

About Underwhelmed

History

Underwhelmed was founded in the San Francisco Bay Area in the late 1980s by Steven Schwab. At that time, Steven realized that documentation was a growing field in the high-tech computer industry and he created Underwhelmed to meet the increasing demand. With a hand-picked team of seasoned writers, he produced top-quality documentation in a variety of media using the latest development tools. This approach has allowed Underwhelmed's growth and development to parallel that of the high-tech industry.

Before the introduction of Windows[®], when MS-DOS[®] was the main computing environment, we produced MS-DOS-based help systems and print manuals documenting software for end users. We soon expanded into programmer/developer guides, network-administration manuals, technical specifications, policies and procedures, and hardware documentation, as well as documentation for software running under the UNIX and Macintosh operating systems. After the release of Windows 3.0, Underwhelmed moved forward into Windows Help authoring long before any WinHelp-authoring tools were available. We continued to stay apprised of current technical-publishing technology as Microsoft[®] released Windows 3.1 and Windows NT 3.51, and we beta tested RoboHELP[®], Doc-To-Help[®] and other help-authoring tools. As Windows continued to mature into Windows 95, Windows 98, Windows NT 4.0, and Windows NT 5.0, we expanded into 32-bit WinHelp development, HTML-based help (such as HTML Help[™] and NetHelp[™]), interactive multimedia, and Web development and maintenance.

The rapid evolution of the electronic-publishing industry has created an exciting challenge—not just staying ahead, but in fact leading. Our innovative and efficient methods increase quality and decrease project length. We stay informed of publishing-technology developments and employ new and existing tools efficiently. Our leading-edge orientation is essential to meeting the high demand for top-quality documentation.

Underwhelmed Technical Communications, Inc. is fully incorporated, and covers its employees and subcontractors with errors and omissions, general liability, and workers' compensation insurance as you would expect. We pay our employees and some subcontractors on a W-2 basis, and others on a 1099 basis, depending upon your requirements and theirs.

Mission and goals

As a company, Underwhelmed's first priority is to deliver quality technical-communications services tailored to your needs. We make the most of leading-edge electronic-publishing technology, and we know how to recommend the right media and process-management choices for your project. This is how we provide you with the best value in a quality-driven environment.

Resources

At Underwhelmed, our on-demand, fully trained technical publications team is prepared for your projects of any size, on any schedule. Underwhelmed project managers remain up-to-date on the latest software, hardware, and expertise related to the craft of technical writing. Most importantly, our project leaders carry out the company approach and goals in their work of creating quality documentation for your product.

You can rely on Underwhelmed; our core team has over 85 years of combined hands-on experience in technical writing, technical editing, documentation management, hypertext authoring (such as WinHelp and HTML-based help), Web publishing, multimedia development, graphic design, training, and related skills. This makes us unique in our field. Our team is seasoned; we know how to make the right decisions to keep your project on schedule and on budget.

About the president

Steven Schwab's interest in technical writing was inadvertently triggered by a programmer friend who was developing software and asked him to write an MS-DOS-based help system and print manual. Steven found that he enjoyed developing the documentation, and also discovered his talent for technical writing in the process.

This experience, followed by a number of years working as a contractor, encouraged Steven to earn a Master of Technical Writing degree from the University of Southern California. His previous educational background includes a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California at Davis with double majors in Mass Communications and Economics and a minor in English.

Steven values the challenge of creating order out of chaos—a situation often faced in technical publications projects. His skills, sharpened by over a decade of experience as a detail-oriented project manager, have provided Underwhelmed with its initial foundation and ongoing standard of excellence.

