



# Technical Communications Manager

**SALARY RANGE (2017):** \$49,000–\$66,000

My job is to produce technical information to help users get to grips with all kinds of technology. This may be in the form of a product manual or a script for a video. The material I produce is designed to allow my audience to use a particular gadget or understand a subject. Sometimes I produce material for a broad consumer audience, such as instructions for a new app. Or I might author material for specialized groups, for example reports on the results of clinical trials. I need enough knowledge to understand the technical subject thoroughly, but my real skill is translating complexity into easy-to-follow guidelines.

**The Tip:** Go travel internationally. Go do a semester abroad. Go volunteer overseas. You'll realize it's a *really* big world. Once you realize this firsthand, complacency is not an option.

## PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

### Advanced Research & Analysis Skills

- Formulating research questions
- Ability to critically analyze literature
- Ability to develop and execute qualitative research
- Ability to synthesize key themes from multiple sources

### Contextual Knowledge

- Knowledge of human behaviour
- Understanding of context and values of audiences
- Essential understanding of topics and themes as they relate to an audience

### Advanced Communication Skills

- Formulate and defend positions
- Sensitivity to how communications is shaped by circumstances, authorship and intended audience
- Formulate and defend positions
- Apply written vocabulary to audience

### Evidence-based Storytelling Skills

- Ability to use research to develop an evidence-based story
- Ability to identify target audiences
- Ability to create compelling narratives across media

### Additional Skills

- Excel at core thinking, communication, interpersonal and organizational skills
- Fundamental business acumen
- Contextual knowledge of specific industry

## BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

### Education & Learning:

- Bachelor of Arts (English)
- Completed Transmedia writing course from Michigan State (via Coursera)
- Continually updating my multimedia technical skills
- Professional Project Management (PMP) certification via the Project Management Institute

Technical communications is changing fast; stagnation is a career killer. My English degree and related experience taught me how to concisely communicate complex issues. Today, what was once technical writing has become technical communications as video has displaced or at least augmented most traditional communication. Doing my project management certificate was critical for my promotion to manager.

<p><b>Employment Experiences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retail telecommunications sales during university</li> <li>• Completed internship as technical writer for a technology start-up</li> <li>• Completed second internship for a larger global technology company. Offered a full-time position at graduation.</li> <li>• After four years, I was promoted to technical communications manager. In this role, I have two writers, a designer and videographer report to me.</li> </ul>	<p>My employment pathway was intentional. I built my technology sales credentials early at home, but with a vision of working in a global technology company. My big break was doing internships for both a start-up and a large global company. The pace of the start-up was exciting, but I learned I need structure. The processes embedded in large companies supports this need. For example, the company paid for me to complete my project management certification.</p>
<p><b>Community Experiences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded the technical writing society at my university. Today, I am an alumni mentor for Arts and Computing students.</li> <li>• I am an active member of the Society for Technical Communication. I chair our professional development sub-committee.</li> </ul>	<p>Being engaged in my professional community is critical for my career. It provides me access to senior people and mentors. It also acts as a lens for what “leading-edge” looks like in technical writing and the professional development required for success.</p>
<p><b>Contextual Experiences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing an international exchange program in high school sowed the seed for my life as a passionate traveler.</li> </ul>	<p>It sounds like a cliché, but the exchange program I did in high school was life-changing. After this, the question wasn’t “if,” it was “where” I am travelling to next.</p>
<p><b>Relationships:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused on building international networks</li> </ul>	<p>I have a genuine passion for other people’s stories. This interest is reciprocated. I consider my international relationships a constant opportunity to learn from others.</p>