



Annual Salaries Report

Year ending June 2012

August 2012

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Summary

In recent years salaries and vacancy levels in the technical communication industry have been impacted by strong demand and skills shortages. The following report shows a continuing trend of significant increases in rates over previous years.

As a recruiter of documentation specialists who work across a range of industries, TechWriter Placements & Services (TechWriter) is ideally placed to review the market rates paid and comment on emerging trends.

This report summarises the results of analysis on income reported by our candidates during the period ending June 2012. We have only presented high level findings on salaries, for a more detailed analysis discussing the reasons for salary variations in more depth please contact us at info@techwriter.com.au or on 1300 788 716.

A summary of our findings on rates paid for 2012 is outlined in the table below.

Role	Annual Package	Hourly rate
Technical writer	\$110,000 - \$200,000	\$75 - \$135
Editor and corporate communications	\$80,000 - \$135,000	\$55 - \$90
Learning & Development	\$110,000 - \$250,000	\$75-\$165

For the year ending June 2012, 60.8% of employees and contractors earned [full time equivalent](#) packages of between \$110,000 and \$200,000, with 5% earning over \$200,000. Lower actual earnings tend to be related to the amount of time worked with 50% of those earning less than \$81,750 reporting working part-time (35 hours or less per week) and 66.7% working for 9 or fewer months.

We asked some questions related to expectations and desired working conditions. The results show that 24% worked more hours than they ideally wanted, 14% less than they wanted and 62% were working at their desired level. This is a change since 2010 when 64% reported working more hours than they ideally wanted, 8% less than they wanted and only 21% were working at their desired level.

On the subject of rates, most employers expected to pay between \$65 and \$80 per hour for technical communication and training work. The table above shows that this is at the bottom of the range actually achieved by most contractors.

Respondents were clear about their preferences about work place conditions with 81% seeking flexible start and finish times and 82% looking for a mix of home and office as the work place. The survey of employers shows that some of these preferences are achievable with 97% indicating that flexible start and finish times were available and over 50% indicating that a mix of home and office was offered. However 18% of respondents wanted to work from home only but 62% of employers indicated this was not available at all or only on an exception basis.

Background

This report summarises the results of responses to the annual contractor surveys for the year ending 2012. The survey collects salary information from anonymous respondents as part of our candidate satisfaction survey. In this survey, respondents provided details on the typical number of hours worked each week, the number of months they worked in the year and their approximate earnings.

The participants in this survey were those who had a significant interaction with TechWriter during the year. Over 50% of the sample did not actually work through TechWriter and thus these results help provide us with a broader market view.

Comparing results with previous years

We have been conducting these surveys since 2005. To date the demographics have largely stayed the same which gives support to the perceived increases in rates. Other surveys you may like to refer to are listed on our website at <http://www.techwriter.com.au/news/salary.htm>

Salaries

In 2012 most documentation specialists are earning the equivalent of between \$110,000 and \$200,000 (see Figure 1 below).

When each attribute is viewed in isolation, there remains no clear correlation between educational background and salary, or years of experience and salary. However, there seems to be a relationship between the combination of educational background and years of experience that generally impacts rates.

The most significant change this year is the increase in the number of those earning \$135,000 - \$200,000, now at 35%. Those earning more than \$95,000 has continued to rise to 85% from 75% in 2011 and 73% in 2010.

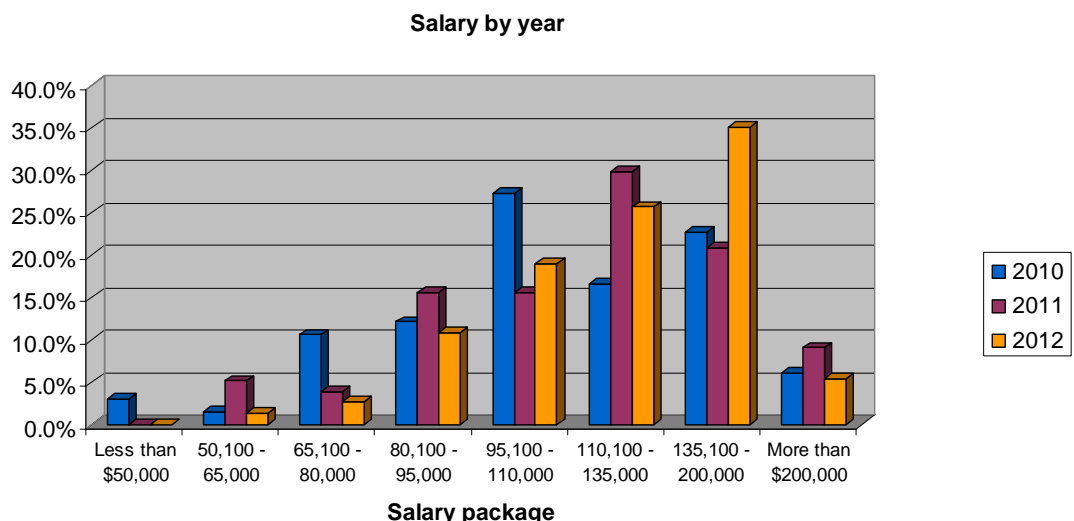


Figure 1: Annual salary ranges (inc superannuation) for documentation specialists¹

