

Some Facts: Writing in the World

Most professions require extensive amounts of writing. In fact, “20 to 50 percent of a technology professional’s time is spent communicating with others. Whether writing a memo, preparing a set of procedures, or making an oral presentation, effective communication is vital to ... professional success.”¹ There is a consensus that writing plays a critical role in all professions so that “The need for college graduates who can research and communicate information at a high level of competence in business, industry, and government is well established.”² This is true of “technical” areas such as engineering and information technology, as well as medicine, music, the arts, and all others. Writing is either required during the course of everyday work tasks or as a supplementary activity, such as doing summary/annual reports, applying for grants, and standard business correspondence.

Here are some statements on writing in the professions:

From the University of Pittsburg:

In today’s business climate, employees have discovered that the ability to research, organize, and write various kinds of documents is a critical component of many positions, including those that are primarily technical in nature. Organizations expect employees to communicate clearly and effectively with both colleagues and nonexpert stakeholders. (<http://www.solutions.pitt.edu>)

From ERIC Digest:

In virtually all areas of business, it is essential to communicate in ways that clients, employees, and the public can understand. Advertising appeals must be intelligible, product warranties must be comprehensible, and job instructions must be stated clearly enough to be followed. It is in the interest of the merchant, the advertising writer, and the lawyer to make sure that their writing is clear. Fortunately for those who must read and interpret communication in business and the professions, there have been concerted efforts to improve that communication in recent years. (<http://www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/digests/d71.html>)

From the US Department of Labor:

“Employers increasingly expect new designers to be familiar with computer-aided design software as a design tool. Designers must also be creative, imaginative, and persistent and must be able to communicate their ideas in writing, visually, and verbally” (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos290.htm#nature>).

“Computer and information systems managers must possess strong interpersonal, communication, and leadership skills because they are required to interact not only with their staff, but also with other people inside and outside their organizations” (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos258.htm#training>)

“Persons planning a career in accounting should have an aptitude for mathematics and be able to analyze, compare, and interpret facts and figures quickly. They must be able to clearly communicate the results of their work to clients and managers both verbally and in writing.” (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos001.htm#nature>)

Persons interested in becoming advertising, marketing, promotions, public relations, and sales managers should be mature, creative... The ability to communicate persuasively, both orally and in writing, with other managers, staff, and the public is vital. These managers also need tact, good judgment, and exceptional ability to establish and maintain effective personal relationships with supervisory and professional staff members and client firms. (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos020.htm#nature>)

¹ Beer, David F. Writing and Speaking in the Technology Professions: A Practical Guide, 2nd Edition. Wiley-IEEE Press, 2003.

² <http://bizntech.rutgers.edu/program/about.html#certificates>