

# Glass Business & Technical Writing

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By Garrett Glass

## Exploratory Proposal Summary

I am conducting this feasibility report so that I can analyze potential of opening a technical writing business in the city of Denton. I would call my business Glass Business & Technical Writing. I would want to start this business with at least 2-5 years of in-field experience before I consider designing this business. I aim to design this business with low overhead costs by working from home. This would mean that a lot of my expenses would come from initial start-up equipment, such as a new, powerful computer and the latest software of Microsoft and Adobe software in order to keep up with my competitors. Another proponent of my costs would include marketing.

I initially intend my small business to serve as supplemental income while I survey the technical communication field. I will provide services initially beginning in

- Brochures
- Flyers
- Grants
- Procedurals and Manuals
- Websites
- Content Management/Social Media

I also plan on targeting a specific demographic: the Healthcare sector. With the rising demand in the healthcare sector, and the aging of the Baby Boomers, I think the industry could potentially prove ripe for a technical communicator.

### Is it Feasible?

To determine whether or not my plan is feasible, I will determine whether or not I will be able to cover my starting costs. My current starting costs are approximately \$1,500. This is an advantage for me, as the starting costs are low. However, I have two things that are going against me: my current experience level, and the lack of a solid clientele.

### Qualifications

Since I am still an undergraduate at the University of North Texas, I realize that my biggest weakness is my lack of in-field experience. That said, I also have the advantage of networking in two areas:

- With my peers among the technical communication majors
- With the groups that I am currently involved in

I acknowledge that the initial set up will involve me throwing my name out there in hopes that I can find clients and eventually retain them. Since I have one remaining semester in my college career, I will rectify this problem by volunteering for college groups to create and edit their commercial documents; this way, I can not only contribute to my portfolio but also build my future clientele. I have already started working with a gung fu group outside of class on a technical manual that will eventually be published on the website (Wu Gung Gung Fu). Since I have a final semester, I can work with my current groups in creating brochures, fliers, and other technical documents for free. By doing so, I hope to spread the word around campus so that I can have some initial buzz before I leave campus. By networking on campus, I could potentially secure some future clientele.

While at UNT, I have completed coursework which has coincided with both the medical and healthcare industry. As of the fall semester of 2012, I am working with a group to complete an e-learning program which is designed to teach employers with health insurance and the unemployed about the Affordable Care Act (the class is for a Manuals and Procedures class). While this is not in conjunction with an in-class externship, I am increasing my knowledge of the healthcare industry in the process. I have also designed (in a technical editing class) PowerPoint presentations and brochures for a clinical trial company called med fusion. Through my coursework, I have learned the increasing need for writers to translate medical jargon into something readable, especially since the baby boomers are aging. And while I may not have a background in a scientific study, such as Biology, I do have the practice of simplifying medical jargon.

## Market Analysis

Technical Communication on a national level is a growing field. The BLS lists Texas as one of the top states that employs technical writers. The city with the most Technical Writers is Dallas, Texas. Dallas pays its technical writers an average salary of \$65,000, and the average hourly rate is \$30.21/hour. When looking up technical writing businesses on White Pages, I discovered many technical writing firms strewn across the DFW area. Some of my competitors include Snee Technical Writing services (Plano, TX), Moreau Services (Carrollton, TX), Author's Beat (Carrollton, TX) and many others. The large list of competition scares me away from the broad DFW area; instead, I used Manta to check out the local competition in Denton. The majority of the writers listed in Denton tend to be involved in advertising. Even still, some of these agencies specialize in brochure/flyer creation and social media content management.

The healthcare industry is also experiencing a growth. My research subsists mostly from Hoover.com. The healthcare industry covers a variety of focuses such as dentistry, nursing homes, hospitals, physicians, and others. Between 2012 and 2016, the industry is expected to grow by 5%. Some of the industry challenges include the Affordable Care Act and *medical errors*. I am fortunate enough to have experience writing an e-learning program on the Affordable Care Act, as well as for writing presentations and brochures for Med Fusion. This is one of my advantages of showing healthcare businesses that I can translate their jargon into something their customers will be able to understand. Employment has increased by 30 percent over a ten-year period, and employment is expected to increase by 22 percent between now and 2018. Hoover also states that many companies are taking to outsourcing work, which would fit into my technical writing business.

## Marketing Plan

This section will detail how I plan to market myself. I plan on using both social media (social media websites and my own website) and word-of-mouth/networking.

### Social Media

I've decided I will continue using Weebly as my primary website. I have been building upon my website since my first class in 2010, and have already created extensive collections of samples for my portfolio. The author also suggested creating blog for your website. With this blog, I can cover topics in technical communication, and I can use social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter to post links to my blogs, which could drive traffic to my portfolio section. The problem I expect to

face is the actual url to the website; I would much rather my potential clients to visit my website without having to remember to include “.weebly.com.” The good news is that I could choose the option of registering a domain name (garrettmcfaddenglass.com) for 10 years at a cost of \$24.99 per month. By registering for 1 year I would have to pay \$39.95. Both options are significantly cheaper than the ones posted on GoDaddy.com, and would allow me to blog and expand my portfolio.

## Facebook Marketing

Some claim that Facebook advertising is the way to the future, but others remain skeptical. I may use Facebook as an experimental marketing tool for my business. I’m considering this because of Facebook’s algorithms which would allow me to select specific demographics. Even though it would cost me money per clicks, I could limit myself to \$25—not a huge dent in the budget—before the ad circulation halts. I would implement this in my first year of operation; depending on how useful the data tells me it is, I’ll either adjust the price and demographics accordingly. No matter what, I would create a free fan page, where individuals can like my page if they wish. From there I can post status updates offering

- Promotions
- Advertisements
- Discounts
- Blog links

Whether or not Facebook will play a major role in my company’s success is not a guarantee; however, it could be worth the experiment with a least a free fan page. I would suspect this would come more into play as I accumulate clients, and which of those clients decide to like my page.