¹ See Methodology at end for explanation on how these figures were calculated

Results by job function

Overall, editors and corporate communicators generally earned less than those working as technical and business writers although the gap has closed with the majority now earning between \$95,000-\$110,000. As in previous years, trainers and instructional designers earn high rates but the work is often more intermittent. The Other category includes project and other managers resulting in higher reported rates.

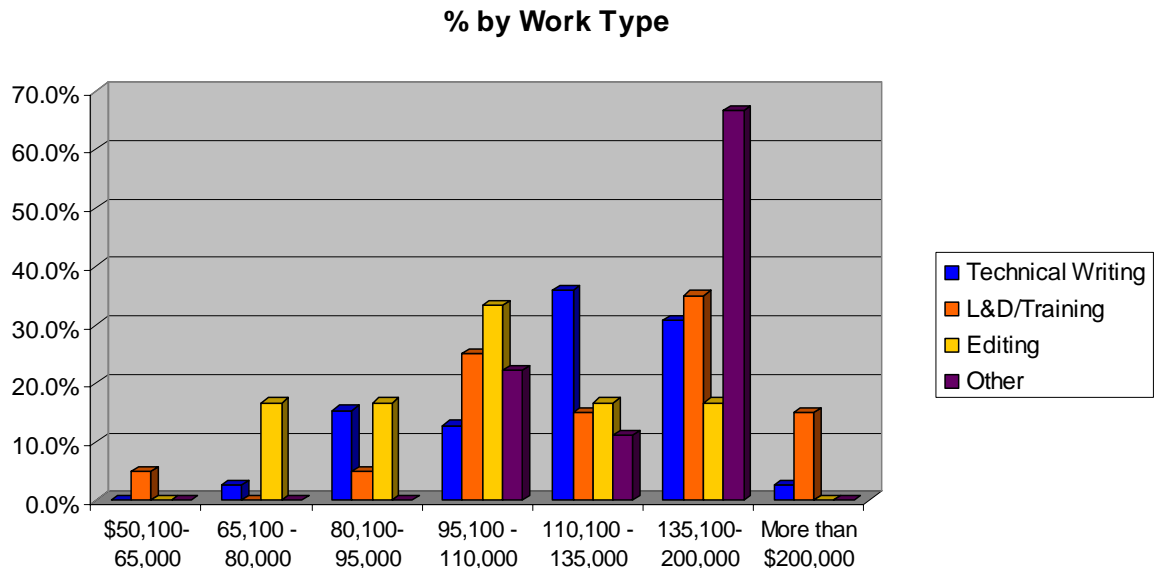


Figure 2: Annual salary ranges 2012 by main type of work

Proportion of Job Function

Participants worked in a variety of roles. Often the roles encompassed a number of skills and functions. The following chart indicates the main role:

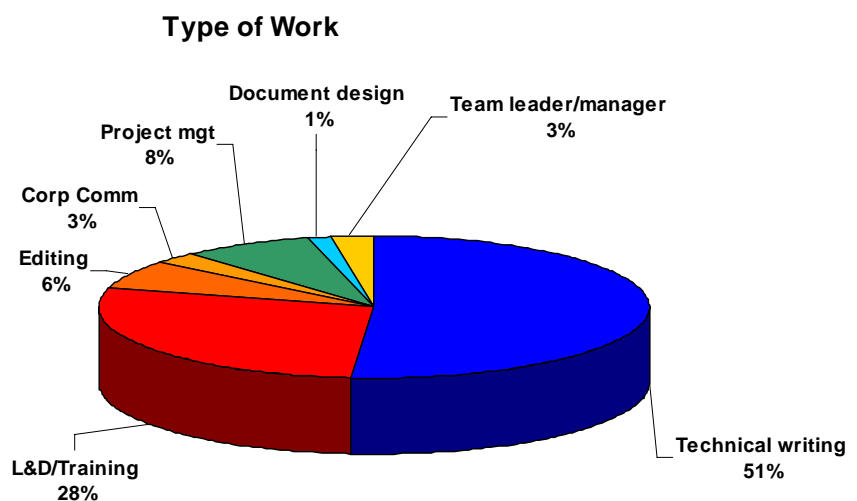


Figure 3: Proportions by type of work

Trends 2012 compared with the last 2 years

Salary packages

The figures provided earlier represent an equivalent full time salary; the picture for actual take-home packages are shown below. This shows a sharp increase in the number reporting that they earned between \$135,000 and \$200,000 range and a decline in those earning less than \$80,000.

