



## **Advancing Yourself: Higher Pay and an Expanded Skill Set**

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*by Gloria Reisman*

The question I am most often asked by consultants and permanent job seekers is: “How can I get more money and more challenging projects?”

Take a look at a route that I recently mapped out for a senior consultant. Maybe you can use some of these ideas to create a roadmap of your own.

### **Consultant Profile**

A senior training developer, instructional designer and technical writer with over 20 years in the financial services industry, this consultant has managed projects and people in both permanent and consulting positions.

### **Step 1. Analyze resume & portfolio**

#### *Reisman's analysis:*

This consultant has a strong background in the development and delivery of soft skills training and end user training for proprietary software; good project management skills excellent people skills; less technical in document publishing, Web development, and online training development.

#### *Reisman's Recommendations:*

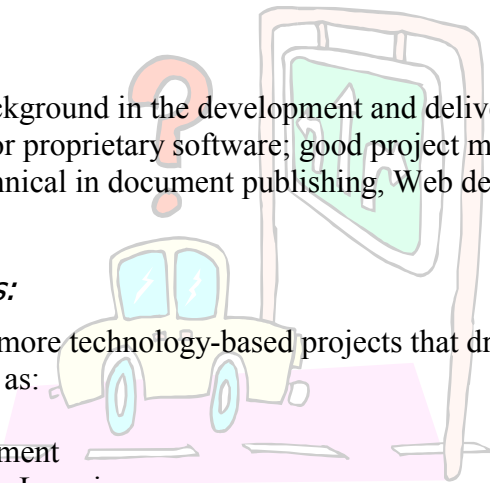
This consultant should explore more technology-based projects that draw on her background and strengths, such as:

- ◆ Knowledge Management
- ◆ Online training and e-Learning
- ◆ Multimedia development

#### *Reisman's Roadmap:*

Review projects and experience in your portfolio to identify your major strengths. This reveals the types of project you will find challenging and enjoyable.

What jumps out at people from your current resume? Is this accurate? Does it convey what you consider to be your true strengths?



## **Step 2. Show resumes to trusted clients and colleagues, write a strong resume summary**

### *Reisman's analysis:*

Obtaining feedback on resumes ensures that the document highlights the consultant's added value and expertise. A resume should capture the consultant's uniqueness, and "position" him or her using a resume profile or summary.

### *Reisman's Recommendations:*

Here are some examples of resume summaries:

#### **INFORMATION DESIGNER**

Top-notch technical expert with extensive experience in information development and delivery, with a knack for organizing and simplifying complex technical information. Specialist in designing solutions for tough documentation problems using a wide variety of existing and emerging documentation technologies. Flexible resource that can do interface design one day, help coding the next, and then jump to website development without missing a beat. Trainer with formal classroom instruction experience as well as custom one-on-one mentoring in FrameMaker, RoboHelp, Doc-to-Help, and Windows help.

#### **LEADER IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Innovative, pragmatic, successful manager with a twenty year progressive career path in manufacturing and service organizations. Unique combination of financial acumen, and operational perspective. Extensive system proficiency, expertise in providing cost effective, and operationally efficient solutions. Self-starter, motivated by continual challenge, able to inspire, influence and communicate effectively.

### *Reisman's Roadmap:*

Include a summary in your resume that communicates the special skills, knowledge and experience you bring to an organization.

## **Step 3. Identify your goals**

### *Reisman's analysis:*

To get what you want out of your next project, and position yourself for future projects, you have to know where you want to go.

### *Reisman's Recommendations:*

Goals for this consultant:

- ◆ Increase hourly billing rate by 20 %
- ◆ Qualify for more technology-based consulting projects.

*Reisman's Roadmap:*

Determine which goals you want to pursue based on your priorities and your interests.

**Step 4. For each goal, plan a strategy and take action:**

*Reisman's Analysis*

Do a “gap analysis” of the consultant's resume. In other words, which skills are required for each target position, which skills does she already have, and which additional skills must she gain?

*Reisman's Recommendations:*

Leverage past work to gain ground in the field of Knowledge Management. With more and more companies trying to capture their organizational intelligence, this consultant can use her experience as a technical writer to assist clients in this process.

*Example:* One of her projects is working as a project manager for a national mortgage lending organization on a project to collect, organize, and standardize their policies and procedures. This project dovetails nicely with the broader field of knowledge management and could be readily recast into the “language” of Knowledge Management.

- ◆ Update her current resume and highlight skills she already has for any of these new areas. Use detailed examples and "buzz" words, such as information design, content management, knowledge management, etc.

*Example:* Here are some "buzz" words from one of our Knowledge Management contract jobs:

|   |
|---|
| <p>Title:            Knowledge Management Project Manager --<br/>                          Content standards &amp; Quality Assurance</p>  |
| <p>Company:    High tech direct B-B sales organization</p>  |
| <p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create templates to be used by internal Marketing communications professionals to create sales support documents and customer collateral (examples: product descriptions, proposals, presentations)</li> <li>- Coach &amp; train authors in creating templates</li> <li>- Monitor documents to ensure compliance with templates</li> <li>- Monitor document categorizations to ensure compliance with overall information architecture</li> </ul> <p>Skills and experience required:</p> <p>Excellent writing skills, project management, and facilitation skills; detail oriented; Conceptual thinker, information architect--able to understand the big picture of information management;<br/>Strong sense of web design and information delivery via the web; Experience with the sales culture (understanding how sales people think and what they need to be successful); Understanding of XML, information architecture, content</p> |

management. Training development and online documentation experience a plus.  
Tools: HTML, MS Word, PowerPoint

- ◆ Research pay ranges for specific consulting titles by investigating agencies, job boards, professional organizations, and networking contacts.