## Other Marketing Plans

Despite my focus on Social Media, I will not abandon the idea of meeting clients in person. For this reason, I will need to print out business cards so that when I meet clients they can view my contact information (website, phone number, email, etc.) I’ll have to initially rely on cold-calling. From there, I can schedule meetings and explain to clients why my technical communication skills can benefit their industry.

## Operations

This section will cover my plan. This will include freelance work, pricing strategies, and financial start-up costs. My idea is to work the first year part-time while I work a stable job in my field-of-study. This way I can still produce a stable income while building my business.

## Freelance

I want Glass Business & Technical Writing to begin, at first, as supplementary income. One article I read suggested to play the field and take whatever you can get. That said, I think it would be wise to limit my focus to the healthcare industry.

As a one-man operation, I would contract most of my work via freelance. I found a resource for freelancers called guru.com. Guru.com allows me to create a profile, much like a social media site like Facebook. As such, I would be able to write about my business, post links to my website, show

my minimum rates and budgets, and show potential clients my experience and my work terms , such as whether or not I'd be willing to work onsite (Note: I would work on-site just so I can meet my clients in person and build trust). Guru.com also can serve as a tool for me to check out my competition. Guru allows me to limit my scope to the DFW area and allow me to view other tech writers' profiles so I can figure out how to adjust my pricing accordingly. Guru.com is not the only freelance agency I could use. Another popular resource would be elance.com.

## Pricing

I've decided to charge hourly for my technical writing services. The WAI provides a basic freelance rate chart on their website for all career writers (including technical writing). A technical writer can charge anywhere between \$47-\$65 dollars, depending on the document he or she chooses to create. The problem with the chart is that it details experience for those with 5+ years of in-field experience. Also, with no outside experience beyond my externships at UNT, I would have to consider setting lower rates. Some of the DFW area freelance writers from Guru have posted significantly lower rates from WAI's listing prices (the lowest I saw was \$10/hour). Another source suggested starting freelancers should set their prices to \$15-20 per hour, and increase as experience and speed accumulates.

I don't want to set my prices too low, but I want to be able to appeal to clients as a cheaper alternative. I'll set my base pricing at \$25-\$35 per hour. Clients are free to negotiate with me on further price options. If I were to work a typical work year (excluding the hours that would focus on marketing my business, which wouldn't earn me an hourly rate), I could make at projects averaging \$30 per hour approximately \$57,600. As I accumulate experience, speed, and efficiency, I can choose to up my costs that the WAI suggests which could possibly net me (calculating from \$47 per hour) \$90,240.

## Financials

Should I pursue this venture, I would need to invest in both computer equipment and marketing materials in order for me to thrive. I want to work my business from my home, so for now I'm going to exclude costs such as utilities and rent as I may move sometime soon. While I'm still in college, I can take advantage of the student discounts when searching for software.

Materials	Costs
Facebook Marketing (Initial Year)	\$25.00
Website (10 year investment through Weebly)	\$249.90
Microsoft Office 2010	\$99.00
Adobe Creative Suite: Masters Edition	\$798.00
Business Cards (Vista Print) per 250	\$10.00
Desktop	\$449.99
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$1,631.89</b>

Facebook marketing could potentially become an ongoing cost, depending on my results with the advertising. Also, with 250 business cards, I expect that that will last me approximately a year. All software (Microsoft Office & Adobe Creative Suite: Masters Edition) is priced according to my student discount.

## Covering Costs

Without a strong clientele pool, it is difficult to say whether or not I will be able to accurately portray my expected first year of profit. I've already decided that I intend to charge by the hour and as supplemental income. Optimistically, if I was to be able to work a typical full-time work year (approximately 1,920 hours at \$30 per hour), I could potentially make \$57,600—well above initial starting costs. Since my actual goal is to work part-time, I've also calculated based on a 20 hour part-time work year, since I'll mostly likely work at first in conjunction with my actual job. According to my calculations of charging the same rate but at a 20 hour work-week, I could make supplemental income of \$28,800.

However, both of these are simply best case scenario. In truth, there is not accurate means of guessing how much I could earn during my first year operating Glass Business & Technical Writing. This is because of my stance as a student and lack of actual free-lance experience. I may aim to do only 20-hour-a-week supplement income; however, businesses such as Ruth Nikolich's business have initially put in 80 hour weeks. Most of this is due to marketing reasons and lack of staff. Luckily, my initial costs are low; however, I cannot guarantee to cover these costs without solid clientele.

## My Recommendations

I would not recommend starting this business immediately after I graduate from college; however, I would recommend starting the business so long as I've accumulated at least 5+ years of in-field experience and networking. The problem is I already have a lot of competition strewn all across the DFW area. My competition already has experience, and business can comfortably pay their rates. The other reason I would wait is because I still need time to network and build clientele. While I am fortunate enough to have a low start-up cost, I still lack the clientele to guarantee that I may cover the costs. Even if I were to work part time with intent on supplementary income, I would probably have to put in more work (hours) just to market my business. Finally, with 5 years of experience, I can charge the rates of the WAI chart and make more money. All is not lost, however. As long as I gain the in-field experience and continue to network, I think that I could eventually

## Sources

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