

**STC Montreal
Feb. 25 2003**

**from
Techical
Writing to
Marcom**

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Moving from Technical Writing to Marketing Communications

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**Please contact me with any questions on this material,
or any challenges in your next marcom project**

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Who Cares about Marcom?

- **As a technical writer, you may be asked to write marketing documents**
- **Knowing how makes you more versatile and more marketable**
- **Refreshing change of pace**
- **Chance to stretch your creativity**
- **Why not find out more before you reject the idea?**

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Preview

- **What is Marcom?**
- **Technical vs Marketing Writing**
- **Skills for Success**
- **The 10 Key Documents**
- **Some Easy Exercises**

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What is Marcom?



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The Word Marcom

marketing

+

communications

=

marcom

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Factors in High-Tech Marcom

- Every industry does marcom, but high-tech is different
- Not dealing in soap or cereal
- Highly technical products that need to be positioned properly
- Engineering culture suspicious of marketing and sales
- Products cause discontinuous innovation (see Geoffrey Moore “Inside the Tornado”)

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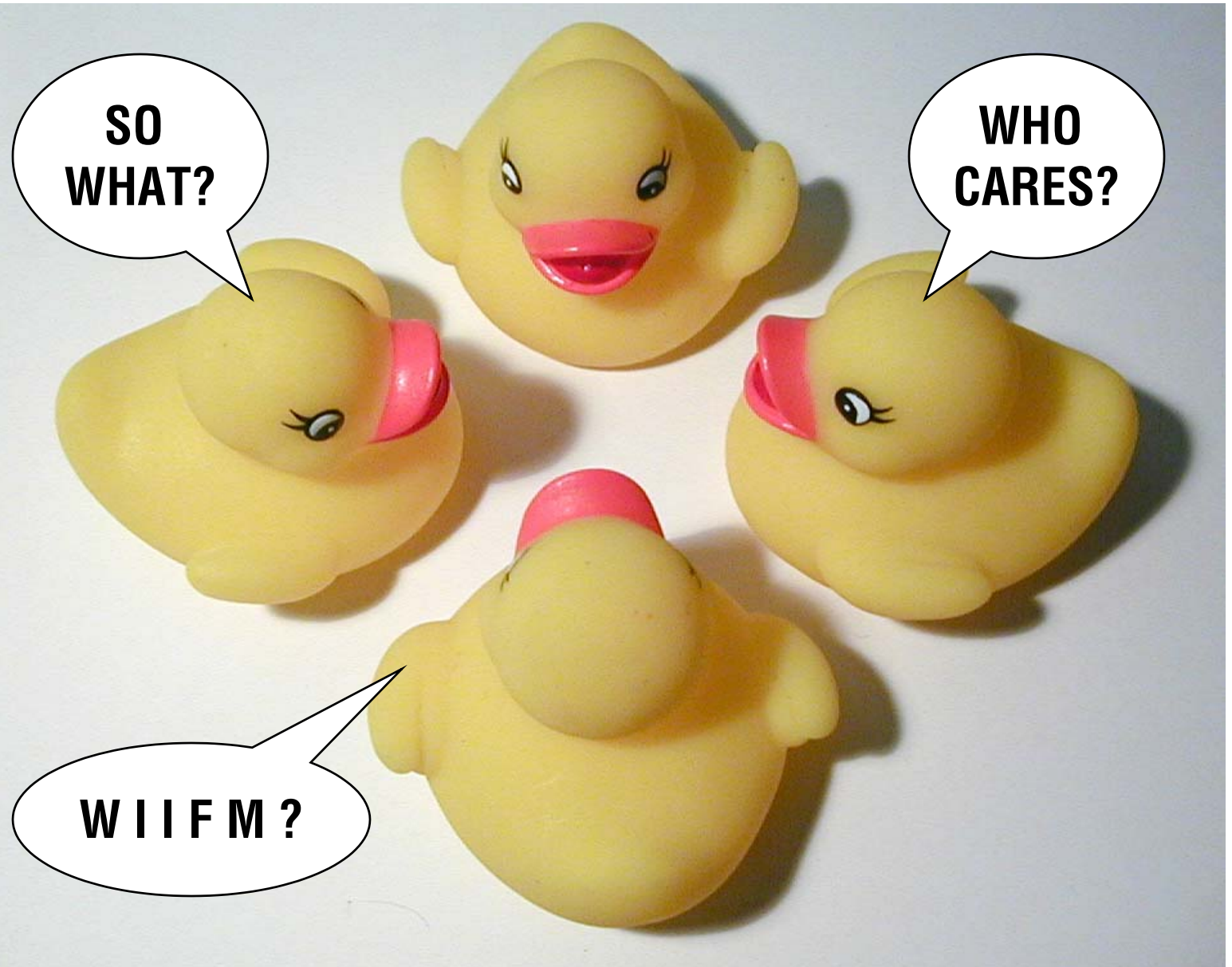
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Three Good Questions



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Technical vs Marketing Writing



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Similarities...

