DISTRIBUTED WORK IN TRADITIONAL PRESENTATIONS

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by

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The nature of work changes, especially as companies grow, technologies change, and work becomes outsourced. Workers need to adjust their skillsets in response to changes, though such adjustments can be tough when work changes quickly. “What we really need are people who know what’s going on, who understand all the different sides of the business and how they work together, especially as we expand and incorporate more companies and resources,” said a Vice President of Branding at Hardware Distributor International (HDI)[1] to me as I took field notes at his company’s large trade show, the Market Expo[2] (field notes, September 12, 2016). The Market Expo took over an entire convention center floor, packed with products from vendors and an area of “Retail Programs” that included resources like e-commerce, advertising, and point-of-sale services. HDI held the Expo twice every year and invited their dealers, who were independent hardware store owners, to come and order inventory for their stores or find resources to help them run their business. While most of the show floor was dedicated to different products and even a few model stores to demonstrate merchandising ideas, all provided by HDI, the Retail Programs section was full of representatives from other companies and organizations, offering services to the store owners. Some companies were completely independent from HDI but invited to the Expo to provide services that HDI did not offer in-house but still wanted to provide to their store owners. When the VP of Branding said “all the different sides and how they work together,” he meant all of the different organizations that get pulled into this event, working with HDI workers and store owners across organizational boundaries.

Another HDI employee told me, “I have three different business cards, with three different company names on them,” (field notes, September 12, 2016). This might sound like the description of a

[1] Hardware Distributor International (HDI) is a pseudonym.
[2] Market Expo is a pseudonym.

freelance worker or adjunct employee who works for multiple organizations, depending upon the project. However, this woman had worked for a marketing and branding agency which was purchased and incorporated by a larger company, HDI, then rebranded as a separate but connected entity so that it could work with a larger variety of clients (field notes, September 12, 2016). Depending upon the customer with whom she interacted and their experience with any of the company names, she had a specific business card.

These vignettes help to describe adhocracies, which are flattened organizations and sites of distributed work. All-edge adhocracies, according to Spinuzzi (2015) and Gallagher (2018), are organizations who appear unified in their “front stage” to customers but are actually comprised of adjunct and contract workers. In this way, the organization doesn’t have a conventional hierarchy or separate silos and departments, and since its workers aren’t fully employed by the organization, work gets organized around specific projects. Depending on the project, different workers “swarm” to best execute the project, but the next project can have a totally different assemblage of workers. This feature of adhocracies to pull workers together depending on the project also allows them to work more easily across organizational boundaries because projects can temporarily connect groups in “arrangements that reach across an organization” (Spinuzzi, 2015, p. 3).

Another more familiar example of an adhocracy is Uber, according to Gallagher (2016). Uber is a company with some full-time employees, but Uber drivers work for themselves, as freelancers, making their own hours. Riders requesting Uber rides might have a different driver each time, depending on their requested route and time, but usually riders don’t choose specific drivers. Instead, they see the united frontstage of the Uber app when they go to request a ride.

Importance to Writing Studies: Making the Work of TCs Visible in Distributed Work

Adhocracies should interest writing studies because these contingent, changing kinds of work are the situations in which technical writers find themselves working. Additionally, adhocracies are best suited for knowledge work (Drucker, 1994; Hart-Davidson, Bernhardt, McLeod, Rife, & Grabill, 2008; Spinuzzi, 2007; 2011; 2012; 2015; Swarts and Kim, 2009; Winsor, 2001) or symbolic-analytic work (Johnson-Eilola, 1996; Reich, 1991), which means work that entails analyzing, and crafting communication for items like language, information, and symbols, as opposed to creating or manufacturing tangible goods. Technical communicators are knowledge workers, and the texts they create help to coordinate and temporarily stabilize these changing assemblages of work. Even before the rise of the "gig economy" and increasingly adhocratic workplaces, scholars cautioned us to make sure TCs weren't relegated to some of the more mundane writing tasks in these workplaces and to focus on ways they could be instrumental in more empowering symbolic analytic work (Johnson-Eilola, 1996). In more traditional and hierarchical organizations, technical communicators might have been in separate departments, working with subject-matter experts from another department. Technical communicators may not have had technical mastery of the subject matter, but they could interview and work with the subject matter expert to produce content that met the needs of different audiences.

When work becomes more distributed, TCs and subject-matter experts work farther apart, and in cases where work is built around projects and assemblages of adjunct employees, not consistently. Writing studies has called for more research into the level of individual TC workers in these changing workplaces, especially as Slattery (2007) and Burris (1993) caution the TCs may lose expertise and status. While distributed work like adhocracies offers the opportunity for TCs to take more active roles as they create the communication that coordinates work across organizational boundaries, writing studies researchers need to advocate for making that work visible (Dicks, 2004; Dubinsky, 2015) and describe the ways in which TCs participate and serve as directors and managers. In order to do so, we need further studies of these TCs, their texts, and the participatory contexts in which they operate. Additional research on these contexts can help balance the way TCs research and describe best practices, develop theories, and then prescribe best practices. Dicks (2018) reminds us to revisit that tension "to remind ourselves that our discipline, as any other, has its own body of literature but, at the same time, is based on the work that practitioners do every day" (p. 213). Continuing to describe practices and develop theories also helps to educate students studying technical communication, so they acquire the knowledge and also ways to advocate for the importance of their own work in participatory and distributed organizations.

