

Making a Six-Figure Income as a Technical Communicator

Presented by Jack Molisani

Overview

- Compensation Basics
- Career Paths
- Sources of Income
- Income Epiphanies
- Do What I Did
- Where to Start
- Recommended Reading

Ground Rules and Warnings

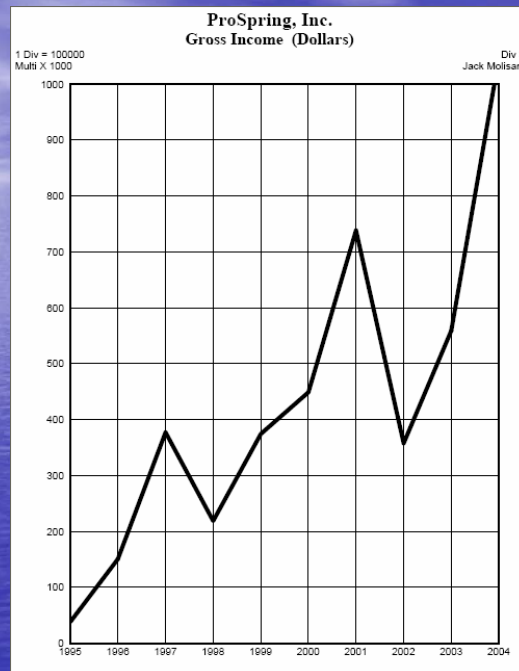
- Group Participation
- Contrasting Viewpoints are Welcome
- Speaking in Hypertext
- Chinese Artists
- Controversy!

Disclaimers

- What I say is just my opinion—nothing is true unless you try it and see if it's true *for you*.
- I'm not a financial professional, so check with your own tax, legal, etc. professional.
- I'm presenting what worked for me. You need to work out what will work *for you*.
- These are my personal views and not those of the STC, etc.

About the Speaker

- Past President, LA and OC STC
- Chair of the STC Year 2000 Pan-Pacific Conference in Hawaii
- Founder and President of ProSpring, Inc. and LavaCon, Inc.



Career Path: SW Engineer vs. TW

- Programmer
- Sr. Programmer
- Engineering Manager
- VP Engineering
- VP Operations
- President
- CEO/COB
- Other Profession
- Technical Writer
- Sr. Technical Writer
- Doc. Manager (maybe)

Career Path: TW Alternate

- Other Profession
- Technical Writer
- Sr. Technical Writer/Doc. Manager
- Independent Contractor
- Business Owner

The Speaker's Career Path

- Project Officer, USAF Space Division
- Sales Engineer
- Technical Writer (staff)
- Technical Writer (contractor)
- Outsource Writing Company
- Outsource Writing and Staffing Company
- Additional Sources of Income

Compensation Basics

- A six-figure income = a gross annual income of \$100,000/year
- Notice I said "income" not "salary"
- Sources of Income
 - Employee: Salary, bonuses, benefits
 - Contract: Hourly and fixed bid
 - Business Owner: Mark-up
 - Other sources of income

