



Growing Your Business

Strategies for Independent Contractors

STC 1998 Region 7 Conference
October 17, 1998

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Growing Your Business Strategies for Independent Contractors

- Welcome!
- Who we are
- What we plan to share

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Balancing Your Workload

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Spreading Work Out

- Work ahead
- Isolate and focus on project pieces
- Review schedule with client and adjust
- Assume every project will be extended
- Be the catalyst

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Juggling Jobs and Nurturing Clients

- Don't over-commit
- Conceal how busy you are
- Tend to the "little" things
- Figure out your threshold (magic number)

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Saying Yes without Losing Your Mind

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can't afford not to.• I'm flattered that they asked me.• I want them to call again.• I simply can't say no.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There will <i>NEVER</i> be another opportunity like this again!• I don't want them to reject me.• I like doing this work soooooo much!
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Saying No without Losing the Client

- Tell them why
- Keep the door open
- Give referrals
- Leave them with insightful tips
- Subtly maintain your presence

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Using Sub-Contractors

- Cautiously!
- Use people you know
- Establish who is in charge
- Define the area of work
- Pay on time or before
- Be ready to step in

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Plan Your Services

Element	This year	Next year	Year after
Writing	30%	25%	15%
DTP/Tools	20%	10%	5%
Usability	10%	15%	20%
Design	10%	20%	30%
Bookkeeping	20%	10%	0%
Self-Education	5%	10%	20%
Marketing	5%	10%	10%

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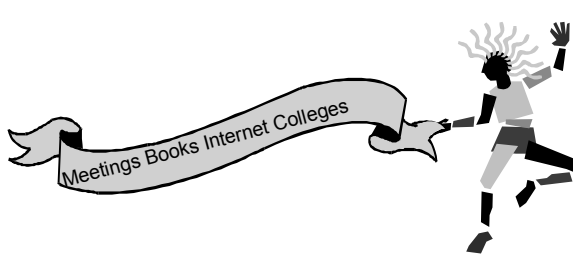
Look at Patterns

- Small projects vs. large
- Time-consuming projects
- Types of clients
- Levels of clients

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Continuing Your Education



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Professional Groups

- Attend professional meetings, seminars, conferences, and workshops
 - STC
 - See list of other organizations
- Participate in special interest groups (SIG)
 - Many organizations have a variety
 - Find the ones you can learn from

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Colleagues

- Work collaboratively with colleagues
 - Learn from their skills and experience
 - Be open to new ideas
- Use peer reviews
 - Ask for peer feedback and offer the same
 - Be specific about your needs
 - Enter competitions
 - Use manual evaluation workshops

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Books and Publications

- STC publications
- Publications unrelated to technical communication
- Books of all types, not just tech comm
- Trade magazines

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Keep up with Technology and Tools

- Try software demos
 - Inexpensive way to learn about new tools
 - Lets you try before you buy
- Determine which technologies are important to you
 - Based on your specialties
 - Based on your interests

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Use More Formal Environments

- Training classes
 - Influent
 - Solutions
 - See Resources handout
- University and community college classes
 - Check your local phone book
 - Good way to learn tools; brush up on other skills

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Don't Forget the Internet!


- Web sites
 - http://english.ttu.edu/ed_ind/
 - <http://english.ttu.edu/gscic/>
- Listserves
 - <http://tigger.clemson.edu/utest/>
- Online classes
 - Universities

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You Are Unique - Use It!

Bringing Who You Are To What You Do
- G. M. Bellman



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Unique. Who Cares?

- You vs. the masses
- You ARE the product
- Is the marketplace defining who you are?
- You and clients will know the difference

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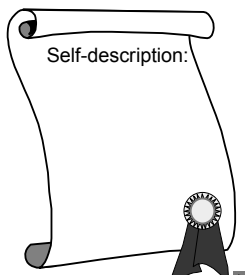
How Are You Unique?

What is unique about me?

Ask others: what is unique?

Test on others.

Self-description:



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Your Business Wish List

I wish I could do more _____.

I really get a kick out of _____.

I really enjoy _____.



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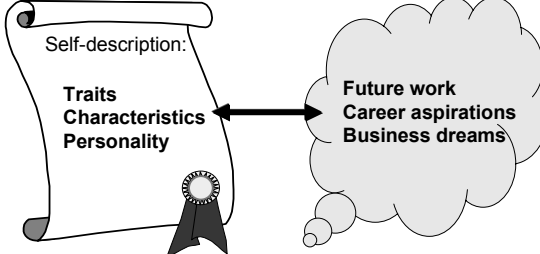
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Connect Who You Are with Your Business

Self-description:

Traits
Characteristics
Personality

Future work
Career aspirations
Business dreams



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Growing Your Unique Side

- Legitimize it:
 - name it
 - talk about it
 - experience it
 - read and write about it
- Growth = Risk

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Marketing Your Business



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Contacts, Contacts, Contacts!

- Professional associations (within and outside technical communication)
- Community groups
- Volunteer - get involved!
 - Makes you visible
 - Be reliable!

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Networking Etiquette

"Networking is a reciprocal process, an exchange of ideas, leads, and suggestions."

Susan RoAne,
The Secrets of Savvy Networking

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Referrals are everywhere

- Ask for Referrals
 - Friends
 - Family
 - Current clients
 - Colleagues
- Use the appropriate setting
- Thank them

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Public Speaking

- Speak at meetings, conferences, seminars
 - Gives you visibility in mailings, printed program
 - Lets you share and show your expertise
- What if you are not a good speaker?
 - Learn - college courses, Toastmasters, private coach
 - Or, don't do it

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Develop Personal Niche

- Type of work
- Industries you work for
- Medium you work in (print, online, multimedia)
- Needs you see unfulfilled
- Use your unique personality
- Target marketing efforts to that niche

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Go Above and Beyond

- Do value-added work for each client
 - Software testing
 - Usability analysis
 - Web site feedback
- Do more than expected
- Give clients a "freebie" once in a while

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Market to Current Clients

- Design training materials to complement the manual
- Create online help
- Edit error messages
- Write or edit web site content
- Edit or create marketing materials
- Write for other products in the product line

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