One participatory context technical and professional communication has yet to focus specifically on is the distributed work of trade associations interacting within the context of a trade show like the HDI Market Expo. The context will be further described in Chapter 3, Methods. For now, it's important to note that HDI workers I described at the beginning of this chapter were discussing the same kinds of distributed work that I just described from the research literature. The HDI Market Expo has many participating workers from a variety of organizations, including workers from the hardware industry trade organization, IHIRA[3].

This study aims to describe and make visible the work of technical communicators by examining the trade organization IHIRA. While not explicitly focused on turning these insights into pedagogical practices, this study is designed to lead to such work in subsequent studies. Trade associations, like the one examined in this work, are smaller, meta-organizations (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005), meaning they have some full-time staff but are also comprised of member organizations. Investigating them shows how writers have more agency as they work with faster speeds but fewer resources and informal processes, still "getting the job done." Researching these workers aids our understanding of how to help students develop flexible, rhetorical skill sets they can use in a variety of workplace settings, as well as ways to assert their own expertise. Students may not face exactly the same workplace constraints, but Mallette and Gehrke (2019) remind us that even without fully replicating workplaces, academic programs "can more intentionally equip graduates to understand the complexity of SME [subject-matter

[3] IHIRA is a pseudonym.

expert] interactions and how to assert expertise" (p. 82). Preparing students in such a way helps emphasize that technical communicators graduate from programs being prepared to continue learning and advocate for the importance of their work as they develop expertise in specific workplace situations.

To focus on the work of TCs from a trade organization and the ways they communicated across organizational boundaries in the distributed workplace of the HDI Market Expo, I specifically examined the ways trade organization workers created and delivered seminar presentations at the event. Studying these texts and practices pointed to the ways speakers developed locally produced strategies to address the context, particularly in the areas of:

- Project management (Lauren, 2018; Lauren & Schreiber, 2018; Robisch, 2018)
- Content management (Andersen, 2011; 2014; Andersen & Batova, 2015; Evia & Andersen, 2020; Hart-Davidson, 2009; Sapienza, 2007) and reuse (Swartz, 2010 Spinuzzi 2015, Hall, Moskovitz, & Pemberton, 2018)
- Slide deck presentations (Marcel, 2017; Lauer and Brumberger, 2019; Stowe, Parent, Schwartz, and Sendall, 2012; Yates & Orlikowski, 2007; Yakura, 2013; Mackiewicz, 2008)

Examining these areas and the roles technical communicators from the trade organization play in them points to unique rhetorical situations in which processes of creating, managing, and assembling texts, including presentations, arise sometimes outside of formal models or methods previously examined in TC research, for both large corporations and smaller, more nimble organizations. Trade association workers aren't exactly subject-matter experts, but their organization works directly with members who are experts at running hardware stores. A recently graduated technical communication student entering this distributed workplace can succeed by learning and participating in the context, though it will take some critical thinking and on-the-job learning. To prepare students to critically think and solve problems (Johnson-Eilola & Selber, 2013; Boettger & Friess, 2016), as well as participate and advocate in these adhocratic situations, we must examine and describe multiple contexts to keep pedagogy current and relevant. Even if our research and pedagogy doesn't address exactly the same constraints our students might face in their future workplaces, we can still help them to understand the complexity of interactions and "how to assert expertise" (Mallette and Gehrke, 2019, p. 82). To help students as they enter multiple contexts, we can help them look for specific TC hooks and concepts to grasp as they enter workplaces, offering them a place to begin learning new genres.

My data and approach of studying workplace writers at the individual level, using sociocultural theories and close analysis of their practices, shows how TC instructors, practitioners, and students can learn from and engage with workplace practices. For students, we should be helping them see how their classroom practices and contexts differ from workplace experiences but also helping them understand how to learn from those workplace practices. This study provides a step in that direction by showing the grayer areas.

Preview of Chapters

To first examine the context of the speakers, their audiences, and their texts, I first examine the project management methods they developed out of their unique rhetorical situation. Chapter 4 explains how these writers don't employ formal project methodologies, like Six Sigma or Agile because they're developing processes in conjunction with audience members. This chapter also examines the content management strategies and invention practices of these writers, beginning to show how they consider reuse and assembly practices in terms of content packages.

Next, in Chapter 5, I investigate and describe in detail the reuse strategies of the speakers for particular educational seminars, looking at how they assemble content for the repeated rhetorical situation of the Market Expo, reusing images and branding items without starting from "scratch" like a blank, pre-designed template.

Lastly, in Chapter 6, I examine how their slideware composing practices compare to best practices literature in academic articles as well as industry-based texts from communication experts, continuing the trend of comparing best practices advice to individual TC practice. Much of the slideware recommendations literature focuses on rhetorical situations like entrepreneurs using a pitch deck to request investors or other rhetorical situations like NASA reports and how slide decks aren’t the best use for conveying information in such a setting. These speakers see their PowerPoint decks as visual aides to their presentations as well as handouts and use PowerPoint as a tool to comfortably fit their practices of reuse and assembling information.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

