

Lecture Notes:  
Careers In Technical Communication  
Day Two: Getting Your Foot In The Door

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Freda Salatino

*“Come to the edge,” he said.  
“We are afraid,” they said.  
“Come to the edge,” he said.  
“We are afraid,” they said.  
“Come to the edge,” he said.  
They came  
He pushed them  
And they flew.*

– Guillaume Appolinaire

## Preparing The Skills Inventory

Prepare the following lists:

- Chronological list of all jobs you’ve ever had
- List of hardware/software/other relevant equipment you’ve used
- Courses you’ve taken (all of them!)
- List of references

## Skills Inventory

Create your skills inventory. Don’t forget:

- Computers with which you have worked or played (operating system?)
- Visual design skills or training
- Programming skills?
- Written and verbal English skills
- Skills you use in your current job
- Other “useless” skills

## Formulating Your Resume

- Identify yourself  
Include your home address, telephone number, fax/cell/pager numbers, and email
- Summary  
Short, one-line description of your experience
- Technical Skills/background
- Professional Experience
- Education
- Professional Memberships

## Example Resumes

- Freda's resume
- A skills-oriented resume
- One very scary resume

## Scary Resumes

(Printed in Fortune Magazine, July 21, 1997)

- Wholly responsible for two failed financial institutions.
- I have lurnt Word Perfect 6.0 computer and spreadsheet programs.
- Reason for leaving last job: maturity leave.
- Failed bar exam with relatively high grades.
- It's best for employers that I not work with people.
- Am a perfectionist and rarely if ever forget details.
- Marital status: single. Unmarried. Unengaged. Uninvolved. No commitments.
- Instrumental in ruining entire operation for a Midwest chain store.
- Marital status: often. Children: various.
- Reason for leaving last job: They insisted that all employees get to work by 8:45 AM every morning. I couldn't work under those conditions.
- The company made me a scapegoat, just like my three previous employers.

## Using Job Banks

- DICE  
www.dice.com  
The Yellow Pages of job banks. Postings last 21 days; you need to remember to re-post.
- Headhunter Net  
www.headhunter.net
- NWU Job Hotline  
www.nwu.org/hotline
- Online Career Center  
www.occ.com
- For Members Only
  - STC job list
  - www.synergistech.com
- Job Site Links
  - California Job Search Guide (www.jobsmart.org)
  - JobHunt ([www.job-hunt.org](http://www.job-hunt.org))

## Working With Recruiters and Headhunters

- The difference between a recruiter and a headhunter
- Foot in the door (careful advocate) or “used techwriter salesman?”
- How will they submit your resume, and will they do it without checking with you first?
- How easy is it for you to reach them?
- Do they offer career counseling?
- Most important of all: do you like their ethics?

# Guest Panel/Q&A

## The Guest Panel

**Iona Koren-Deutsch** is a Senior Technical Writer at Cisco Systems in San Jose. As a consultant, she has managed major technical documentation or web design projects for Abbott Laboratories, Amoco and BlueCross BlueShield Association. She has also worked as a bilingual technical writer for London Underground, Ltd. and for BusinessObjects.

In her previous lives she has taught theatre history and feminist theory at two Midwestern universities, and has worked in professional theatre in the UK and US.

**Joanne Tenenbaum** is a writer, editor, and photographer with 20 years technical writing experience in the computer industry. As a consultant, she successfully completed major technical documentation projects for Xerox Corporation, Hewlett Packard, and a variety of other major corporations. As a full-time technical documentation professional, she has specialized in automating existing technical documentation groups for established corporations and putting new documentation organizations in place for developing companies. Tenenbaum currently works as Publications Manager for Harmony Software in San Mateo.

**Andreas Ramos** is a technical communication consultant with 13 years of experience. He has worked at many Silicon Valley companies, including Silicon Graphics and Sun Microsystems.

He is the Palo Alto co-chair of the NWU's Technical Writer Trade Group, for which he co-conducts a quarterly seminar on Breaking Into Technical Writing. (See [www.andreas.com/seminar](http://www.andreas.com/seminar).)

Ramos is currently manager of technical publications at a Palo Alto startup.

# Resources

## Free Trial Software

(compiled by the National Writers Union)

- FrameMaker
  - FrameMaker User Group  
[www.frameusers.com](http://www.frameusers.com)
  - Contact Jennifer Olker ([jennifer@highsoft.com](mailto:jennifer@highsoft.com)) of Highsoft, Inc., or check [www.highsoft.com](http://www.highsoft.com)
- PhotoShop  
[www.adobe.com/prodindex/photoshop/demodnld.html](http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/photoshop/demodnld.html)
- RoboHelp  
[mail.blue-sky.com/regforms/robohtml.htm](http://mail.blue-sky.com/regforms/robohtml.htm)
- Adobe tutorials and CDs  
[www.adobe.com/adobepress/classroom.html](http://www.adobe.com/adobepress/classroom.html)
- Guides from Peachpit Press  
[www.peachpit.com/peachpit/titles/categories/titles.vqs.html](http://www.peachpit.com/peachpit/titles/categories/titles.vqs.html)

## Peer Groups

- American Medical Writers Association  
[www.amwancal.org](http://www.amwancal.org)
- BayCHI  
(ACM Special Interest Group on Computer-Human Interaction)  
[www.baychi.org](http://www.baychi.org)
- Bay Area Mac User Group (BMUG)  
[www.bmug.org](http://www.bmug.org)
- International Association of Business Communicators  
[www.iabc-capitale.com/](http://www.iabc-capitale.com/)
- National Association of Science Writers  
[www.nasw.org](http://www.nasw.org)
- National Writers Union  
[www.nwu.org](http://www.nwu.org)
- Society for Technical Communication  
[www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)
- USENET discussion groups  
[techwriting.about.com](http://techwriting.about.com)
- TECHWR-L  
[www.raycomm.com/techwhirl](http://www.raycomm.com/techwhirl)
- Windows User Group Network  
<http://www.wugnet.com>

## Colleges and Universities

(compiled by National Writers Union)

- De Anza College (Cupertino)  
408.864.5678 or 408.864.8547 (Language Arts Dept.)  
Certificate of Achievement, AA in Tech Comm
- Laney College (Oakland)  
510.834.5740
- San Francisco City College  
415.239.3203 (direct), 415.239.3000 (main)
- San Francisco State University  
415.338.7025 or [www.sfsj.edu/~tbw](http://www.sfsj.edu/~tbw)  
BA, minor, and certificate in Technical and Professional Writing
- San Jose State University  
408.924.2670  
Certificate Program in Professional and Technical Communication (which includes an internship)
  - UC Berkeley Extension  
510.642.4111  
Professional Series in Technical Communication (certificate in the works, 1999)
  - UC Santa Cruz Extension  
831.427.6600 or [www.ucsc-extension.edu](http://www.ucsc-extension.edu)  
Certificates in Technical Communication, Technical Communication Management

## The NWU Course

- Cheaper, shorter, and conducted by more people than this seminar.
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- Attendees receive all seminar material as a 60-page book.
- For further information, see [www.andreas.com/seminar](http://www.andreas.com/seminar).

## Credits For Today's Segments

- The Guest Panel
  - Ilona Koren-Deutsch
  - Joanne Tenenbaum
  - Andreas Ramos
- Scary Resumes, Interview Roleplay
  - Rich Julius