- **Marcom (not advertising) is not fluff!**
- **Both require audience analysis**
- **Both require in-depth research**
- **Both require clear, precise writing**
- **Both have tough deadlines and approval cycles**
- **CGNR* Syndrome exists in both**

* Can't Get No Respect

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Differences...

- Writing to persuade, not to explain
- Usually give explicit action step
- Introduce emotion, jazz, sizzle
(beaten out of tech writers)
- Shorter and faster projects
- Higher production values
- Reviewers care passionately?!

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The Universal Tasks

- Research
- Selection

Pre-sales: done
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- Installing
- Configuring
- Programming
- Learning
- Using
- Troubleshooting

After-Sales:
covered by
technical
writers

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Marketing vs R&D

- **Why the culture of mistrust between R&D and marketing?**
 - Totally counter-productive
 - There is no “Dark Side”
 - Everyone in a firm is in it together
- **Marketing people don't have to be Dilbertian clichés**
- **Neither do engineers**
- **Tech writers don't have to pick sides**

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Marketing & Tech Writers

- **Marketing people can help technical writers do our jobs**
 - They're in touch with real users
 - They can help us do audience analysis or develop personas
 - They can help us do task analysis or day-in-the-life scenarios
 - They can help us explain the purpose of a product
- **Talk to your marketing people: you may be surprised!**

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Skills Required for Success



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Skills Required for Marcom

- **Good communicator**
- **Fast, accomplished writer**
- **Quick study**
- **Familiar with your industry**
- **Good at visualizing customers**
- **Creative and flexible**
- **Team player**
- **Professional detachment
AKA thick skin**


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Tech Writers Have the Skills!

- Good communicator
 - Fast, accomplished writer
 - Quick study
 - Familiar with your industry
 - Good at summarizing customers
 - Creative and flexible
 - Team player
 - Professional detachment
AKA thick skin
- 

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Moving into Marcom

- **Tech writers are well-positioned**
- **Seen good communicators**
- **Proven research skills**
- **Good knowledge of industry**
- **Empathy for users**
- **Creative and flexible: especially with knowledge of type, graphics**
- **Team player**
- **Thick-enough skin?**

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What Tech Writers Must Learn

- **How to turn features into benefits**
- **How to handle emotion, sizzle**
- **The top 10 marcom documents**
- **A higher level of writing mastery**
 - **Requires subtle, nuanced style**
 - **You aren't in Click-OK-Land any more**

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How to Break In

- **If on staff, say YES when asked...**
- **Build your portfolio**
- **Help startups with no marcom**
- **Join forces with other freelancers**
- **Contact PR agencies**
- **Build your network**
- **Find a mentor**
- **Most of all:
BELIEVE YOU CAN DO IT!**

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Top 10 Marcom Documents



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Top 10 Marcom Documents

1. Product blurbs
2. Data sheets
3. Brochures
4. Press releases
5. Success stories
6. Newsletters
7. White papers
8. Catalogs
9. Packaging
10. Presentations



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Why These Top 10?

- **Most often used by high-tech**
- **So you will most often be asked to write one of these top 10**
- **Not every company does all 10**
- **This list helps clarify discussion if someone asks you for**
 - A flyer
 - An announcement
 - A spec sheet

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Usually Left to Specialists

- **From the top 10**
 - Packaging
 - Presentations

- **Other documents**
 - Advertising
 - Business plans
 - Investor documents

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1. What is a Product Blurb?

- **A concise statement that sums up a product in 1 or 2 sentence**
- **Can be 25, 50, 100 words**
- **AKA elevator pitch**
- **A fundamental building block of all other documents**

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How to Write a Blurb

- Start with this model sentence:

[product name]
is a / the
[adjective]
[genre]
that
[verb]
[key benefit].