To help describe how people write at work in multiple contexts, writing studies often expands its investigations to focus on knowledge work. As described in Chapter 1, knowledge work (Drucker, 1994; Hart-Davidson, Bernhardt, McLeod, Rife, & Grabill, 2008; Spinuzzi, 2007; 2011; 2012; 2015; Swarts and Kim, 2009; Winsor, 2001)) or symbolic-analytic work (Johnson-Eilola, 1996; Reich, 1991), is work that involves analyzing, creating, and communicating things like symbols, language, and information, versus other work that involves manufacturing or growing tangible goods. These knowledge workers have different tasks as they work in increasingly distributed workplaces. Spinuzzi (2007) defines distributed work as “coordinative work that enables sociotechnical networks to hold together and form dense interconnections among and across work activities that have traditionally been separated by temporal, spatial, or disciplinary boundaries” (p. 268). More traditional work forms like hierarchies involved strict boundaries between departments or other companies, so people in the accounting department only worked with other accounting department colleagues, and marketing workers only worked on marketing tasks for their own company, not for other companies or clients. For workers, distributed work means that different work activities become “spliced” (Spinuzzi, 2008) together and anyone can work with anyone else inside or outside of their organization, and as work becomes more intersected, these workers have to learn across organizational boundaries and coordinate more texts (Slattery, 2007). Spinuzzi uses the term “spliced,” (2008) as opposed to “woven” to mean the parts brought together, or spliced in, can still be separated. “Woven” refers to actants brought together in a way that can’t be separated. When workers from different organizations get spliced into a project, once the project is complete, the group may dissemble, and workers can return to their respective organizations.

Particularly due to economic factors and developing communication technologies, some organizations have become so distributed that Spinuzzi (2015) calls them “all-edge adhocracies,” borrowing a term from Toffler (1980). All-edge adhocracies exemplify distributed work by having flat, non-hierarchical structures and by changing frequently and flexibly as different assemblages of workers come in and out. Work is organized around a project in a network, so whoever is best able to assist comes in to help and complete the project, and that person might not be a full-time employee. These temporary assemblages work together and coordinate through what Spinuzzi, drawing from Goffman (1959) describes as the "backstage," meaning clients and customers don't see all the connections and cross-disciplinary collaborations. Instead, they see a unified front, or "front stage." Because of their front-stage appearance, adhocracies can appear more traditional and stable. Adhocracies are best suited for certain kinds of knowledge work or creative work, though Spinuzzi cautions such adhocracies don't hold as well for jobs that need control, repeatability, or operating efficiency.

Because adhocracies are so well suited for knowledge work, writing studies must further investigate how texts function and coordinate work within them. Writers are responsible for coordinating through texts and other communication across distributed work boundaries, and our skills of rhetorically analyzing each audience and purpose allow us to coordinate. Considering this type of work and the ways workers are working across organizational boundaries helps us to better understand some of the rhetorical situations our students will enter after graduation, and much research in technical communication has looked at distributed or flattened workplaces.

Trade Shows: An Unexamined Adhocracy

As described briefly in Chapter 1, twice yearly, a company called Hardware Distributor International (HDI) who distributes hardware and home improvement products to independent store owners, hosts a Market Expo. The dealers, or independent store owners, come to purchase products for their stores, look at display ideas and new trends, and learn ways to improve their business. These independent stores must compete with bigger corporations like Walmart or Home Depot for customers, and they have many fewer people and resources. Therefore, much of their business is contracted out or spliced in from other organizations. For example, a store in northeast Ohio may only have 10 employees, and those employees might focus their work on selling goods and customer service, while the owner maybe dedicates one or two people to tasks like billing, accounting, and human resources. That owner's distributor provides solutions for those issues as well as goods to sell, and the Market Expo shows software or management options they provide or contract in from other companies. In this way, the work of running an independent hardware store becomes distributed from the store in northeast Ohio to a distributor based in another part of the country and to software or consultants based in other parts of the country. The coordination of this work often occurs over internet or telephone communication (i.e., the software can be downloaded remotely; the owner can place orders through an online portal), but twice a year the activity temporarily takes place in the same location.

Spinuzzi (2015) admits the original work theorists considered adhocracies to be overlaid on top of or within existing hierarchical work structures, but now some hybridization of structures occurs. This concept of adhocracy has yet to be extended into such hybrid workspaces. One such area where adhocracies combine with conventional hierarchical organizations is the Market Expo. Trade shows like the Expo are often hosted by traditional, hierarchical companies for smaller and still traditional organizations, but they bring distributed resources together, showing how elements of other organizations, from merchandise to be sold to programs for accounting and human resources to advertising resources, become spliced into the running of one business. Workplaces like the Market Expo present questions Spinuzzi's work doesn't answer. He focuses on the coordination of front and backstage of adhocracies, but temporary workplaces like trade shows openly express their backstage as they have always been distributed in nature. These spaces aren't entirely flat or organized around one project then dispersing; all participating organizations can still be hierarchical in nature, and they occur twice a year, meaning the same people often work with the same group from another organization each time. The projects in these instances may differ, but the work is still repeatable. They aren't all edge, but they still contain many ‘adhocratic’ work elements. What do these work structures add to our understanding of distributed work? How does writing function in these other forms of distributed work?

Through this dissertation I am to answer these questions through my analysis of the texts and actors at the Market Expo.

Frameworks for Researching Writing at the Market Expo

McNely, Spinuzzi, and Teston (2015) examine how looking at this distributed work and its effects on technical writing are assisted through frameworks of sociocultural, associative, and new materialist theories. All of these frameworks help to show technical writing as situated and mediated through people and tools like new (and old) technologies. Specifically, Activity Theory and Writing, Activity, and Genre Theory (WAGR) are tools writing studies researchers frequently draw from to more critically examine writing in distributed workplaces.