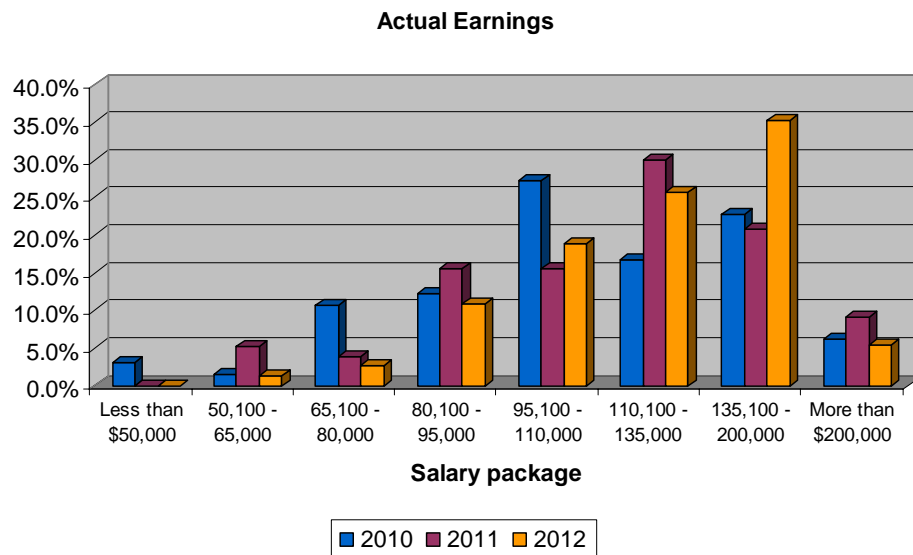


Figure 4: Annual salary packages (actual)

Months Worked

When looking at the number of months that respondents worked, it appears that 2010 was the year when most were fully employed but even this is down on 2008. During 2012 the majority have worked for more than 6 months.

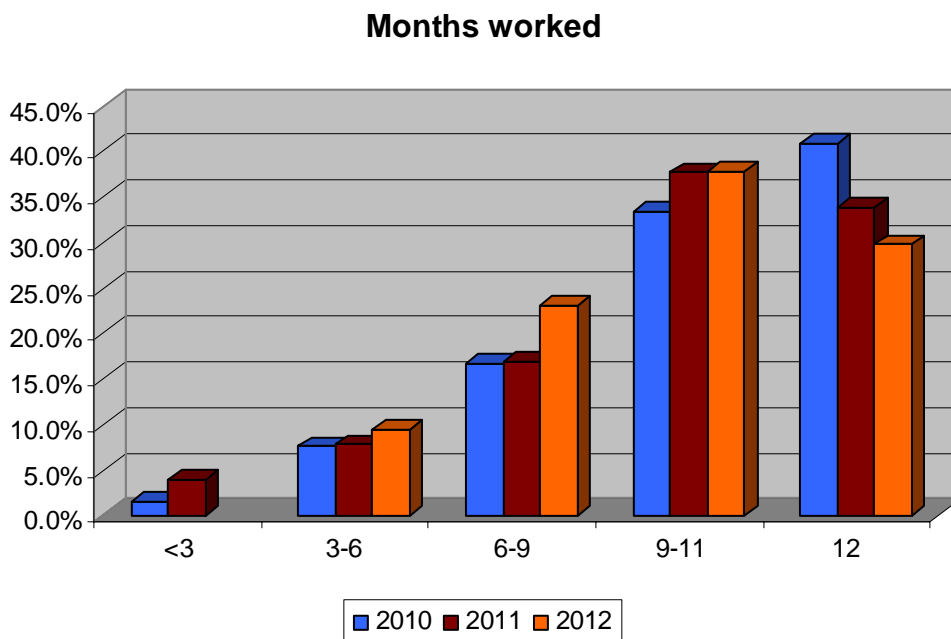


Figure 5 Months worked

Hours worked

On average 70% of respondents are working at least 36 hours per week. There seems to have been an increase in those working more than 50 hours.

