Introduction to Professional Communications
What is Professional Communication?

• Professional Communication is
  “writing that aims to get work done, to change people by changing the way they do things”
  - Killingsworth and Gilbertson, 1988

• Authors use this kind of writing
  “to empower readers by preparing for and moving them toward effective action”
  - Killingsworth and Gilbertson, 1988
What Does Professional Communication Include?

• Annual reports
• Books
• Computer Hardware Guides
• Documentation Sets
• Hardware/Software Guides
• Information Materials
What Does Professional Communication Include?

- Magazines
- Newsletters
- Equipment Guides
- Organizational Manuals
- Promotional Materials
- Quick References Guides
What Does Professional Communication Include?

- Scholarly/Professional Articles
- Scholarly/Professional Journals
- Websites
- Technical Reports
- Trade/News Articles
- Training Material
Is it Important?

• Professionals in the aerospace industry reported that they spend 68% of their time (3 and a half days per week) communicating
  – Pinelli, et al.

• Most engineers spend about 40% of their work time writing

• The percentage increases as they move up the corporate ladder!
Major Traits of Professional Communication

• Audience-centered
  • Helps users find what they need
  • Helps users understand what they find
  • Helps users appropriately use what they understand
  • Enhances relationships
  • Occurs within a community
  • Is interactive
  • Has a definite purpose
Major Traits of Professional Communication

• Designed
  • Considers appearance - headings, blocks, visual aids
  • Considers content - top-down, logically consistent

• Responsible/Ethical
  • Uses unambiguous language
  • Is designed honestly
  • Has helpful visual aids
  • Credits others
Major Traits of Professional Communication

• Global
  • Exhibits “radical localization” - cultural etiquette, attitudes, e.g., problem-solving techniques, tolerance for directness, etc.
  • Exhibits “general localization” - culture-specific references, e.g., time formats, weights and measurements, currency, number formatting, etc.
The Professional Communication Process

• Plan Stage
  • Discover and collect all relevant information about the situation

• Draft Stage
  • Revise the document by selecting and re-arranging elements

• Finish Stage
  • Edit the final form
Plan Stage

• Situate Yourself
  • Determine your goal and your knowledge
  • Review a model
  • Consider legal, ethical, and global issues

• Create an Audience Profile
  • Determine identity - personal and external factors
  • Determine the role of the audience
  • Determine the task
  • Find out the knowledge level
Plan Stage

• Create a Document Plan
  • Establish content needs
  • Develop a strategy
  • Create an information design
  • Create a template or outline
Plan Stage

• Develop a Production Schedule
  • What are the due dates and responsibilities?
  • Who is involved?
  • What will be the medium of the final product?
  • Assign duties to members of the group
  • Establish deadlines
  • Establish methods of review
Draft Stage

• Research to discover information
• Design information to help your reader
• Create an alpha version
• Test for consistency, accuracy, helpfulness, and appropriateness
• Create a beta version
Finish Stage

• Edit for consistency and accuracy
• Use the chosen technology to produce the report
• Meet quality benchmarks
• Don’t finish too early or too late!