WAGR

WAGR synthesizes activity theory with rhetorical genre theory (McNely, Spinuzzi, and Teston, 2015). David Russell (2009) explains, “WAGR views genres as both intertextual and hypertextual systems and therefore can construct “a concrete analysis of writing-in-use not only as tools and rules, in actions and operations that stabilize-for-now (Schryer, 1993) behavior in far-flung organizations and help explain institutional change and collective learning, but also as systems, at the level of activity” (p. 42). Because genres are social, Yates and Orlikowski (2007) explain genres change over time and draw from Schryer’s (2002) work to explain they are improvisations. An actor might change how they enact a genre one day, and if the change gets adopted widely, “the shared discursive expectations associated with the genre may be altered” (p.3). They explain genre theory suggests “particular genres are enacted to accomplish particular communicative purposes in response to specific recurrent situations” p. 3. For example, Yates and Orlikowski (2007) talk about how memos and letters are used in workplace communication, suggesting memos evolved as a separate genre from letters at some point as they were used in slightly different recurrent situations. Workers may have improvised their letter writing practices in certain situations to take on the form of a memo, and through time that came to denote a different repeatable rhetorical situation to those workers.

As distributed work leads to more organizations interacting across distances, they do so through genres (including emails, written forms, Zoom meetings, etc.). WAGR looks at these genres as well as contradictions between motives of different organizations as they interact. Examining genres then helps to see how objects are stabilized and to identify motives. This framework also identifies moments of reuse or document cycling as parts of texts become reused and reassembled into different but related genres. Both WAGR and activity theory are used frequently in writing studies (Russell, 2009; Spinuzzi, 2010, McNely, Teston, & Spinuzzi, 2015), especially those looking at professional writing. As will be explained further in Chapter 3, Methods, these frameworks lead to methods involving collecting texts, tracing genes, and discourse-based interviews.

Activity Theory

Activity Theory stems from early work by Vygotsky and Leontev and has more recently been adapted by Engstrom. Focusing on activity theory and writing systems, Spinuzzi (2012) explains an activity system as “a collective in which one or more human actors labor to cyclically transform an object (a raw material or problem) in order to repeatedly achieve an outcome (a desired result)” (p. 5). These systems form networks but also contain contradictions, or “systemic disruptions that form within activities, sometimes within parts of the activity, sometimes across parts of the activity, and sometimes across activities in the network” (Spinuzzi, 2012, p. 5). Using activity as a framework therefore means identifying an activity system with its actants, objects, and outcomes, and looking for contradictions. Defining the object becomes increasingly difficult, however, when looking at more distributed and collaborative forms of knowledge work, and activity theory has evolved to recognize that work doesn’t just happen in one activity system but across many intersecting systems. Now, fourth generation activity theory (4GAT) looks at work being done across organizations where actants have different objectives or different understandings of objectives.

Defining the Object

An issue with activity theory can be that as researchers expand it to account for more complex contexts, the object expands too much for it to work as a lynchpin or unit of analysis (Spinuzzi, 2011; Witte, 2005). For example, making "learning" the object of the activity system of seminar presentations or even the Market Expo entirely is too broad, and as we start to look at the ways the actors define the object, it breaks apart. Conventional activity theory approaches then keep expanding the context and expanding the object to account for how the object breaks apart, but Spinuzzi (2011) argues for using these differences in defining the object to qualify and contract the object. In the case of these seminars, participants describe multiple and sometimes conflicting objectives of the activity, as Table 1 below begins to demonstrate:

Object	Desired Outcome of Max/Noelle/Speaker	Desired Outcome of Audience Members	Desired outcome of HDI for their Market Expo
A presentation that...	persuades store owners to modify or adds business practices	teaches them ways to improve their store performance	serves as one of many resources HDI offers to its customers
...and...	gets audience members to participate in IHIRA's studies and draw on other membership resources	offers practical applications that are feasible and fit within their understanding and individual markets: things tailored to their industry (hardware and home improvement)	directs attendees to HDI resources and products
...and...	justifies their presence/contribution to the market		offers the same type of educational opportunities as their competitors
...and...	builds their own individual credibility as speakers/experts in the industry		customers who learn better business practices and improve sales can buy more products and services from them

Table 1: Defining the Object of Study

This table describes the object of the presentations as it fractures according to the different desires of each of the participants in the activity. The different participants, from speakers to store owners to HDI corporate, all talk about the seminars as having the object of teaching or learning new or best business practices. They describe different motives, as when the speakers discuss getting more people to use their resources and trust in their company and personal ethos as industry experts who can help, as store owners who want feasible solutions for their own business, and as a host company who wants seminars to provide the same learning opportunities as competitors and to help store owners improve sales so they can spend more money on products and services from the host company. These differing perspectives help delineate the activity system of the seminar presentation (as opposed to the multiple and overlapping systems of the entire market) around one object---the seminar presentation itself. Even though different participants hold different motivations and objectives for the presentation, the presentation is a text that acts as boundary object (Star & Griesemer,1989) that bridges these motives into a single activity. Instead of letting these different ideas of the object 'run away' until defining the object as something broad like "learning" or "sales" or so far as "global capitalism," we can use the motives to help rebound the object. In this case, the presentation acts as a poly-object (reflecting all objectives of participants) while still remaining singular enough to analyze. Learning, sales, and global capitalism all play a role in this activity, but narrowing the object to the presentation allows us a measurable means to understanding the activity here. As an object, the text is also an actor, and understanding how the text is made and what it does offers us a starting point for better understanding its activity. The text as the object is also what writing studies is particularly suited to analyze and understand.