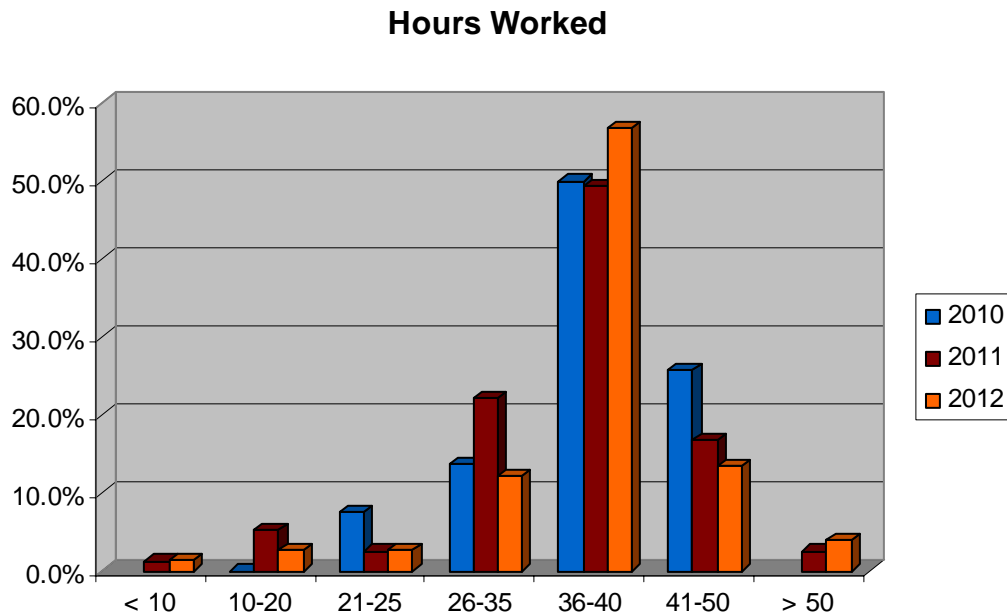


Figure 6 Hours worked

Employer Expectations

In our industry survey, we asked what employers were expecting to pay for various services provided by technical communicators. Although based on a small sample, this shows the majority expect to pay between \$65 and \$95 per hour which equates to an annual salary of between \$97,500 - \$142,500. Expectations have risen across the board since 2010 reflecting the tight market.

Hourly rate (exc GST)	Up to \$64.95	\$65-\$95	Over \$95
Updating existing documents	47%	53%	0
Related subject matter expertise	17%	67%	16
Creating New documents	28	72%	0
Training Material creation	24	65%	11.8
Technical communication consulting	17	78%	5
Specific tool skills	50	50	0

Employee Expectations

There were 2 questions asking employees about their working expectations. The first related to the number of hours being worked. Results here are quite clear

Working hours	Desired	Actual
less than 24 hours (3 days per week)	8.8%	7%
25-32 hours	16.5%	12.5%
33-40 hours	62%	61%
more than 40	12.7%	19.5%

The results show that the majority were able to work the hours that they desired. This is an improvement over 2010.

The second question related to conditions – the preferences are clear. While these are generally the same as in 2010, there has been a large increase in those seeking a mix of work from home and in office.

Option	% desiring
work from home only	18
flexible start and finish times	81
standard hours but flexibility to take time off if required	53
a mix of work from home and in office	82
ability to work extra hours	31
standard work hours in office	6

Demographics

The demographics in this report are largely unchanged from last year. They are shown in the following table:

Job functions	The top three primary job functions were: 1. Technical writing (44%) 2. Instructional design/training (24%) 3. Editing and Business writing (9%)
Education	The majority of the sample had a higher education qualification. 77% had a university education comprising 25% with a bachelor's degree and 53% with a postgraduate qualification. The percentage of those with postgraduate qualifications is consistent with previous years.
Experience	The majority (70%) had more than 10 years relevant experience;

	44% had 15 or more years of experience. This is consistent with prior years and highlights the lack of recent graduates coming into this market
Hours worked	81% reported that they normally worked more than 35 hours per week with 19.5% indicating that they normally worked more than 40 hours per week.
Months employed	30% of the sample worked for 12 months of the year and 68% worked for more than 9 months, an decrease on the 74.2% in 2010. Only 9% reported working for less than 6 months of the year. 2008 was a year of high employment with 48% working for 12 months and 76% working more than 9 months. The survey does not ask whether respondents wished to work more or fewer months than they actually did.

Methodology

A number of assumptions have been made in order to produce this report. They are:

Equivalent annual full-time salary

The equivalent annual full-time salary has been calculated using a utilisation factor that includes both the number of hours worked and the number of months. For example, someone who reported working for 38 hours a week for 12 months of the year has a utilisation of 1, while someone who worked 38 hours for 6 months has a utilisation of 0.5.

The salary figures include both base salary and 9% employer compulsory superannuation.

Other costs

The salary rates discussed do not include other costs associated with hiring a documentation specialist on a contract or permanent basis including statutory costs (eg payroll taxes, workers compensation premiums) and agency fees.

Type of work

As most contractors will be aware many contracts encompass various components and use multiple skills. For the purposes of this report, we asked respondents to identify their primary role where possible. Training includes instructional design as well as pure training activities and editing has been grouped with corporate communications