



Examining the Value of Technical Communication Graduate Degrees in Non-Academic Professions

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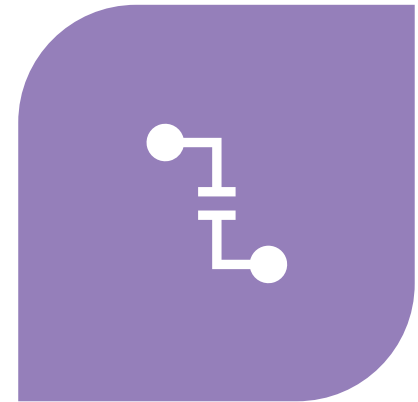
Introduction



TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION IS
A DIVERSE AND EXPANDING
FIELD



MINIMAL RESEARCH ON HOW
TECH COMM DEGREES PREPARE
STUDENTS FOR INDUSTRY ROLES



DISCONNECT BETWEEN
COURSEWORK AND SOME JOB
DUTIES

Research Question and Purpose



RQ: In what ways do graduate degrees in technical communication in the US prepare students to excel in management, consulting, or entrepreneurship roles?



Purpose: Identify courses, skills, and professional developmental activities that will help technical communication graduate students prepare for non-academic roles, and make recommendations to graduate programs

Participants

- + **Sample Group:** Technical communicators who hold a master's or doctoral degree in technical communication, or equivalent degree, and who work outside of academia.
- + **Recruitment:** Largely via LinkedIn messages, following up via email.



Methods

Narrative Inquiry and Content Analysis

Surveys

Semi-structured interviews

Manual coding

- Two rounds of coding done by primary interviewer and a secondary reviewer.
- Codified into a single spreadsheet and run through Orange for validation.

Topic Modeling and Sentiment Analysis

- Data was used to generate word clouds to validate our manual coding.
- Data was given a positive, negative, and neutral scores and analyzed.

Interview Results

Five Interview Responses

Top five words

Communication
People
Question
Professional
Way

Top categories

Communication
Value
People
Different
Professional



Sentiment Analysis

Dataset: Survey Questions				
Participant	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Compound
SM	19.4%	1.8%	78.8%	98.5%
AD	10.7%	2.3%	87.1%	98.2%
CH	8.1%	4.1%	87.8%	89.6%
KG	6.8%	0.0%	93.2%	93.5%
SR	18.3%	0.7%	81.1%	99.8%
MG	13.2%	0.4%	86.3%	99.0%
SG	7.0%	0.7%	92.3%	93.5%
SH	10.6%	0.0%	89.4%	99.1%
HH	11.3%	0.9%	87.8%	94.7%

Dataset: Interview Transcripts				
Participant	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Compound
CR-Transcript	12.8%	4.2%	83.0%	100.0%
KG-Transcript	15.4%	1.5%	83.1%	100.0%
MG-Transcript	12.7%	0.9%	86.4%	100.0%
SH-Transcript	16.5%	1.9%	81.7%	100.0%
SM-Transcript	11.1%	1.7%	87.2%	99.8%

Recommendations



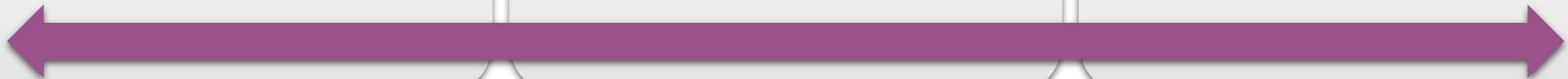
Partner with industry for more “true” internship opportunities.



Work with alumni to provide opportunities for continuing education and mentorship.



Offer an internship option in a Ph.D. program.