Previous Studies Examining How Texts Get Assembled in Workplaces

Previous work in technical communication research has examined the work of writers working to manage content, knowledge products, or symbolic-analytic work (Johnson-Eilola, 1996) in flattened and more distributed workplaces. Much of the work focusing on content management addresses how writers in such workplaces can take a more active role in creating content management systems (Andersen, 2014; Hart-Davidson, Bernhardt, McLeod, Rife & Grabill, 2008; McCarthy, Grabill, Hart-Davidson, & McLeod, 2011). Distributed work, as explained earlier, often lacks central organizing forces, so workers build their own infrastructure through information technologies and worker-created texts (Swarts, 2010). As writing studies continues to research distributed and changing workplaces, it must examine how to best involve people as individual workers. As discussed in Chapter 1, as these workers move farther from subject-matter experts, for example, they risk losing expertise and status (Slattery, 2007; Burris, 1993). Losing such status means writers could be relegated to more mundane writing tasks instead of the empowered symbolic-analytic work Johnson-Eilola (1996) describes. Lauren (2018) says writing studies research should also learn how to best involve these writers in project management strategies.

Looking at distributed workplaces, where texts are assembled, shows how much of texts writers and organizations reuse. Work from Ridolfo and DeVoss (2009) calls for scholars to further examine reuse, specifically focusing on how content gets composed knowing it may be reused. They use the term “rhetorical velocity” to show how texts change as they are passed along and taken up in new digital environments and remixed by third parties.

Reuse in Workplace Communication

Writing studies research in organizations tends to focus on reuse as part of content management systems or single-sourcing practices in large, corporate environments (Anderson & Batova, 2015; Sapienza, 2007, Hart-Davidson, 2009), again pointing for the need to examine worker-level practices at smaller organizations. Other studies examine reuse as a less structured practice. Swarts (2010) discusses how veterinary students use information from various tools and sources to put together a patient narrative; Slattery (2007) looks at tech writers assembling content from multiple content management and client databases, and Spinuzzi et al (2015) examined entrepreneurs taking up feedback and revising their pitch proposals, noting that these pitch decks and their versions made up a document cycle (Kleinman, 1993) showing entrepreneurs working in dialogue with their mentors. These studies draw from Freadman's (2002) idea of "uptake" as the knowledge of when and how to deploy certain genres and argue that when workers reuse, they do so intentionally and rhetorically. Reusing content is part of a dialogue, argues Kleinman (1993) and Spinuzzi et al. (2015), as workers progress through drafts and feedback. In order for writers to reuse content rhetorically, they must acquire background knowledge, which they acquire tacitly as they learn on-the-job the folklore and "tips and tricks" of their workplace. Learning the genre means one can learn to enter the given activity and understand that workplace practice the way that its current participants do. When writers at work learn new genres, "they must make rhetorical choices about what content to reuse, and how to reuse it, in response to feedback that is conveyed, often cyclically, through other genres" (p.48.) Once writers become experienced in these new genres, their reuse and therefore uptake practices are "complex, often habitualized, socio-cognitive pathways that mediate our interactions with others and the world" (Bawarshi, 2010, p. 199). Once writers develop practices of smoothly uptaking/reusing, those practices become "tacit, deeply ingrained, and ideologically consequential" (Dryer & Miller, n.d.).

Reuse can demonstrate how writers are deploying the genres of their workplace, especially as work becomes more distributed. Jakobs and Spinuzzi (2014) characterize reuse in such a manner, stating "with increasingly textualized workplaces, document cycling will become more complex and interlaced as it strives to lower transaction costs" (p.366) Their same article expands on Spinuzzi's 2010 work examining how SEO specialists quickly developed reports by using automated tools and templates to "assemble" pieces then interpret implications. Again, if distributed work means more reuse and text assembling practices, all the more reason to study other smaller, nimble organizations to learn about their practices. Adding to our understanding of reuse practices in workplaces can also help us to prepare students for careers outside of academia.

