Analyzing the Importance of Technical Writing in Professional Industry of Pakistan

Sadaf Khalid, Jahanzaib Sarwar, Rabia Tauseef

Abstract—No matter how much perfect we becom e in our practical skills regarding the implementation of learned ideas, the need of technical writing capability cannot be neglected being a professional. Technical writing is a way of communicating the ideas in written which otherwise need to be presented orally. Technical writing skills have always been the need of the time, as they are required for internal as well as external official communication in both formal and informal manner. Moreover, they are the best way to capture the attention of your customers by presenting information in effective manner. This paper aims to analy ze the importance of technical writing skills in prof essional industries of Pakistan by conducting a survey. Survey results presented in this pap er clearly depicts the importance of formal and informal written communication media used in different professional industries in Pakistan. Analysis and discussion of the extent to which the alternative ways of communication besides technical writing have got i mportance in Pakistan is also an important aspect of this survey.

Keywords—Technical writing, Survey, Oral communication, Globalization, Communication trends, Formal Comm unication Media, Informal Communication, Audience.

I. INTRODUCTION

GLOBALIZATION and technological advancements have changed the communication trends. Any technological advancement can only be successful if people can make the best use of it for their benefits. Effective writing and presentation skills are required to introduce the technological developments to the world. Otherwise, an invention placed in the room has no purpose, if people are not aware of it and also cannot use it for their benefit.

Technical writing either formal or informal is a writing medium to co mmunicate information to audience [1]. It has always been a top priority requirement in lives of professionals. The job search begins with a formally written resume, which in the case if not written effectively reduces the chances of getting a job to some extent for the candidate. One must be well trained to effectively communicate the messages to become successful in professional life. All what is required are written and oral co mmunication skills, that help to introduce yourself and your products to the world.

Developed countries give more importance to effective technical writing skills, and this has pres ented them as more appealing and mature in opinion of other nations. But in developing countries like Pakistan, this trend of learning and

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implementing technical writing skills is progressing slowly. Professionals have now started to realize that reason behind complexities in thei r professional lives is the lack of implementation of technical writing skills. Professionals once considering the techni cal writing skills as un important have started learning to write effectively.

This paper analyzes the co mmunication trends in d ifferent professional industries in Pakistan. How the implementation of effective writing skills can ch ange the li fe of professionals is discussed in comparison with the difficulties arisen due to the lack of wr iting skills. Practice of other communication media besides technical writing in different industries in Pakistan is also discussed in this paper. People from local small businesses to large on es, from schools to univer sities, private sector to government offices; are part of this survey.

Rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section II briefly describes the concept of technical writing and its importance. Section III highlights some important communication trends in practice throughout the world. Trends of communication being followed in Pakistan, as obser ved from survey results along with the analysis of obtained results are presented in Section IV. We conclude in Section V by sug gesting further improvements that must be made to improve communication trends in Pakistan and the resultant advantages that might be obtained by practicing effective communication skills.

II. IMPORTANCE OF TECHNICAL WRITING

Accurate information presented in effective and appealing manner is t he key to success. With increased awareness, people have started paying attention not only to the information content but also to t he way information is presented to them. As an aim to discipline the field of technical writing, different writing styles and rules has been devised, and it is the need to fo llow these rules to become successful as a professional. Communication in written includes documents like memos, letters, reports, summaries to communicate with office staff and customers, and fliers, brochures, technical descriptions, user manuals, websites to market your products. All of these technical writing media of communication, if mastered effectively, help to sell the business [2].

Well-presented information always grabs attention of its reader. All scientific theories, inventions and researches need to be shared for their real success. Millions of dollars need to be spent in marketing the products. In 2010 internet advertisement alone was over $26 billion and television advertisement was over $ 50 billion [3].Unfortunately all

trends that become need of modern world are lately followed in Pakistan.

People find attractive people more intelligent, friendly and competent than less att ractive people [4]. Another research says physical and social attractiveness deliver substantial benefits in al l social interaction, makes person appears more competitive and in cases ensu res better job and promotions [5]. Same is the case of our daily professional communication. Information free of errors presented in attractive manner surely increases its value. Professionals need to write user manuals, develop websites, document technical descriptions; similarly, students need to write their thesis and research reports. All what is needed is proficiency in technical writing skills to achieve success wherever you stand. Hence ignorance about writing skills and lack of its implementation in professional life is like living in Dark Age, with no future i n modern organized world.