Clients and projects

Clients

Finance

- Bank of America
- VISA International
- Wells Fargo Bank
- Providian Bancorp

Utility and power

- Chevron
- PG&E
- Pacific Bell

Software

- Oracle Corporation
- SunSoft
- Apple Computer
- Hewlett-Packard
- Taligent, Inc.
- Symantec
- NetDynamics Inc.
- NetObjects, Inc.
- Cisco Systems
- JavaSoft
- enCommerce, Inc.
- Palladium Interactive

Hardware

- National Semiconductor
- Tandem Computers
- Hitachi
- Hewlett-Packard
- Intel
- Apple Computer
- Harris Farinon
- Sun Microsystems

Publishing

- Apple Developer Press
- IDG Publishing
- M&T Books
- West Publishing
- Times-Mirror Publishing
- Addison-Wesley

Health and biotech

- Genentech
- Kaiser Permanente

Documentation types

End-user documentation

- Companion Guide
- Documentation Road Map
- Feature Guide
- Getting Started Guide
- Idea Book
- Installation Guide
- Online Help System
- Quick Reference
- Reference Guide
- Readme Files/Release Notes
- Service Manual
- Tutorial Guide
- User Guide
- Web-based manuals and help systems

Product marketing materials

- Multimedia demos
- Print marketing communications pieces
- Data sheets
- Technical white papers
- Web sites
- Customer newsletters
- Direct-mail pieces

Programmer/developer documentation

- API/Language Reference
- Conversion Guide
- Design Guide
- Developer's Guide
- Functional Specification
- GUI-design style guides
- Interactive and print tutorials for IDE tools
- Java-based online help systems
- Library Reference
- Programmer's Guide
- Programmer's Reference
- Resource Kit
- Software-Development Cookbook
- System Design Guide
- Technical Reference

Networking documentation

- Network Administrator's Guide
- System Administrator's Reference
- Technical Reference

Internal IT documentation

- Policies and Procedures
- Network-Security Guidelines
- Technical specifications and end-user documentation for RAD environments
- RDBMS data dictionaries
- System runbooks

Technical publications management documentation

- Documentation plans
- Online information architecture standards
- Print and online editorial style guides
- Authoring tools and methodology guides

Technical and subject background

Software tools

Help authoring

- RoboHELP
- Doc-To-Help
- ForeHelp®

Graphics

- Adobe Photoshop™
- Adobe Illustrator™
- CorelDraw™
- CorelXARA™
- VISIO™
- ABC Flowcharter™
- Macromedia FreeHand™

Desktop publishing

- Adobe FrameMaker®
- Adobe PageMaker®
- QuarkXPress™
- Microsoft Publisher™

- Adobe Acrobat™
- Microsoft Word™
- Lotus Word Pro™
- WordPerfect™

Web authoring

- Microsoft FrontPage™
- Visual Internet Developer™
- HoTMetaL PRO™
- Adobe PageMill™
- HotDog Pro™
- Symantec Visual Page™
- NetObjects Fusion™

Multimedia and presentations

- Macromedia Director™
- Authorware™
- Microsoft PowerPoint™
- Lotus Freelance™
- Adobe Persuasion™
- ToolBook™
- Astound™
- CBIPro™

Environments

- Windows 3.1x, 95, and 98
- Windows NT 3.51, 4.0, and 5.0
- MacOS™ 6, 7, and 8
- UNIX (Solaris™, HP-UX™, Irix™, Linux, A/UX™, IBM NetView™/AIX™)
- OS/2™
- DEC

Subject knowledge

Software-development tools and technologies

- C; C++
- Java
- Perl
- Visual BASIC®
- APIs
- IDE tools
- Compilers/pre-compilers
- GUI applications design

RDBMS technologies

- Oracle Financials™
- Red Pepper™
- SAP™
- SQL
- Sybase™
- Informix™
- Microsoft Access®
- Lotus Approach™

Networking technologies

- Client/server technology
- Networking hardware and software
- LAN/WAN administration
- Windows NT
- TCP/IP
- CGI
- Networking protocols
- Intranet/Internet software
- E-commerce applications
- Web servers and HTML authoring
- Bridges/routers

Miscellaneous

- CAD/AutoCAD
- Telecommunications/Telephony
- CAE/chips
- ISO 9000