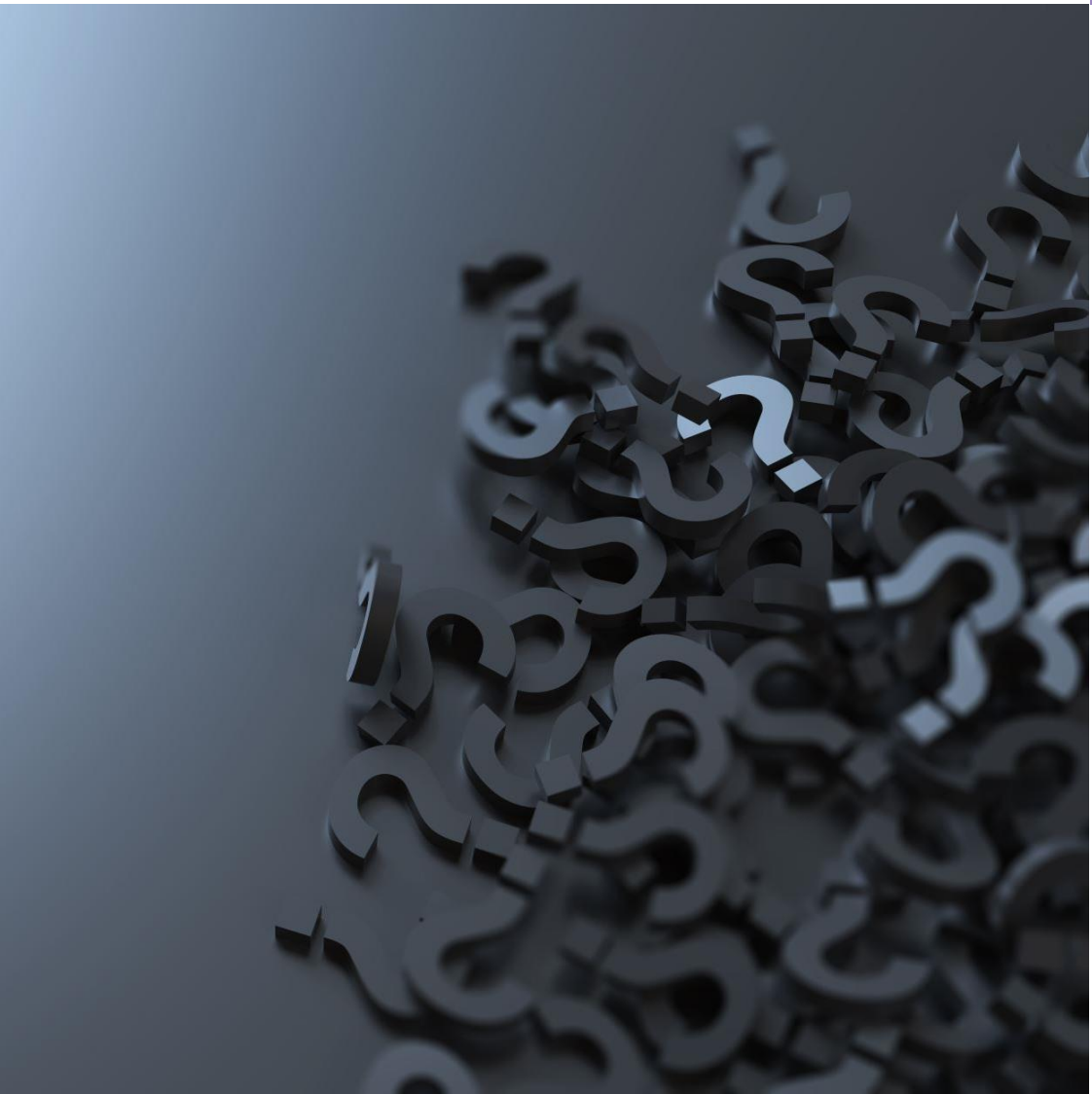


Conclusion and Parting Thoughts

Software documentation and **usability-related** tasks comprise a major part of a technical communicator's work.

General communication skills were important, but technical communication work consisted of varied skills, such as **time/project management** and **research skills**.

Courses covering the **foundations of technical communication, software documentation, usability**, and the **internship** course were most useful.



Questions?