

## Establishing Yourself in a Writerless World

The following table shows the steps the new National Resources documentation team at IDX took in 1997 to establish its role within the Client Services department. This table also includes the first-year results for the team.

Task	Description	First Year Result
Establish the Technical Writer's role	<p>We held meetings with Management to determine what services we would provide to our customers.</p> <p>The role document produced includes the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ the services we provide</li> <li>■ how we work within the department and the entire company</li> <li>■ our relationship with other company writers</li> </ul>	<p>This task was helpful in making staff familiar with the services Technical Writers can provide.</p> <p>Based on our first-year results, we added the following to the role document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ information on how different customers utilized each of the services</li> <li>■ incentive measurement data</li> </ul>
Develop procedures and measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Since we were starting from scratch, we had to develop procedures to handle documentation requests and other tasks. These procedures needed to work within the structure and environment of the department.</li> <li>■ As the department is very goal-oriented, we had to also establish performance measurements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Our procedures are working but we have to reassess them and determine how our customers perceive them. (For example, do they find our request form useful? Is it easy to use?)</li> <li>■ We met our performance measurement goals for our first year. As the measurements are still valid, we only had to revise the weight of each goal.</li> </ul>
Present role to customers	<p>We met with all the teams we would be working with, reviewed the role document with them, and answered any questions they had.</p>	<p>We were fortunate to have worked in the past with some key members of our assigned teams. These people understand the value Technical Writers can provide and they utilized our services well.</p> <p>There were, however, a few teams that needed documentation who would only ask us for basic editing services or word processing advice. Despite follow-up meetings, we could not get them to see where their documentation "holes" were. We need to come up with new ways of making staff understand our role and our value.</p>
Be creative with your resources and projects	<p>We started with two writers and had five teams to work with. We developed different ways of getting documentation projects done while not over-burdening ourselves.</p>	<p>The methods used for this task have varied by team. Most teams like that they can work with a Technical Writer, even in a limited capacity. However, we still cannot provide the amount of attention we would like to on our projects. The possible addition of a third writer later this year may help alleviate this problem.</p>
Revise and enhance your role annually	<p>We reviewed the results of our first year and evaluated how the teams utilized our services.</p>	<p>Our role hasn't changed much for 1998. It may have to change a bit in 1999 to account for new technologies and departmental changes.</p>