)**

✓ Honesty
✓ Professional appearance
✓ Accuracy & Precision
✓ Accessibility
✓ Clarity
✓ Comprehensiveness
✓ Conciseness
✓ Correctness

- **Most important aspects of Technical Communication**

✓ Accuracy
✓ Clarity
✓ Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation
✓ Conciseness
✓ Visual Appeal
✓ Scientific Precision

Audience

Audience Type	Distinguished Features	Examples
Primary	Deal makers	Clients, Government
Secondary	Advisors	Engineers, Technicians
Tertiary	Evaluators	Journalists, Lawyers of the opposite teams

Process of Technical Communication

- ✓ Planning
  - ➢ Analyze audience and purpose
  - ➢ Generate ideas
  - ➢ Research additional information
  - ➢ Organize and outline
- ✓ Drafting (use/modify templates)
- ✓ Revising (read to yourself/ ask others)
- ✓ Editing
- ✓ Proofreading

Grammar + Spelling

Tell VS *Persuade*

TELL = REPORT FACTS

PERSUADE =

tell facts
+
tell why these facts
+
use these facts to make an argument

8 Constraints in Communicating Persuasively

- ✓ Ethical
- ✓ Legal
- ✓ Political
- ✓ Informational
- ✓ Personnel
- ✓ Financial
- ✓ Time
- ✓ Format & Tone

- **The Audience's Broader Goals**

✓ Security
✓ Recognition
✓ Professional Growth
✓ Connectedness

- **Using the Right Kinds of Elements**

✓ "Common Sense" arguments
✓ Numerical data
✓ Example
✓ Expert Testimony

- **Considering Opposing Viewpoints**

✓ The opposing argument is based on illogical reasoning or on inaccurate or incomplete facts.
✓ The opposing argument is valid but less powerful than your own.
✓ The two arguments can be reconciled.

- A "**Modular Document**" is a document that you break up into components addressed to different readers.

- A "**Memo to File**" describes a problem and a copy is kept to self in order to avoid later complications.

- **OBLIGATIONS**:

Legal

- Copyright Law
- Trademark Law
- Contract Law
- Liability Law

Ethical (ethics is the study of the principles of conduct)

- Obligations to your employer
- Obligations to the public
- Obligations to the environment

- A "**definition**" is a brief explanation of an item or a concept using words and sometimes graphics.

- **Types of DEFINITIONS:**

✓ Parenthetical Definition
✓ Sentence Definition
✓ Extended Definition (made up of one or more paragraphs – begins with a sentence definition that is later elaborated)

- A "**Stipulative Definition**" presents a working definition for a particular document.

- **8 Techniques in Writing an Extended Definition**

✓ Graphics
✓ Examples
✓ Partition (showing the several parts/ breaking up of an item)
✓ Principle of Operation (How things work)
✓ Comparison and Contrast
✓ Analogy
✓ Etymology
✓ Negation

- **Where to use extended definitions?**

✓ Text
✓ Marginal Gloss
✓ Hyperlink
✓ Footnote (however, it can slow readers down)
✓ Glossary
✓ Appendix

- A "**description**" is a longer explanation of a place, object, mechanism, or process.

- ***Description of a mechanism* VS *Description of a process***

Looks at parts of the object and how they work together	Includes a number of steps with a summary at the end

- "**Instructions**" are a kind of process description that is almost always accompanied by graphics, intended to enable readers to carry out tasks.

- **Planning for safety**

Signal Word	Explanation
DANGER	Used to alert readers about an immediate and serious hazard that will likely be fatal
WARNING	used to alert readers about the potential for serious injury or death or serious damage to equipment
CAUTION	used to alert readers about the potential for anything from moderate injury to serious equipment damage or destruction
NOTE	used for a tip or suggestion to help readers carry out a procedure successfully

- ***Culturally Shallow* VS *Culturally Deep***

Western design conventions	Targets cultures and preferences

GOALS of a Good Design

- ✓ Good impression on readers
- ✓ Helps readers understand the structure and the hierarchy of the information
- ✓ Helps the readers understand the information
- ✓ Helps the readers find the information they need
- ✓ Helps the readers remember the information

~ **White space is an EXCELLENT design tool**.
Margins
Space between two paragraphs
Space around list
Area between image and text

Principles of Design

(*the CoCo BAG*)

- ✓ **Consistency** (repetition of a certain pattern/ echo)
  - Predictable headings
  - Lists: consistent bulleting and numbering schemes
  - Page numbers in the same place
  - Use a maximum of TWO typefaces (Serif and Sans Serif)
  - Headers and footers
- ✓ **Contrast**
  - Adding Shades
  - Highlighting
  - Background color
  - Font size
  - Line length
- ✓ **Balance**
  - Columns and paragraphs
  - Right/ Left
  - Top/ Bottom
- ✓ **Alignment**
  - Vertical (readers are able to identify different levels of information)
  - Horizontal (readers see the information as bulks)
- ✓ **Grouping**
  - Breaking information into blocks one can scan

Functions of Graphics

- ✓ Demonstrate logical numerical relationships
- ✓ Communicate spatial information more effectively than words alone
- ✓ Communicate steps in a process more effectively than words alone
- ✓ Save space (e.g.: it is better to use a table than a paragraph)
- ✓ Reduce the cost of documents intended for international readers (less translation)

Characteristics of an Effective Graphic

- ✓ A graphic should serve a purpose.
- ✓ A graphic should be simple and uncluttered.
- ✓ A graphic should present a manageable amount of information.
- ✓ A graphic should meet readers' format expectations.
- ✓ A graphic should be properly labeled.

Kinds of Graphics & their uses

- ✓ Table - displays large amounts of numerical data
- ✓ Bar graph - shows values of two or more objects
- ✓ Infographic - enlivens statistical information
- ✓ Line graph - shows change with time/ trends
- ✓ Pie chart - shows how the parts compare
- ✓ Diagram - shows relationships among items
- ✓ Organization chart - shows hierarchical relationships
- ✓ Checklist - shows materials or describes an action
- ✓ Flow chart - shows steps
- ✓ Logic tree - shows which path to follow
- ✓ Photographs & Screenshots - show what things look like
- ✓ Line drawing - shows simplified representations of objects
- ✓ Map - shows geographical areas
- ✓ Gantt chart - illustrates project schedule