

## How to find the right technical writer on the Front Range

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By Ed Hanson

Finding the right technical writer is now easier than ever. Whether your company needs a full-time writer, or just some help on a project, two Front Range groups have all the writers you need. Better yet, the groups' free services are available online.

The Boulder Writers Alliance (BWA) is a nonprofit organization of communications professionals in Boulder and throughout Colorado. Members specialize in all facets of writing and communications, including technical and marketing writing, fiction and journalism, editing, graphic arts, multimedia and the World Wide Web.

The BWA Web site ([www.bwa.org](http://www.bwa.org)) lets employers post job listings online for free. The group recently launched a searchable membership database. Search for a BWA member using categories, including software expertise, operating system knowledge or specialty, such as technical writing.

The search results list the members by name, and provides telephone and e-mail contact information. BWA President Phil Tobias said, "The new database features are easy to use. Just type what you're looking for, and click Find. You'll get a list of professionals with the exact skills you need."

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) also provides a free job-listing service. The STC is an international organization "dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of Technical Communication." The Denver chapter is one of the largest and most active in the world. To post a job, visit its Web site ([www.strmc.org](http://www.strmc.org)) and follow the Jobseekers and Freelancers links.

Searching for specific writers

Now that you know how to find a technical writer, how do you find the right one?

What does a technical writer do? In a nutshell, a technical writer collects, analyzes, organizes, formats and presents technical information for your targeted audience, whether in print or online.

The right technical writer knows how to:

- Research and collect available information for a project, and how to identify and interview the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).



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- Analyze the information to understand the project concept and see how the pieces fit together. The writer also needs to identify the intended audience in order to write to that audience.
- Organize the information to make it understandable and useful to the intended audience.
- Format the information to make it easier to follow, emphasizing key ideas, making them more accessible to the reader.

Finally, the technical writer develops content into a final document using the three characteristics of good technical writing:

- **Clarity** – To be understandable and useful, the text must be clear. Even the U.S. government has (finally) recognized the need for clarity, and is promoting a campaign of official document revision known as Plain English.
- **Conciseness** – Too many words get in the way of explaining or describing something.
- **Accuracy** – It's imperative. Inaccuracy can kill, maim, derail, crash, electrocute, poison, destroy ... well, you get the idea.

Your company's important technical writing needs may include project documentation; instructions and manuals; Web sites; online help; policies, methods, and procedures; quality systems; medical writing; environmental, health, and safety; scientific writing; and more.

In today's tough business climate, your company must find better ways to communicate with your customers. And do it on time, easier and more profitably.

How? By using smarter strategies that include better project planning, more flexibility and innovation, and better instructions. This demands the talents and expertise of a resource that is capable, ready to contribute and eager to please: The right technical writer.

Now that you know what to look for, go find the right technical writer. As Tobias said, "For the first time, employers have fingertip access to the top communications professionals along the Front Range. Not only can you advertise jobs for free, you can now find any type of communication specialist you need. Instantly."

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