III. COMMUNICATION TRENDS IN MODERN WORLD

Technical writing and communication is now acquiring a professional status in the modern world. It is being considered as an umbrella profession reaffirmed by different job profiles [6]. Technical writers hold a range of titles in the world today. These titles include information manager, technical content specialist, SDK technical writer are the few being named here. Technological and sc ientific inventions had great impact on the need of technical writing skills as well as technical writers in the i ndustry because the c ustomers now demand for clear, concise and usable product information along with the product itself. With t echnological advancements and increased user awareness, there is a need for high level core technical competencies for the technical communicators.

Technical writing is equally important for students studying in professional institutions. No matter how much capable a student is in learning the technical content, but what to do of it if a s tudent cannot communicate it effectively towards their teachers and their employers in future. Good technical writing helps to achieve job goals for today's students [7]. Being students, good writing skills will help them to write e ffective dissertations that can be accepted without any major objection.

Professionals spend almost 20 to 30 percent of their time writing at their workplaces [1]. Table I [1] depicts the importance of technical writing and communication by showing the communication tools and the number of messages, whether formal or informal, written by the workers daily.

Modern world is dedicated towards technical writing. Considering the importance of technical writing, technical writers are separately hired in offices nowadays. But professionals like engineers, doctors and many others need to have good writing skills themselves, as they can better understand and communicate the kn owledge relevant to their domain as co mpared to oth er professional technical writers. Special technical writing training courses can be o ffered to professionals in order to enhance their writing and presentation skills, in their respective fields.

TABLE I
COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND NUMBER OF DAILY MESSAGES

Communication Tools	No. of messages sent/received daily
Voice-mail options	
Telephone	48
Voice mail	21
Cellular phone	6
Electronic Text tools	
Email	50
Fax	10
Pager	8
Hard-copy Tools	
Interoffice mail	18
Postal mail	15
Miscellaneous Tools	
Sticky notes	12
Telephone Office Slips	18
Total	**206**

IV. TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION IN PAKISTAN

Technical communication involves both or al and written communication practices. Oral co mmunication trends are being given importance to some extent i n almost all of the countries including Pakistan, but written communication practices seek less att ention as com pared to oral communication.

A survey is conducted among different professional institutions including software houses, educational institutions, business organizations and medical industry to analyze various communication trends in practice. We aim mainly to make people realize the importance of technical writing in Pakistan. The communication practices being adopted in professional industry depict the importance of existing communication trends in Pakistan.

Our survey focuses on the following five aspects:
a. Awareness of the concept of technical writing.
b. Medium of communication whether oral or written preferred in daily communication.
c. Impact of designation of th e professional on t he communication trends adopted.
d. Increasing trend of electronic and print media for communication.
e. Experience of the professionals' not practicing technical writing in their professional life.

Professionals belonging to different institutions, who became part of the survey, cooperated well with us and completed the questionnaires with complete unbiasedness representing true facts and figures.

A. Awareness of the Concept of Technical Writing among Professionals

When asked the question from different professionals about the awareness of the concept of technical writing, their response shows that they are aware of the conce pt but not implementing it in their profession. Survey results show th at 86 percent of the people are aware of the concept of technical writing while the other 14 per cent tend to be lacking in its understanding. Those who are aware, mostly include job-oriented professionals such as teaching assistants, engineers, business administrators and doctors, while medical practitioners are comparatively less aware of technical writing.

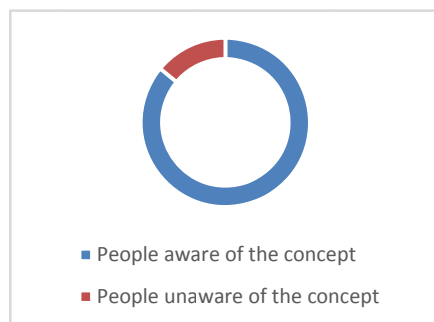Fig. 1 shows the ratio of awareness of technical writing among professionals in Pakistan.

