Technical Writing:

COURSE DETAILS

BSC_CSIT\TECHNICAL_W RITING_LP.XLS

KATH FORD COLLEGE

TANKA PRASAD PAUDEL

Technical Communication

What is Technical Communication?

➢ Technical Communication (TC) is the process of transmitting facts and information to a defined audience for a specific purpose.

➢ More simply, TC is writing for understanding.

➢ TC differs from other forms of communication in several ways: audience, purpose, style and organization.

➢ TC is the process to communicate regularly on the business and the profession: e-mail, letters, memos etc. in general level.

➢ However, for high level: Reports, Proposals, Presentations etc. in specific.

The History of Technical Communication

➢ In 17th Century, the Royal Society in London defined and produced the first written attempts to describe and categorize the physical world systematically.

➢ Now, in the 21st Century, scientists use a longstanding methodology for conducting and reporting discoveries and technical developments.

➢ Today, we have a wide variety of equipment and computer software to make our writing, research, and distribution efficient: word processer, desktop publishers, graphics programs, multimedia presentation and so on.

➢ As well as other innovative equipment: modems, digital cameras, scanners, laptop, hand-held computers, portable digital assistants (PDAs), portable digital notepads (PDNs)

Elements of Technical Communication

Audience: Technical, Semi-technical and Non-technical

Purpose: to inform, explain, describe, persuade, record etc. some documents have multiple purposes: both to persuade and to describe

Format: Reports or documents:

Records-keeping forms:

Instructions:

Correspondence:

Presentation

Style: Language, Organization, and Layout

Audience

▶ The audience is the person or group of people whom you expect to read your information;

▶ They can usually define the targeted or intended audience.

1. **Technical,**
2. **Semi-technical, and**
3. **Non-technical**

What information does the audience already know about the subject?

How familiar might the audience be with technical details?

What does the audience want to know?

What does the audience intend to do with the information?

What Audiences want:

➢ Experts/technician want highly technical communication with just the facts.

➢ Informed readers want semi-technical communication with an explanation of the facts.

➢ Laypersons-common people- want non-technical communication with facts explained in the simplest terms.

Language and Style

➤ Use as much as possible **ACTIVE** voice rather than **PASSIVE** voice: however, both are equally important and most be error free;

➤ Adjust (modify) **sentence length**;

➤ **Interlink** the sentences- chronologically;

➤ Reduce single and double negatives; rather use negative prefixes correctly;

➤ Use articles (a/an/the) correctly;

➤ Use **signposting (labelling) language** in an appropriately;

➤ Write using a **neutral tone.**

Passive vs Active Voice

Active

We **should use** environmentally friendly products rather than chemical ones.

Environmentally friendly products ***should be used*** rather than chemical ones.

Passive

Active

Using chemical products **has caused** fatal water pollution.

Fatal water pollution ***has been caused*** by using chemical products

Passive

Active

We ***should use*** eco-friendly products rather than using chemical products.

Eco-friendly products ***are to be used*** rather than using chemical products

Passive

Language and Style

We should use eco-friendly products *such as natural detergents or manure* rather than using chemical products. Using chemical products has caused fatal water pollution. *Water is essential for our everyday life.* Therefore, people in the world should have the responsibility to maintain clean water. **We should use environmentally friendly products rather than chemical ones**. It will help improve our environment.

Interlink

Signposting Language

We should use eco-friendly products rather than using chemical products. Using chemical products has caused fatal water pollution. **Therefore,** people in the world should have the responsibility to maintain clean water. **So,** all the companies should introduce environmentally friendly products. **It will help to improve our environment.**

Neutral Tone

Audience Adaptation

▶ How to make technical information more understandable for all audiences! (*what you've all been waiting for*)

▶ ***Add information readers need to understand your document:*** Check to see whether certain key information is missing--for example, a critical series of steps from a set of instructions; important background that helps beginners understand the main discussion; definition of key terms.

Audience Adaptation

▶ ***Omit information your readers do not need:*** Unnecessary information can also confuse and frustrate readers. For example, you can probably chop theoretical discussion from basic instructions.

▶ ***Change the level of the information you currently have:*** You may have the right information but it may be "pitched" at too high or too low a technical level. It may be pitched at the wrong kind of audience--for example, at an expert audience rather than a technician audience.

▶ ***Add examples to help readers understand:*** Examples are one of the most powerful ways to connect with audiences, particularly in instructions.

Audience Adaptation

▶ *Change the organization of your information:* Background information needs to woven into the main information-for example, in instructions it's sometimes better to feed in chunks of background at the points where they are immediately needed.

▶ *Strengthen transitions:* Make connections clearer by adding *transition words* and by echoing *key words* more accurately.

▶ *Write stronger introductions--both for the whole document and for major sections:* Write a strong introduction to the entire document--make the topic, purpose, audience, and contents clear. For each major section, use mini-introductions that indicate the topic of the section and give an overview of the subtopics to be covered in that section.

Audience Adaptation

▶ ***Create topic sentences for paragraphs and paragraph groups:*** It can help readers immensely to give them an idea of the topic and purpose of a section (a group of paragraphs) and in particular to give them an overview of the subtopics about to be covered.

▶ ***Change sentence style and length:*** An average of somewhere between 15 and 25 words per sentence is about right; sentences over 30 words are to be mistrusted.

▶ ***Break text up or consolidate text into meaningful, usable chunks:*** For non-specialist readers, you may need to have shorter paragraphs. Notice how much longer paragraphs are in technical documents written for specialists.

Audience Adaptation

▶ *Use headings and lists:* Readers can be intimidated by big dense paragraphs of writing, uncut by anything other than a blank line now and then. Search your rough drafts for ways to incorporate headings--look for changes in topic or subtopic

▶ *Use special typography, and work with margins, line length, line spacing, type size, and type style:* For non-specialist readers, you can do things like making the lines shorter (bringing in the margins), using larger type sizes, and other such tactics. Certain type styles are believed to be friendlier and more readable than others.

Questions?

1. *What is technical communication? How is it difference with general communication?*

2. *What is the purpose of technical communication?*

3. *"Audiences are the core concern of technical communication". Justify*

4. *Why language and style is important in technical writing? Explain with appropriate examples.*