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Advisor Who Led Effort to Have Government Recognize Technical Writers as Distinct Profession Receives President's Award



STC's economist Richard O'Sullivan received the President's Award at the STC Technical Communication Summit in Dallas, in a special ceremony on Monday, 3 May. He was instrumental in helping STC convince the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to recognize "Technical Writer" as a distinct job in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (OOH), giving technical writers a separate chapter in the 2010 edition. STC's primary claim was that not all writers can do technical writing.

O'Sullivan, principal of Change Management Solutions (www.harnesschange.net), a four-year old consulting practice dedicated to helping nonprofit organizations to "identify, understand and harness the forces of change," advised BLS for 25 years as a member of the Bureau's Business Research Advisory Council (BRAC), a select group of private sector economists, which counseled the agency on its collection and publication of economic indicators including employment statistics. An economist and business environment analyst with 30 years experience in the public, private, and civil society sectors, O'Sullivan has worked with associations and nonprofit organizations around the globe to design and implement demand-driven strategies that engage market forces to address social concerns. His work includes assisting in creating nonprofit sectors in

transitional and developing countries, including conflict environments such as Palestine, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. .

Changes to categories in the OOH can often take up to a decade. “By expanding our message beyond the profession’s technical qualifications to include the unique value technical writers bring to the marketplace, Rick helped make STC’s arguments compelling and the differences between our members and other writers clearly apparent, which BLS has now recognized. We had our proof in the marketplace,” explained STC President Cindy Currie.

Acknowledging the honor, O’Sullivan noted, “Outside consultants are often blamed when things go wrong but are quickly forgotten when an organization succeeds. I am both flattered and impressed that STC would stop to recognize my contribution to this achievement.”

O’Sullivan was also the director of the Voice of the Market project, where STC was able to take the pulse of several corporate executives whose companies hire technical communicators. The project collected data that was essential to understanding the perceptions of the value of technical communicators and their contribution to the bottom line.

His citation reads: “For your tireless effort working with the United States Department of Labor, which resulted in the recognition of technical writers as a profession distinct from all other writing professions. Your tremendous contribution provides an unbiased and respected voice confirming STC’s longtime position before employers and human resource departments.”