Reuse in Academic Contexts

In academia, reuse is not as clearly described. Regarding students and academic writing, reuse can too hastily be labeled “self-plagiarism” (Hall, Moscovitz & Pemberton, 2018). Roig (2016) explains self-plagiarism as “a somewhat controversial term used to describe situations in which authors re-use their previously disseminated work and pass it off as new” (Roig, 2016, p. 657). Furthermore, self-plagiarism is considered a form of cheating (Roig, 2016) and many university websites warn students against it (Bretag &Mahmud, 2009). However, other institutions don’t specifically mention self-plagiarism as a form of misconduct (Salhaney and Roig, 2005). Halupa and Bolliger (2013, 2015) found most universities didn’t specifically address self-plagiarism in academic honesty policies; however, Halupa’s updated work in 2019 found the percentage of faculty who considered self-plagiarism an offense was increasing. Generally, the term self-plagiarism as a concept isn’t clear to some instructors (Halupa & Bollinger, 2013) or to students (Halupa and Bollinger, 2015). Some instructors claim that because it’s impossible to steal from oneself, self-plagiarism isn’t an applicable term (Roig, 2016; Bird, 2002, Callahan, 2014). Furthermore, in 2013, the United States Public Health Service’s Office of Research Integrity (ORI) gave official guidance, saying self-plagiarism, generally, doesn’t constitute research misconduct, at least in academic publishing. Student perceptions regarding reuse of their own previous works agreed self-plagiarism shouldn’t be an academic honesty offense (Halupa & Bollinger, 2015) and only one-fourth of the students studied reported actually recycling parts of assignments in the past. When universities do have policies that forbid students from “double dipping” (Bruton, 2014; Halupa, 2019) or from submitting a paper that has already been submitted for another class, Roig (2016) notes the policies don’t focus on the types of reuse that might be acceptable: “For example, students may understand that they cannot re-use a previously submitted paper, but what if they re-use three quarters of a paper, or half a paper, or a quarter of a paper?” (p. 659). Citing the work of Hartle, Kimmins, and Huijser (2009), Halupa (2019) pointed to instructors who see value in seeing the interconnections between assignments and courses. Students expand knowledge when they can relate two different assessments and see interconnections. Hartle, Kimmins, and Huijser go so far as to place the issue of self-plagiarism on faculty for creating similar assignments. Whatever we call it, both Roig (2016) and Halupa (2019) point out the need for transparency; student writers should talk to their instructor about recycling.

When we consider academia as a workplace, expectations of how much text can be recycled in research publications also varies across disciplines (Hall, Moscovitz, and Pemberton, 2018). The ORI gives additional guidance for some reuse, and work by Moskovitz, Pemberton & Hall (2022) focuses on how publishers can create policies for acceptable reuse in academic publications, especially in STEM fields.

Whether in workplace, academic publishing, or classroom contexts, people often reuse material in an effort to save time or as a means to achieve efficiency, like when Jakobs and Spinuzzi (2014) talk about it helping to lower transaction costs in distributed organizations. Writing studies research has discussed when workplace reuse practices cause issues, especially when workers craft slide presentations. When writers tried to save time by cutting and pasting content from older presentations into new ones in Yates and Orlikowski's study (2007), graphic designers who worked with them noticed inconsistencies that had to be fixed later. This fear of "wasting time" appears when Thielsch and Perabo (2012) discuss how participants spend too much time on design and animation, despite not being graphic designers. When these participants know the presentation might have a second life, the writer might be motivated to "to put a lot of effort in its graphic design", which the authors discourage as they consider design "noncontent" instead of part of the writing process. Therefore, "from an organizational perspective," Thielsch and Perabo recommend "well designed and easy-to-use templates to enhance the employee's production of presentations and to reduce the time spent on print versions or matters of visual style" (p. 112). In *Advanced Presentation by Design*, Abela (2013) invokes this same idea when he recommends speakers not open presentation software to draw slides until the eighth step of his process.

If speakers open the software earlier, they might spend too much time on slides they later have to cut or include slides that aren't effective because they became attached after spending so much time on them. If reuse is supposed to save time for those creating workplace documents, then it requires some background knowledge, like knowing how to reuse visual elements consistently in a template. Having background knowledge and generic or easy-to-adapt slides helped workers reuse materials in Yakura's (2013) study, where a large bank integration project used PowerPoint slides to help workers visualize the process across multiple locations. Presenters frequently tweaked or updated slides "on the road" between locations, updating information as the project changed and abstract processes became more concrete, so presenters were always building on their background knowledge. While examining how workers reused parts of proposals, Covertino et al. (2010) found writers had ad-hoc, not systematized processes. Looking at the proposal writers' strategies showed that different people help write the proposal each time, meaning not all of them benefit from past experience. One of their participants, a manager, explained that they wouldn't reuse part of a previous proposal "unless I could get some information from the person directly involved in its creation." The same manager said to really make sense of what the content means one should contact the author--in this way, knowing how to figure out the context of the original means reuse may demand a lot of background knowledge.

Background knowledge aside, the harshest criticism of reuse and slide decks targets workers who use slide decks as presentation visuals and a report. Some folklore, often derived from communication consultant books on best practices, indicates that reuse in terms of a slide deck as visual and deliverable is more efficient and lowers costs, often at the expense of effective communication. In *Beyond Bullet Points*, Atkinson goes so far as to call it the second largest myth about PowerPoint: that the same slide works equally well as printed handouts or on screen. *Presentation Zen*'s Garr Reynolds bemoans the idea of a slide deck for presentation that doubles as a handout: "People think they are being efficient — a kind of kill-two-birds-with-one-stone approach…Unfortunately (unless you're a bird), the only thing '"killed'" is effective communication" (p. 72). Despite good intentions, reusing slides this way is detrimental, as he further explains, "The slideument isn't effective, it isn't efficient, and it isn't pretty. Attempting to have slides serve both as projected visuals and as stand-alone handouts makes for bad visuals and bad documentation" (p.72). The term "slideument" comes from Nancy Duarte's *Slide:ology*, in which she explains any slide over 75 words is a document, not a slide (thus, slideument), that instead should have been circulated as a white paper before scheduling a meeting instead of a presentation.

