The first edition of this book was published in 2000 as *The Essence of Technical Communication for Engineers*. The idea behind it was to provide effective communication strategies for technical people such as engineers to employ in the course of their careers. It included proven and reliable tricks and techniques for writing, presenting ideas, and participating in meetings; basically covering all kinds of communication situations a technologist was likely to encounter.

After the original edition appeared, it became apparent that its contents were applicable to a much broader scope of professionals than the title implied. The tricks and techniques work just as well for scientists, architects, researchers, doctors, and others as they do for engineers. So the title of the first edition, "The Essence of Technical Communication for Engineers," was really too constrained and did not represent the book's true value across the breadth and depth of technologists.

For the second edition, we have done a lot more than simply change the title. The first three parts, which mirror the original edition in title and contents, have been modified to be more general, setting out the tricks and techniques in a context that all technical professionals, regardless of experience, discipline, or specialty, will relate to.
Here, for example, a medical researcher, mechanical designer, or computer scientist will find the information just as useful as an electrical engineer would. Also, a fourth major part with four additional chapters has been added to address what we call cross-culture communication. This part shows how we can apply the tricks and techniques to reach unfamiliar audiences or readers, as would a scientist addressing a group of investors or an architect writing for corporate executives. Technology is pervasive in our culture today, and every technologist needs to be able to both recognize and overcome communication culture gaps to effectively communicate with nontechnical audiences or readers. The fourth part of this edition explains exactly how to achieve this kind of communication.

I believe this second edition will serve the communication needs of many technologists, across myriad disciplines and specialty areas. Readers of the first edition will find useful new material in Part IV, and new readers will find the entire book a handy guide for effective communication in any circumstance. As in the first edition, I have kept the entire book succinct and easy to read, and have included many real-world examples. I hope you enjoy it.

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“Us engineers don’t need no English” was a common saying around undergraduate engineering circles in my bachelor’s program days. It seemed to be true. After all, in our entire engineering program, we were only required to take a token composition course in our freshman year. We were learning so many more interesting, technical ways to express ourselves. Surely, if we required better training in communication, the university would have provided a more comprehensive treatment. So who needs it, anyway?

As it turned out we did! We engineers did need some English, and we weren’t getting it. This was the late 1960s, and we were caught up in the wonders of marvelous technological changes. Semiconductors and integrated circuits were thrusting the old vacuum-tube technology aside. The notion of software technology and its associated disciplines were in their infancy. It was a truly exciting time to be a young, aspiring engineer, and the idea of setting some of the technology aside to gain communication skills seemed a radical departure from “the important stuff” to students and faculty alike.

Now, many years later, it is still a truly exciting time for a young engineer (and even for a few old ones). How-
ever, although engineering schools are now offering technical writing and communication courses, it appears that the prevailing attitude is still that technologists do not need to hone their communication skills.

Unfortunately, that attitude is a dead-end trap. Technology will always be on the move, and its current state will always be exciting to emerging engineers. If it were boring, it surely wouldn't be worth all the effort of an engineering education, right? But what about the future? A few (very few) technologists will be so brilliant that their employers will be happy to surround them with a covey of technical writers. The vast majority will spend their entire careers promoting themselves and their ideas to gain acceptance, better pay, career advancement, or even career changes toward management or technical marketing, for example. For that majority, communication skills may very well mean the difference between having a rewarding and well-compensated senior position and one slinging fast food down at the local burger joint.

This little book is designed to guide technologists in their quest for these communication skills. Purely and simply, it is about writing, presenting ideas, and interacting effectively in a technical environment. Its purpose is to provide simple, useful, and effective communication tools to make communication both pleasant and easy for the practicing technologist. I hope you enjoy it.

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