- Fill in appropriate terms

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Sample Blurb: 20-20 Design

- **Audience: kitchen designers**
- **[20-20 Design]
is the
[world's leading]
[software]
for
[designing]
[kitchens and baths].**

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Sample Blurb: Global Trust

- **Audience: IT security experts**
- **[Global Trust]
is an
[award-winning]
[privilege management
infrastructure (PMI)]
that
[safeguards]
[your priceless business
resources].**

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Exercise: Product Blurbs



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WinXP Marcom Challenges

- **So what? Who cares? W I I F M?**
- **What's the difference between Home and Professional?**
- **Can't I be both a home user and a power user?**
- **Creating excitement (it's ONLY an operating system)**

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Blurbs for WindowsXP

- [product name]
is a / the
[adjective]
[genre]
that
[verb]
[key benefit].
- **Let's write two blurbs:
XP Home and XP Professional!**

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Blurb for WindowsXP Home

■ **From the Microsoft Web site:**

**[WindowsXP]
is
[the operating system]
that home users
[have been waiting for]
[—because it offers serious
speed and serious stability,
so you can have serious fun].**

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Blurb for WindowsXP Pro

■ **From the Microsoft Web site:**

**[WindowsXP Professional]
[delivers]**

**[the new standard in reliability
and performance].**

**[This] [operating system]
[is designed]**

**[for businesses of all sizes and
for users who demand the most
from their computing experience].**

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2. What is a Data Sheet?

- **Spec sheet that lists features**
- **Done for many high-tech products since there's a lot to explain**
- **No big sell, mostly factual**
- **Easy for tech writers to do**
- **Can be combined with brochure**
 - Front is brochure
 - Back is data sheet

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3. What is a Brochure?

- A polished sales pitch that effectively positions a product
- AKA slick, glossy, flyer
- Done for many high-tech products
- Must turn features into benefits
- Can be combined with data sheet
 - Front is brochure
 - Back is data sheet

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Turning Features into Benefits

- Feature = capability of a product
- Benefit = emotional appeal
- Benefits answer the questions:
 - So what?
 - Who cares?
 - W I I F M?
- People don't buy products
- People buy what products promise to do for them

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Desk Lamp Exercise

Restate each feature as a benefit...

- Feature: Swivels 360°
■ Benefit: _____

- Feature: Gray enamel
■ Benefit: _____

- Feature: Welded joints
■ Benefit: _____

- Feature: Uses standard halogen bulb
■ Benefit: _____

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Anti-Virus Software Exercise

Restate each feature as a benefit...

■ Feature: Identifies 50,000 known viruses

■ Benefit: _____

■ Feature: Instate updates over the Web

■ Benefit: _____

■ Feature: Scans email and attachments

■ Benefit: _____

■ Feature: Can run unattended

■ Benefit: _____

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The Lessons Learned...

- **There is no right and wrong way to do marcom**
- **It's fun to do marcom (?!)**
- **You CAN write marketing materials!!**

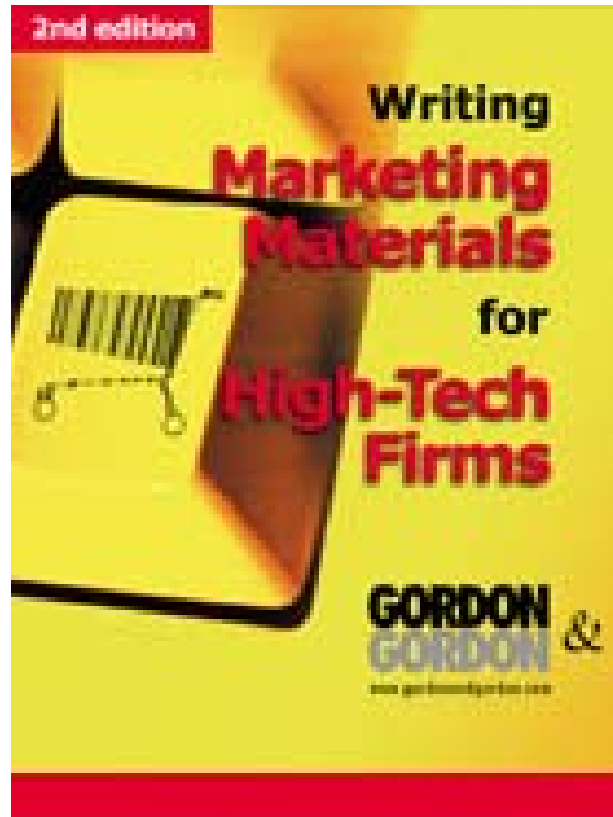
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This Was a Tiny Excerpt...



**from the full-day workshop
coming to Toronto Friday
April 11, 2003**

**The workbook contains
enough material for a
1.5-day workshop.**

**For more details, see
www.gordonandgordon.com**

Thank you!