Web TechnoLust
Employers, Employees: Getting What You Really Want

Some Hot Trends That Will Affect Our Field/Our Field Can Affect
Wired, April 2001

Personal Fabrication on Demand – Desktop manufacturing from easily transmitted hi-res digital files (e.g., hearing aids that match the wearer's ear canal) (172).

The Next Wave – Sea Launch, a partnership involving Boeing Commercial Space, Russia's RSC Energia, the Ukraine's SDO Yuzhnoye/PO Yuzhmash, and Norway's Kvaerner Group; an international consortium that's one of the first commercial endeavors to bring together veterans of the Soviet space industry and Western counterparts; designed to integrate the best of the two sides and their technologies to create the first commercial space enterprise of its kind (175).

The Hot New Medium: Paper – Christer Fåhraeus at Anoto in Lund, Sweden is developing the most advanced digital input screen—very high resolution, perfect contrast, and costs a fraction of a cent to produce, any graphical interface can be printed on it….and it's paper, digital paper. It won't be hard to find and it won't cost more than standard copy stock. Ericsson is marketing the Chatpen is the writing instrument that will allow you to send email and faxes directly on paper, with no personal computer or wireless tablet (185).

The Playing Field Is Going to Get Bigger & Better For Us
The Roaring 2000s, Harry S. Dent, Jr.

Dent predicts that the 2000s will see exponential growth in the market: "The sudden emergence of information technologies, along with the peak spending years of the baby-boom generation, will usher in a new era of prosperity and sweeping changes" (32).

"Electronic communication and commerce will also allow companies to tailor products and services to individual needs…. Customized goods and services, once luxuries, will increasingly be affordable for the average consumer" (53).

Return to customer focus, resurgence of small, dynamic work teams (72).

Internationally, the "new economy will emerge in the highly industrialized, developed countries. The U.S. will be the leader in high tech and customization. Baby-boom demographics will strongly favor countries like Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and newly industrialized countries of the Pacific Rim" (84).

1998-2008: predicted largest boom in history→baby-boomers are living longer, fastest and largest population getting online and buying computers; largest population with disposable income.

What does this mean for Web Designers (technical communication in general)?
Despite the fluctuations in the market and the downsizing of several of the technology companies, many signs point to a positive and growing future for our field. There will be a growing demand for us, and, more importantly, we need to be more specific about how we advertise for Web Designers and how Web Designers advertise themselves.

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Getting What You Want
Employees:

You can't do everything. Try to understand how all parts of the Web site fit together; understand the whole, but then figure out what area or couple of areas in which you want to specialize.

Ask the right questions:
What do you expect the Web Designer to do?
Are there other duties related to this position you expect the Web Designer to do?
What kind of technical support will I receive?
What kind of budget is there for software? Software upgrades?
Is this a separate line item in the budget?
What kind of budget is there for hardware? Hardware upgrades?
Is this a separate line item in the budget?
[#1 Technical support   #2 Hardware (especially future budgets)   #3 Software]
What kind of ongoing training will I receive?
Who are the others (if any) that I work with? Are these their full-time jobs?
Am I a part of the decision-making process on hardware, software, and web content and design?
What do you want the Web site to do for you? What do want the Web site to do for you in the future? Do I
        have a say in that?
Where is the Web site housed?
Is there a full-time technician/technologist assigned to the server/Web site?
What is the attitude of the company toward the Web site/technology?

Getting What You Want
Employers:
Know what you want when hiring—Web designer is too vague.

Ask the right questions:
What are your particular strengths as a Web Designer?
What are your particular weaknesses as a Web Designer?
Can you make Web site cross-platform compatible?
What specific graphics packages do you know (Photoshop, Illustrator)? What level of competence:
        beginner, intermediate, advanced, power? Would you be willing to demonstrate your skills? Are
        you willing to spend time outside of work developing those skills?
What specific databasing packages packages do you know (Access, SQL, Rational databasing, XML)?
What specific desktop publishing packages do you know (RoboHELP, html help)?
What specific programming languages do you know (C++, Java, Perl)?
What HTML editing programs do you know (Dreamweaver, FrontPage, GoLive)?
Can you hand code HTML? With CSS? XHTML? DHTML?
Do you know any client-side scripting (Javascript, XSLT (extendable style sheet language transforming))?
Do you know any server-side scripting (asp, Perl, Java, C++)?
Have you taken many writing-intensive courses? How strong are your writing skills?
Do you have a portfolio that demonstrates your writing ability? Graphic skills? Programming skills? etc.

A good Web team will consist of:
Graphics Designer
Programmer
Webmaster (content creator/project manager/technical communicator)
Legal Consultant (IP issues, fair use, copyright)

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