Income: Employee

2005 UNITED STATES SALARY SURVEY
(By selected groupings. Figures in U.S. dollars.)

Grouping	Base	Mean	10%	25%	50%	75%	95%
Total	2,258	\$67,528	\$44,200	\$53,000	\$65,000	\$78,130	\$93,000
Employment Level							
Entry	79	40,730	30,500	36,000	40,400	44,400	50,200
Mid-Level, Non-Supervisory	546	51,150	39,890	45,000	52,140	61,950	70,000
Mid-Level, Supervisory	281	71,050	48,510	57,500	68,000	84,750	97,000
Senior-Level, Non-Supervisory	1,019	70,430	51,450	60,000	69,000	80,000	91,500
Senior-Level, Supervisory	305	86,010	60,000	70,000	82,500	95,070	111,100
Other	27	74,520	—	48,750	55,000	97,330	—
Education Level							
High School	107	64,930	43,350	51,730	65,000	75,610	90,900
Associates	129	62,440	45,000	50,000	61,000	71,750	85,000
Bachelor, Arts	816	66,860	43,000	53,460	65,000	78,000	91,000
Bachelor, Science	430	69,460	46,500	50,000	64,000	77,000	90,000
Master's Degree	684	70,860	48,040	56,000	67,310	82,000	96,420
Doctorate	92	71,470	44,000	52,000	67,360	86,500	100,000
Sex							
Female	1,511	66,960	44,000	52,260	65,000	78,460	92,000
Male	747	68,670	45,430	55,000	68,000	80,000	94,150
Age							
20-29	166	48,040	35,260	40,000	44,750	54,250	64,530
30-39	640	62,960	44,000	50,000	60,000	73,000	85,000
40-49	686	70,140	47,990	56,000	68,000	81,000	95,000
50 years and over	796	73,230	50,000	60,000	70,000	84,940	99,400
Years of Experience (in technical communication field)							
Less than 2 years	65	42,810	30,280	35,630	41,500	47,000	57,600
2-5 years	376	52,610	38,000	42,440	50,000	60,000	70,310
6-10 years	648	64,540	46,380	53,000	63,000	73,000	85,280
11 years or more	1,169	75,320	52,280	61,810	73,000	96,000	100,250
Job Titles							
Documentation Manager	412	79,740	55,000	62,500	78,350	94,330	108,000
Information Developer	238	69,940	48,000	56,000	67,630	80,000	92,000
Online Help Developer	46	61,930	—	48,000	60,000	69,500	—
Teacher of Technical Communication	36	59,430	—	44,000	52,790	62,000	—
Technical Editor	162	61,350	39,620	46,350	61,500	74,000	81,000
Technical Writer	1,049	62,860	42,135	50,000	62,000	73,200	83,000
Usability Specialist	16	85,090	—	—	74,500	—	—
Web Designer	17	62,400	—	—	62,000	—	—
Other	270	70,350	47,000	55,000	67,250	81,000	97,200

Income: Employee

MEDIAN CANADIAN SALARY BY PROVINCE
Figures in Canadian dollars.

Province*	Salary	Province*	Salary
Alberta	\$55,750	Ontario	\$63,300
British Columbia	\$59,000	Quebec	\$65,000
Manitoba	\$49,570		


* This list only includes results from provinces that provided a statistically significant number of responses.

MEDIAN SALARY BY COUNTRY
Figures in New Shekels (ILS) or Pounds (GBP).

Country*	Salary
Israel	ILS 180,000
United Kingdom	GBP 31,000

* This list only includes results from countries that provided a statistically significant number of responses.

MEDIAN U.S. SALARY BY ONE-DIGIT ZIP CODES
Figures in U.S. dollars.



ZIP Code	Salary	ZIP Code	Salary
0****	\$73,750	5****	\$59,000
1****	\$63,000	6****	\$56,000
2****	\$65,000	7****	\$67,000
3****	\$57,000	8****	\$61,540
4****	\$52,450	9****	\$75,000

MEDIAN U.S. SALARY BY TWO-, THREE-, AND FOUR-DIGIT ZIP CODES
Figures in U.S. dollars.

ZIP	State	Salary	ZIP	State	Salary	ZIP	State	Salary
01	MA	\$83,000	44	OH	\$60,000	8011	CO	\$67,000
017	MA	\$2,400	441	OH	\$48,000	802	CO	\$66,000
018	MA	\$4,500	45	OH	\$60,000	83	ID	\$7,010
02	MA	\$2,750	46	IN	\$55,000	84	UT	\$3,880
024	MA	\$7,520	48	MI	\$55,000	85	AZ	\$3,000
03	NH	\$7,000	481	MI	\$55,000	90	CA	\$4,150
07	NJ	\$0,000	49	MI	\$4,000	91	CA	\$9,000
070	NJ	\$1,750	50	IA	\$5,000	92	CA	\$1,000
08	NJ	\$5,000	53	WI	\$3,000	921	CA	\$1,000
10	NY	\$6,000	537	WI	\$2,000	926	CA	\$2,700
15	PA	\$1,000	55	MN	\$3,000	93	CA	\$4,000
19	PA	\$6,000	551	MN	\$5,000	94	CA	\$0,000
193	PA	\$7,500	553	MN	\$1,500	940	CA	\$0,500
20	DC/DOWA	\$2,010	554	MN	\$5,000	941	CA	\$7,300
208	MD	\$4,500	60	IL	\$6,000	945	CA	\$4,850
21	MD	\$5,000	600	IL	\$4,000	95	CA	\$6,000
22	VA	\$2,330	606	IL	\$5,500	950	CA	\$2,000
27	NC	\$5,000	63	MO	\$5,500	951	CA	\$3,500
276	NC	\$3,950	64	MO	\$8,000	97	OR	\$8,040
277	NC	\$6,000	75	TX	\$5,000	978	OR	\$5,500
29	SC	\$5,500	750	TX	\$3,000	972	OR	\$8,040
30	GA	\$1,250	752	TX	\$6,070	98	WA	\$5,000
300	GA	\$6,000	76	TX	\$5,000	980	WA	\$4,250
303	GA	\$4,000	760	TX	\$5,000	985	WA	\$4,750
32	FL	\$5,000	77	TX	\$8,000	991	WA	\$6,500
327	FL	\$8,240	770	TX	\$7,150	9810	WA	\$0,720
33	FL	\$6,370	78	TX	\$0,000			
35	AL	\$5,000	787	TX	\$1,000			
37	TN	\$5,000	7875	TX	\$4,800			
43	OH	\$6,000	80	CO	\$5,000			
432	OH	\$3,000	800	CO	\$0,260			
432	OH	\$2,380	801	CO	\$6,970			

