Welcome to our webinar!
This Adobe Connect session is for
What I Would Have Liked to Know When I Started Out by John Hedtke
John will begin his session in just a few minutes.

John Hedtke has been working in high tech for over 30 years and writes documentation and books for many leading software products. John owns and operates Double Tall Consulting, a company providing writing, consulting, and training services to private and government clients in all fields. He also runs http://tradebookauthor.com, a blog for people who want to become authors. John lives near Tacoma, WA. When not otherwise occupied, he plays the banjo, writes magazine articles, and writes slogans for a button company. John is a Fellow of the STC.

What I Would Have Liked to Know When I Started Out
A presentation by John Hedtke
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What this presentation covers
- I had no training as a technical communicator.
- I was smart and learned some things fast…
- …but there was a lot I didn’t know.
- I’m going to give you a summary of the things I’ve learned.

Who Are You?

1. Figure out what you want.
- Talk to a life coach, mentor, or therapist.
- Figure out what matters to you in a job.
- Do you prefer captive or freelance?
2. If you like something, do it.

- "Do what you love and the money will follow."
- Take some risks.
- Don’t be afraid to fail.

3. Network!

- Be active in the STC at all levels.
- Join at least one other professional organization.


- You work because you’re getting paid.
- If the pay is low, consider the intangibles.
- Watch out if someone justifies being cheap by saying “It’ll be good exposure for you.”

5. Sometimes you just have to do what’s available.

- Some jobs suck.
- Be professional, but keep looking.
- Grit your teeth and keep your perspective.

6. Always be looking for your next job.

- Start looking for your next job the day you start your current job.
- Think about what you’d like to do next.
- Cultivate agencies and recruiters.
7. Keep a day log.
   - Keep a day log.
   - Build a vocabulary of emotional concepts.
   - Record everything you do.

8. Save copies of everything.
   - Keep copies of everything.
   - Keep copies of everything digital, too.
   - When I say “copies,” I really mean more than one copy of each thing.
   - Keep a list of your accomplishments.

9. Read!
   - Read books and magazines in your field.
   - Read things completely outside your skill set and career focus.

People Skills

    - Dress for success.
    - It’s a game of symbols.

11. Learn to be an extrovert.
    - Lots of technical communicators are introverts.
    - Develop the ability to act like an extrovert.
    - Learn your communication style.
12. You really are going to have to bribe people for info.

- Yes, you sometimes have to bring in chocolate chip cookies.
- Just deal with it.

13. Some people cheat.

- Some people cheat. They're the bad ones.
- Trust your tummy.
- Use your day log.

The Really Important Stuff

14. Protect your hearing.

- We work in surprisingly noisy environments.
- Turn off all the gear in your office sometime.

15. Don’t overwork.

- You're only granted a finite amount of immortality.
- Get enough sleep, exercise, and don’t smoke. I am not kidding.

16. Keep in touch with everyone you’ve liked.

- Life is best when you have lots of old friends.
- Be prepared to lose some people along the way.
- Never dump someone because they’re “kind of inconvenient” at that moment.
17. Be optimistic.
- Ask the right question.
- Don’t be right; be happy.

To summarize….

18. It’s always about fun and bucks.
- Everything in life is always some combination of fun and bucks.
- It’s never too late to start saving for retirement.
- Buy a long-term disability policy.
- Buy life insurance, too.

Thank you!
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