Some research on the appropriate number of words per slide draws from Dual Coding Theory (Mackiewicz, 2008; Doumont , 2005; Atkinson, 2011). Dual Coding Theory, as Allan Paivio describes (1986), means that when people receive new visual and new verbal information, they process it in two separate but related channels. Visual and verbal information can still be processed simultaneously, so audience members can receive and interpret a presenter's words while simultaneously receiving and interpreting a picture on a slide. However, if the slide is mostly text, it doesn't get processed like a picture, but instead gets processed as another verbal input. So, the words on the slide compete with the speaker's voice in the audience's brain. Work on PowerPoint draws from this theory to recommend that presentations be as visual as possible and contain few if any words. This feeds into discussions about exactly how many words belong on a slide, why people read from slides, and how to create compelling slides without using too many words.

Wordy slides, especially when they result because the presentation deck also serves as the handout or other deliverable, often lead to people reading from the slides, which academic studies have cited as a problem for both workers and students. Professionals in Marcel's (2017) study said wordy slides are a frequent issue they encounter with coworkers. Reading from slides, according to Kernbach, Bresciani & Epler (2015), is the most disliked practice in every survey regarding student's use of PowerPoint and often results in the audience's apathy or dislike. Cyphert (2004) says reading from slides cripples performance (cited in Kernbach, Bresciani, & Eppler, 2015 p.306). Academic presenters in a study by Hertz, Kerkhof and van Woerkum (2016) averaged 54.41 words per slide, though the researchers found most slide deck instruction books recommended from 16 to 36 words maximum. They contend academic speakers use more words per slide so they can read from them and reduce speaking anxiety. Together, these suggestions and rules border on being more prescriptive and designed for classroom and training applications instead of necessarily describing some of the workplace practices and the rhetorical situations that lead to them.

Yates and Orlikowski (2007) also noted the afterlife of slide decks that may have been created as presentation visuals but later served as deliverables. Drawing from a genre as social action (Miller, 1984) approach, they explain how genres are improvisations (citing Hanks, 1987, quoted in Schryer, 2002, p. 81), which means these decks are being "produced in the course of linguistic practice and subject to innovation, manipulation, and change" (p. 5) If a worker changes (deliberately or accidentally) how they enact one genre of a PowerPoint presentation, and if their changes then become widely adopted, then others start to alter some of the shared discursive expectations associated with the genre. Yates and Orlikowski call these "corollary genres," defined as "variants of an established genre that are enacted in parallel with it" (p. 2). For example, as PowerPoint decks were shared and used for presentation aids but later spun off and came to be used as standalone documents that resembled reports, the standalone deck became a corollary genre. As these corollary genres continue to emerge from PowerPoint decks, people's expectations of the genre start to blur, which can be unsettling for some (like academics) who understand genres to be tightly coupled to specific communicative purposes and particular recurrent situations. Initially, these corollary genres can generate ambiguity in how they should be used, but Yates and Orlikowski assert the multiple purposes of PowerPoint text/corollary genre uses "reveals the artful ways in which people are able to adapt and improvise their use of organizing structure," (p. 17) resulting in new communicative practices.

Some communication consultant books recommend strategies for using PowerPoint features to add content to slide decks so they can serve as visuals and a handout or report. In *Advanced Presentation Design*, Abela suggests using call-out boxes, which allows authors to create a deck with details sufficient to be a stand-alone document but that can be quickly edited by deleting the boxes, resulting in a cleaner deck to project. In *Beyond Bullet Points,* Atkinson (2011) suggests using the Notes features in PowerPoint to add more detail to a slide that wouldn't be projected. Then, speakers can print their slides or save them as PDFs of the Notes Pages to get full context. While the practice seems logical, Lauer and Brumberger (2019) ask their participants why they used the same deck without utilizing the Notes features for more detail, and their participants explained that clients wouldn't know to look in the Notes features. Again, this calls for more research into different types of presentation decks as genres-in-use.

Lauer and Brumberger (2019) offer a more nuanced take when they discuss how their participants created one deck that doubled as a report, saying the practice "certainly went against our notions of effective slide design and effective report writing. But it also brought to light the important role played by efficiency in writing as-multimodal-editing" (p. 653) They explain how writing-as-multimodal editing has led to genre conventions evolving in response to technologies (like video and apps) as well as in response to the need for more efficient use of time. Reflecting on their study in 2017, Lauer and Brumberger acknowledged that some clients might prefer to read information in slide deck form "because it delivers information in an even more distilled and segmented way than a report, removing all extraneous language and focusing only on the most important elements that need to be conveyed" (p. 9). For clients who prefer to read slide decks, slide decks might be perceived as the more efficient (or at least quicker and easier) way to glean information. Lauer & Brumberger (2017) also address how these changing practices focusing on efficiency might seem unsettling for researchers in writing studies: "while we don't agree that adapting communication practices for the sole sake of efficiency is optimal, we do agree that channels of communication are evolving rapidly and thus genre conventions should continually be reexamined for their appropriateness and suitability to the communication context” (p. 9). In certain communication contexts, like Angel investors reviewing pitch proposals, a pitch deck appears as both a visual aid and at least two times without a presenter as it circulates through investors and its process, found Williams, Spinuzzi, and Newbold (2019). Participants in that study, as well as those of Lauer and Brumberger (2019) and Yates and Orlikowski (2007), perceived their practice of using slide decks as deliverables as necessary or typical. However, these studies don’t examine how the participants’ different audiences find this practice.

