

INFORMATION TRANSFER IN THE TECHNICAL WORLD

TechCom Applications for Your Work Environment

An Informative Newsletter for the SME in You

Rhetorical Strategies in Technical Communication

Technical Communication (TechCom) Specialists should use rhetorical strategies to avoid ambiguity in the messages they are trying to deliver to their readers. TechCom Specialists must ensure their readers interpret the message correctly. The correctness of the message in the Information Products that TechCom Specialists deliver is important to protect the purpose of its message - to help readers perform a job or to perform a task safely. For example, a safety poster designed to inform point-of-service users in difficult work environments like deep-hole drilling.

TechCom Specialists invest time to study strategies in Cognitive Psychology and Information Design. For example, TechCom Specialists effectively use color choice, typeface, word choice (*industry terms*) to meet rhetorical strategies of audience, purpose, context to deliver correct messages to their readers. To ensure their Information Products are accurate, TechCom Specialists rely on Process to acquire information that reflect the needs of their audience.

Rhetorical Strategies

TechCom Specialists should understand terms like *correctness* to ensure the purpose of their message effectively reaches the audience. The writing profession includes a rich history of using rhetorical elements like color and word choice. These rhetorical strategies are used by information designers (writers, editors, graphic designers) in B2B publications, peer review professional journals, and commercial publications. Rhetorical strategies persuade readers to take action or to perform a task that benefits the client, organization. For TechCom Specialists, rhetorical strategies are used to deliver the correct message to benefit readers, so readers can effectively take action or perform a task.

The effectiveness of using rhetorical strategies to persuade readers is so important that leaders (PhDs) in Technical Communication offer academic programs, courses, commercial training based upon research and cognitive psychology. Because rhetorical strategies are so effective, leaders offer academic training and courses in Technical Communication Ethics. To be taken seriously as a professional, TechCom Specialists must understand the term, *correctness*, to ensure a correct and ethical message reaches their audience.

Process to Gather Information for Rhetorical Strategies

TechCom Specialists use Process to gather information that reflect the needs of their audience. The audience can be subject-matter-experts, or decision makers who work within organizations. TechCom Specialists have opportunities to gather information that reveal qualitative data. Data can reflect weak systems, or a need to provide innovative forward thinking solutions or ideas. For example, accident reports show that workers often fail to report out-of-norm deviances in knowledge bases during their day-to-day work patterns.

Research shows that weak reporting systems lead to excessive technical support, inferior technical manuals, product usability, weak safety awareness, major industrial events (*Challenger, Deep Water Horizon, Bhopal India*). By using process to gather qualitative data, TechCom Specialists can deliver Information Products that reflect the needs of the audience.

Knowledge Base Research

Knowledge base research provides easy access to find information. TechCom Specialists research information in academic knowledge bases, and professional journals. Trade publications like B2B (Business-to-Business publications) include the latest information from industry trade associations and marketers. B2B trade publications are typically marketing materials that provide business value for their readers, and the commercials markets. These materials are considered to be the application of information sourced by experts in commercial industry. Information from academic and professional journals are considered to be more authentic because of peer reviewed research.



Fig. 1. AARC Deliverable Piece An Information Product

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10.22.2010 AC

Informative Interviews with SMEs in the Field

Informative Interviews can reveal qualitative data from the field that spark innovative programs for decision makers. By using Informative Interview Guides with a Schedule of specific questions for specific topics, TechCom Specialists gather qualitative data from SMEs for Information Products. These products can reveal opportunities to conduct value-add innovative forward thinking solutions or ideas.

- develop new concepts for R&D
- start product improvement programs
- evaluate needs to conduct usability testing
- audit remote sites to find weaknesses in process and systems
- teach SMEs about Technical Communication

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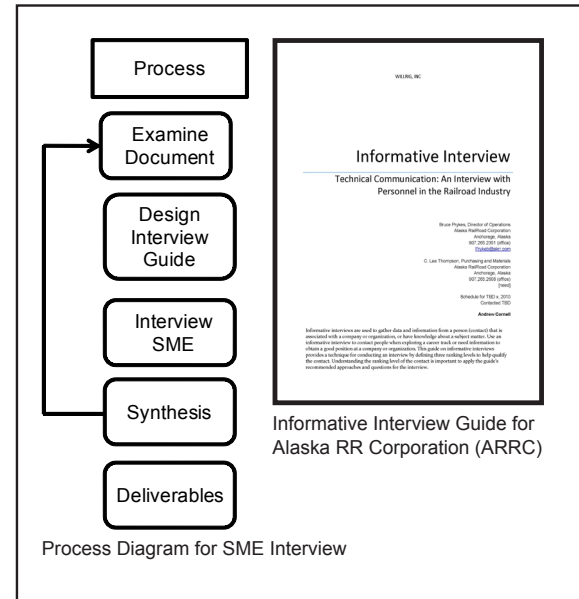


Fig A. Process and Materials to Gather Field Information

Case Study: A Scenario for Methane Safety Awareness

Scenario: A controversial new innovative technology and process used to extract *Natural Gas* from Coal and Shale is forcing public pressure on local governments to regulate its use. The public is concerned with the processing effects upon the local environment. Public opinion towards a controversial process, conflicts with the term *Natural Gas*, and its ECO persona of an alternate fuel for depleting oil energy sources — a persona established by the public, government, industry. Research points to hidden dangers for workers who extract the core compound, *Methane*, from coal-beds and shale to be used in the production of Natural Gas (Gas) - a product delivered to consumers in public, government, and industry.

Case Study Question: Should the TechCom Specialist use the term *Natural Gas* for a safety poster designed for point-of-service workers in the field who need updated information about new processes to safely perform their job or task, and guard against hidden dangers.

Figure B. Review of conceptual Safety Poster for audience, purpose, context for correctness.

The poster includes the term, *Natural Gas*. The term is incorrect because it reflects a product processed by industry, and delivered to consumers in public, government, industry.

The term *Natural Gas* fails to capture the hidden danger and awareness for the field worker. To protect the consumer, industry will process *Natural Gas* to include an odor.

Figure C. Revised Safety Poster designed for audience, purpose, context and correctness.

The poster includes the term, *Methane*. The term avoids ambiguity and adapts a correct message for the safety poster.

The poster is designed for correctness to protect the credibility of an industry adapting controversial new methods and technology to produce an alternate fuel for depleting energy sources.

Green Hue is used to project ECO persona established by public trends and industry. *Methane* lacks odor, and is flammable and explosive.

Author's Note: Process and Informative Interviews with Subject-Matter-Experts (SME) will establish and verify *Correctness*

Source: Cornell, Technical Communication and Rhetorical Strategies, 04.16.2011