(This list only includes results from ZIP codes that provided a statistically significant number of responses.)

Income: Employee vs. Contract

- Hourly rates vs. annual salary
- 40 hours x 50 weeks x hourly rate
- $\$50/\text{hr} \times 40 \text{ hours} \times 50 \text{ weeks} = \$100,000$
- Rule of thumb is to double the rate
 - $\$30/\text{hr} = \$60,000 / \text{year (approx.)}$
 - $\$40/\text{hr} = \$80,000 / \text{year}$
 - $\$50/\text{hr} = \$100,000 / \text{year}$
 - $\$60/\text{hr} = \$120,000 / \text{year}$

Income: Hourly

- The rule of thumb is only true *if* you work a full 40 hours x 50 weeks
- Also consider the cost of "benefits"
 - Medical insurance
 - Sick days and vacation time (non-billable days)
 - Education (tuition, conferences, etc.)
 - Matching 401k, stock options, etc.

Income: Fixed Bids

- You agree to produce X for \$Y
- High Risk vs. Big Profits
- Good way to make \$\$ *if* the deliverable is well defined *and* you control "mission creep"
- Document plans and prototypes are essential
- Great if you are a fast producer

Income: Business Owner

- Entrepreneur: One who creates jobs
- Make money on (most) everyone you employ
- Income not limited to how many hours you can work
- With power comes responsibility

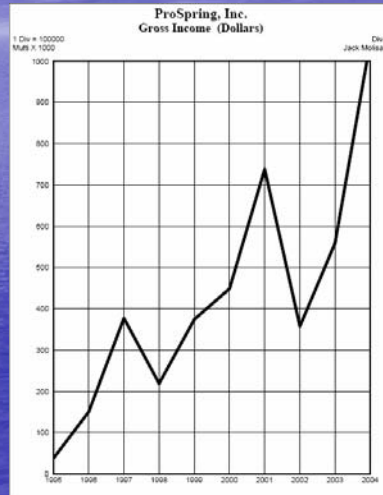
Income: Other Sources

- Investments
 - Stocks
 - Real estate (flipping, rental income)
 - Mutual funds, etc.
- Consulting (usability, UI design, etc.)
- IBO/multi-Level Marketing

My Income Epiphanies

- Employee vs. Contractor
- Contractor vs. Business Owner
- Multiple Sources of Income
- Hands-on Business Owner vs. Hands-off Business Owner

Do What I did



Do What I did

- Apply Condition Formulas
(L. Ron Hubbard)
- Think Positive, Send Out Ships
(Chellie Campbell)
- Get Out of the Rat Race
(Robert Kiyosaki)

Where to Start

- Start contract work on the side
- Build volume until you are “losing money” by working as an employee
- Build volume and sub-contract the overflow work (as needed)
- Build volume until you can hire employees (if desired)
- Build alternate streams of income in parallel (e.g. Quixtar.com)

Recommended Reading

Speaking from Experience, L. Ron Hubbard

The Wealthy Spirit, Chellie Campbell

Rich Dad, Poor Dad, Robert Kiyosaki

The Millionaire Next Door, Stanly and Danko

Questions and Answers

jack@ProSpring.net

www.ProSpring.net

jack@ProSpring.net

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