### *Reisman's Roadmap:*

Review your resume frequently to highlight new skills and add "buzz" words for your field. Keep up to date with pay ranges for different types of projects in your field.

## **Step 5. Research resources to learn or keep abreast of a new field**

### *Reisman's Analysis:*

This consultant is less technical in document publishing, Web development, and online training development.

### *Reisman's Recommendations:*

e-Learning is a HOT topic! If the consultant gains experience in this area, prospects for future projects in this genre increase. The consultant needs to:

- ◆ Develop a critical eye and gain experience in analyzing the elements of an effective online course, rather than courses that are just online "page turners."
- ◆ Do a storyboard showing how she would move one of her classroom training sessions online.
- ◆ Explore some of the programs are offered by e-Learning companies and local professional training organizations.

*Example:* Our local TEMPO group, [www.tempo-train.org](http://www.tempo-train.org) presented 2 recent topics on e-Learning, "*The Learning Organization: Has its time REALLY come?*" presented by Element K; and "*Effective Web-Based Distance Learning: Oxymoron or Reality*", a case study presented by Insync Training.

A NYC vendor company recently presented a free e-Learning introductory program as a marketing technique with topics on:

- ◆ E-learning: Build it or Buy it
- ◆ Cost Savings: Fact or Fiction
- ◆ Calculating ROI
- ◆ How to Build the Business Case
- ◆ Benchmark Study: Trends in the Marketplace

Some good resources are trade magazines, conferences, vendor websites, and financial industry analysts:

- ◆ Knowledge Management magazine [www.kmmag.com](http://www.kmmag.com) (keyword "e-learning" to search for articles)
- ◆ Technical Conferences <http://www.techexpo.com/>
- ◆ Online Learning magazine [www.onlinelearningmag.com](http://www.onlinelearningmag.com)
- ◆ Online Learning basics  
<http://illinois.online.uillinois.edu/IONresources/index.html>
- ◆ Distance education articles & studies  
<http://www.cisnet.com/~cattales/Deducation.html>
- ◆ Distance education certificate programs  
<http://www.uwex.edu/disted/certificates.html>
- ◆ Vendors [www.elementk.com](http://www.elementk.com), [www.digitalthink.com](http://www.digitalthink.com), [www.smartplanet.com](http://www.smartplanet.com)
- ◆ **Corporate e-Learning: Exploring a New Frontier**  
Download Report from WR Hambrecht  
<http://www.wrhambrecht.com/research/coverage/elearning/>
- ◆ **Riding the Big Waves: A White Paper on the B2B e\*Learning Industry**  
Download Report from Thomas Weisel Partners  
<http://www.tweisel.com/client/index.html>

*Reisman's Roadmap:*

- ◆ Look for local technical conferences and programs offered by professional organizations.
- ◆ Join listservs and subscribe to email newsletters that relate to leading edge training topics.
- ◆ Look for Press Releases and white papers on company websites, and reports from industry analysts to see where the fields of Knowledge Management and e-Learning are headed.

**Step 6. Learn new tools and techniques**

*Reisman's Analysis:*

Multimedia development is a new technique this consultant could readily add to her skill set. She is well-versed in the instructional design process and wants to build a knowledge base and credibility in this area.

*Reisman's Recommendation:*

I recommend that she look at Allen Communication's website. They have a demo for their product, Designer's Edge, which is a tool for automating the multimedia development process. She should compare their multimedia development process with her instructional design process. This can be found at [www.allencomm.com](http://www.allencomm.com)

### *Reisman's Roadmap:*

Many vendors offer product demos or online tutorials. Get familiar with the latest tools to develop a working vocabulary. Professional organizations, such as ASTD [www.astd.org](http://www.astd.org) and STC [www.stc-va.org](http://www.stc-va.org) sponsor workshops on specific topics that could be of interest.

Go investigate! If you don't find what you want, organize it yourself - you may be able to get a discount for everyone.

## **Step 7. Circulate and Network**

### *Reisman's Analysis:*

This consultant, like many, has been somewhat isolated in her position. Professional organizations offer many opportunities for learning new skills, staying up to date in the field, and

### *Reisman's Recommendation:*

To meet other trainers and technical writers this consultant should research and get involved in one or more professional organizations of her choice, such as:

- ♦ The American Society for Training and Development -ASTD ([www.astd.org](http://www.astd.org)),
- ♦ The Society for Technical Communication STC ([www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)), or
- ♦ the Network for Women in Computing Technology ([www.NWCT-phil.org](http://www.NWCT-phil.org)).

### *Reisman's Roadmap:*

Maybe you have also felt somewhat isolated in your position as a consultant.

- ♦ Conduct informational interviews to learn how someone else developed the skills you want to gain.
- ♦ Find a mentor or coach in your professional organization. This person can be your sounding board and help you develop your personal "roadmap."

## **Summary**

Since each person begins with their own unique set of skills, experiences, interests, and goals, the roadmap that each person creates for themselves will also be unique.

Good luck creating your roadmap to your destination!

### **About the author**

Gloria Reisman is principal and marketing director of Reisman Consulting Group, Inc., a consulting services and placement company based in Philadelphia, PA. Reisman provides experts to Fortune 1000 companies in the areas of technical writing and documentation, online help, marketing communications, interface design, web usability, training development and instructional design.

Reisman lectures and coaches independent consultants on marketing techniques to reach more clients, how to maximize their time, and ways to achieve their business goals.

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