Fig. 1 Ratio of Awareness of concept of Technical Writing among Professionals in Pakistan

B. Preferred Media of Communication in Daily Communication

The results to our question about medium of communication used by professionals for their daily communication depict that different communication media are used by them according to their will without any obligation about using some particular communication medium at workplace. Memos are the formal written communication trend commonly used in offices by professionals, while most of them prefer using emails for communication, a bit less formal way to communicate official information. SMS, another least formal way of communication in written is not practiced at all at most of the organizations while some use phone calls t o transfer the messages. Fig. 2 sho ws the statistical analysis of various communication media used by engineers, doctors, academicians and business people.
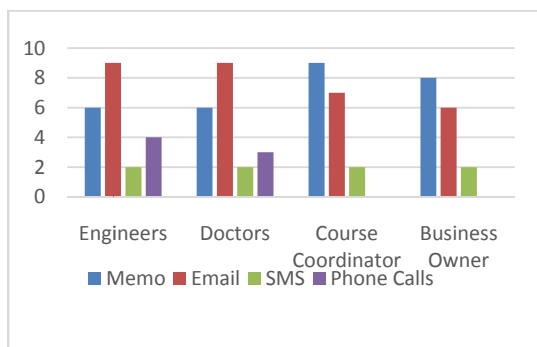

Fig.. 2 Communication Trends adopted by Professionals

C. Impact of Designation of Professionals on the Communication Trends adopted

Professionals at different designations give importance to technical writing differently. Managers are found to realize the importance of formal technical writing much more than workers at other designations in the offices. According to the survey, senior regional team leaders though being engineers are found to be more sensitive in implementing technical writing in their professional activities as compared to technical radio frequency engineers. Fig. 3 shows the impact of designation on the implementation of technical writing by professionals.
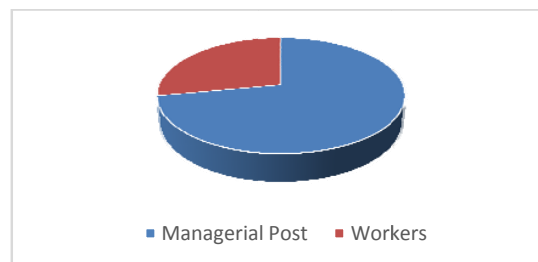

Fig. 3 Impact of Professionals' Designation on the Communication Trends adopted

D. Effect of Electronic and Print Media on Technical Communication

Technological advancements promote the use of electronic media for conveying messages as it i s much faster and attractive. The survey statistics show that websites have proven to be one of the effective ways of communication. Flyers, TV commercials and newspapers are still other means of communication being practiced in Pakistan. Fig. 4 shows the survey results depicting the role of electronic and print media in technical communication.
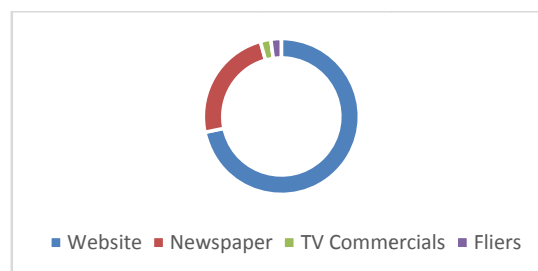

Fig. 4 Impact of Media on Technical Communication

E. Experience of Professionals not Practicing Technical Writing

Survey results show that organizations which are of the opinion that technical writing should be made use of, but haven't implemented it in real; believe that it has harmed their professional life. They feel that their work is goo d but they face criticism on the way of their presentation and documentation.

One of the professionals explained how he recognized the importance of technical writing in his career in the following words:

"…Sometimes we got the negative image of our hard work and efforts for positive work in our organization. It is really important to present your work by effective writing and communication skills..."

F. Other Comparative Features

50% employers consider confidence as main appealing quality in candidates for interview while other 5 0% select employees on basis of good communication skills. If they are selected, 99.9% companies use email to acknowledge their

candidates. In case of non-selection, 33.3% companies and institutes don't acknowledge their candidates, while 66.6% inform candidates about their failure via emails.

V. CONCLUSION

Our main aim in this paper is to focus on the importance of written communication trends in Paki stan. Survey results show that although trend of technical writing is increasing in Pakistan but still awareness needs to be spread. As many professionals are still unaware of it in literary terms. If they don't know about it, how will they excel in this field? They implement its techniques unknowingly considering them to be important and helpful in professional career. Sadly trend is seen that rarely any large organization has separate department for technical writing. Students and professionals who want to peruse technical writing as their professional career don't have any future in this field. So awareness still needs to be spread not only among people but also a mong large organizations. This will not only makes image of co untry more mature in long term but will also help in increasing jobs in Pakistan, as it will give talented students chance to peruse it as a career.

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