

**Transforming Your Career...**

**...With the Economy and the Industry:  
Moving from Commodity to  
Strategic Contributor**

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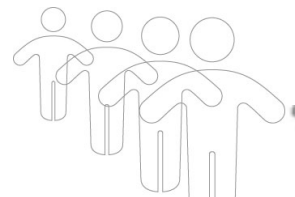
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**About Andrea**

- Technical communicator since 1983
- Areas of expertise
  - Information architecture and design and interaction design for products and interactive information
  - Information and product usability—from analysis through validation
  - User-centered design and development process
- Certificate coordinator for two UC Santa Cruz Extension programs
- STC Board of Directors

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## Discussion Topics

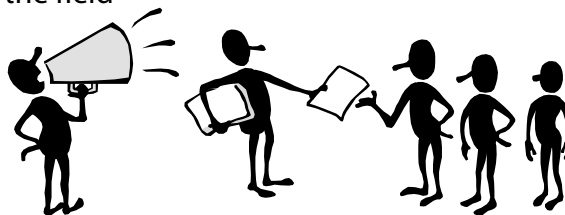
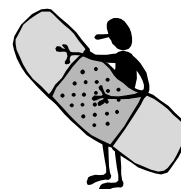
- Current profile of our industry
- Our industry is changing—don't get left behind
- Moving in the direction of change—staying ahead of the curve
- Demonstrating our value
- Discussion

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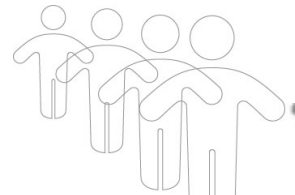
## Current profile of our industry

- Reactive and passive
- Take direction—assignments handed out
- Patch and put “bandaids” on bad products
- Becoming a commodity—technical communicators in some areas are paid as low as \$5/hr
- Experienced communicators moving away from STC and the field



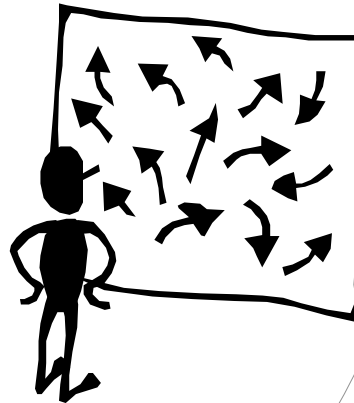
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## Our industry is changing

- Can you anticipate those changes?
- Are you keeping up?
- Rather than reacting, shouldn't you be *leading* that change?

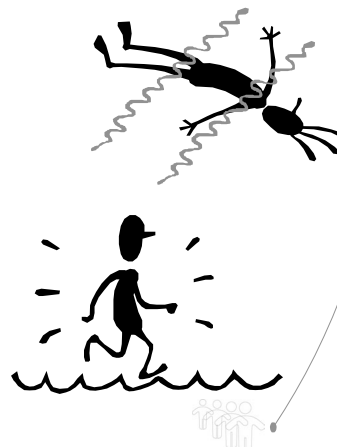


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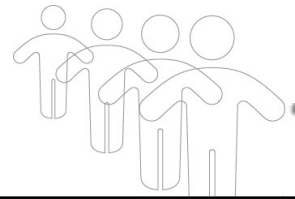
## Don't get run over...or just tread water

- The economy is killing us
- Just "getting better" isn't good enough
- We need to lead the industry and drive the changes

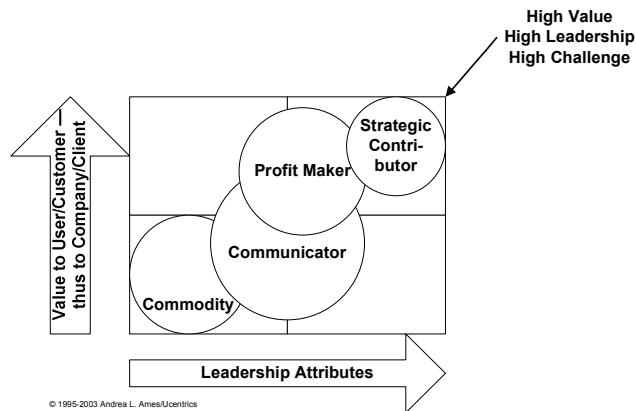


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## Moving in the direction of change— staying ahead of the curve



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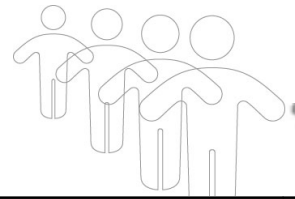
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## Commoditization (Geoffrey Moore, Inside the Tornado)

- A fundamental force in mass-market economies, such as ours
- Market's goal: To serve the broadest number of customers possible by reducing cost and eliminating distribution friction; enable new market price points
- Fewer component parts = Fewer suppliers who need to get margins = Lower prices = Product can be more reliably distributed and more easily serviced
- Design out the need for expertise
- Mass production

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## Commodity

High Value  
High Leadership  
High Challenge

- Cheap
- Writers in low-cost-of-living areas are even cheaper
- Deliverables are formulaic "documentation"
- Nearly clerical
- Oh, and... "anyone can write"

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## Communicator

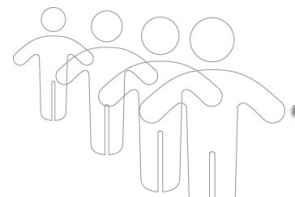
High Value  
High Leadership  
High Challenge

- Understands
  - Humans, in general
  - Audience for product
- Designs solutions to communication problems, not standard deliverables
- Develops user assistance, not documentation

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## Profit maker

Value to User/Customer - thus to Company/Client

Leadership Attributes

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High Value  
High Leadership  
High Challenge

- Communicator, who also understands
  - Product development process in depth
  - Tools used to develop product in depth
  - Technologies associated with product, in depth
- Designs product solutions, not just communication solutions
- Contributes to product usability

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## Strategic Contributor

Value to User/Customer - thus to Company/Client

Leadership Attributes

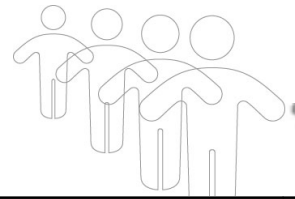
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High Value  
High Leadership  
High Challenge

- Communicator and profit maker
- Understands business, customers, and competition
- Contributes to strategy and business process improvement
- Ensures customers/users are successful
- Can demonstrate financial impact of information and usability on bottom line
- Can make business case for new initiatives
- Visionary; leads multidisciplinary teams to improve customer/user experience

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## The bottom line...

- The formulaic assembly of standard documentation deliverables is *not* where our value lies
- We are communication *problem solvers, process improvers, and contributors* to business strategy and the bottom line



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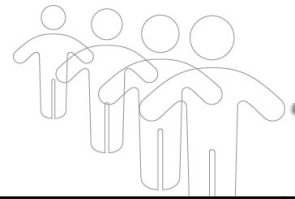
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## A Few Ideas for Demonstrating Our Value to Employers and Clients

- Be a consultant! And be proactive!
- Be an expert
  - Technical communication expert
  - Technical expert
  - Business expert
- Ask questions—diplomatically
- Offer your opinions—diplomatically
- Learn to influence
- Take on responsibilities outside the typical technical communication realm
- Learn to build business cases for the things you know are right (usability, etc.)

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## **Discussion**

- What changes are you seeing—evolution/trends?
- How are you responding?
- Why not take the lead and drive that change?
- How do *you* demonstrate your value to your employer or clients?



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## **Contacting Andrea**

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