Other Studies Examining Slideware

Echoing Lauer and Brumberger (2017; 2019) and Yates and Orlikowski (2007), Farkas (2008) calls for researchers to respect the contingent and local factors when making claims about PowerPoint use. Perhaps the most famous source regarding slide decks is Edward Tufte’s “Cognitive Style of PowerPoint” (2003), a booklet which examines the slide decks used by NASA engineers when trying to assess damage to the Space Shuttle Columbia, which disintegrated upon re-entry into the Earth’s atmosphere on February 1, 2003. The decks contained analysis of the potential damage on the shuttle when a piece of insulation broke off from an external tank and struck the shuttle’s left wing during its takeoff. Had these PowerPoint decks been written as technical reports with more detail and a better-connected narrative instead of six levels of bullet hierarchy per slide on a deck presented at a meeting, Tufte thinks NASA would have had more information about the dangers of the damage.

The ways Tufte’s arguments were taken up focus on pitfalls of PowerPoint slides in place of a report and the overuse and abuse of PowerPoint in general. Tufte published his arguments in the 2003 booklet as well as in a shorter piece in *Wired* called “PowerPoint is evil” (2003) and in another shorter essay on his own website called “PowerPoint does rocket science--and better techniques for technical reports" (2005). Similar criticism in more general publications draws from Tufte to question "Is PowerPoint the Devil (Keller, 2003) or blatantly state "PowerPoint Makes you Dumb" (Thompson, 2003).

Doumont (2005) tackles many of Tufte's arguments in his academic article "The cognitive style of PowerPoint: Slides are not all evil" and points out that slides can be effective visual aids when they are "redundant, stand-alone, and visual." Amare gives an overview of Tufte and similar "PowerPoint haters" and explains she agrees with "Tufte's assessment of PowerPoint as a grossly overused and abused tool. However, I do not agree that PowerPoint (or Microsoft) should be held accountable; after all, there is a speaker/creator behind the slides" (p. 63). Despite the catchy titles, many of these sources don't focus enough on how Tufte's 2003 pamphlet, as well as the full report from NASA's Columbia Accident Investigation Board both additionally focus on the context of the report and the culture at NASA that resulted in the way the risk was reported in the PowerPoint slide. Analyzing a PowerPoint presentation then also means examining the situated context in which it's produced.

Other sources regarding PowerPoint best practices focus on design, often drawing from Tufte's ideas of simplifying design and limiting bullet point hierarchies. Nearly every source on PowerPoint design mentions Tufte's 2003 piece (Stark and Paravel (2008); Thielsch & Perabo (2012); Williams, Spinuzzi, and Newbold, 2019); Yates & Orlikowski (2006); Abela (2013); Cadena & Coutinho (2014); Doumont (2005); Kaplan (2011); Mackiewicz, 2008). Much of the literature on slideware practices comes from "communication experts," (like Duarte's Slide:ology (2008) and Reynolds' Presentation Zen (2020) and tends to focus on advice for live presentations with vibrant visuals and few words per slide. Much of the best-practices advice only considers slide decks in the context of a presentation aid for a live presentation. Coincidentally, Tufte's mistake, according to much of PowerPoint literature, is to compare a slide deck to a full report or stand-alone document instead of as part of a presentation, considering the delivery (Borgoin & Muniesa, 2016; Doumont, 2006; Farkas, 2006; Stark and Paravel, 2008). Tufte's and communication experts' stance suggests a confusion of the genre of presentations and slide decks, which other research shows is more complicated as slide decks are used in many contexts.

Some scholarship has begun to examine specific local contexts of slide decks in use, including cases where the deck also serves as deliverable, noting that not all presentations are live performances. Studying entrepreneur pitch decks, Williams, Spinuzzi and Newbold (2019) note that despite many resources, writing studies and entrepreneurship doesn't have a large body of empirical research regarding slide decks. They refer to books about design (like Duarte's *Slide:ology*) and Tufte's "scathing criticism" as helpful guidelines for presenters but caution "the advice is not evidence-based, it relies on common design principles, and it is not specific to the entrepreneurial context" (p. 4). They also cite Galbraith et al.'s 2014 assertion that only recently have researchers started to empirically examine design and effectiveness. Farkas (2008) similarly notes "Although there are certainly clear and precise arguments and well-conceived research studies, much of the public discussion of PowerPoint is unhelpful and an unsteady platform for ongoing investigation". He further calls us to consider PowerPoint not as one genre but many genres. Audiences are familiar with differences in PowerPoint presentation genres, says Farkas, like "a welcoming talk at a banquet, a sales presentation, …a technical briefing within a workgroup, and a scholarly presentation at an academic conference." Differences in genres of PowerPoint presentations "have profound implications for the way in which visual support is provided" (n.p.), so claims about deck design should take those genres into account.

Research on Trade Associations

This study will examine the presentation speakers who work at the trade association of IHIRA, which will be described further in Chapter 3, Methods. Trade organizations or associations "serve as agents for disseminating and exchanging information within industries, and often act as informal regulators by setting voluntary standards of behavior for industry members" (Rajwani, Lawton, & Phillips, 2015, p. 225). Therefore, a trade organization offers knowledge products to members; in this case, IHIRA offers a news source and magazine discussing issues in the industry, market tools and studies, and educational opportunities like online training programs for employees, among others. Previous writing studies research has only begun to research trade organizations. Alford (1989) studied collaborative texts of a hospital trade association, finding workers created and adapted texts and genres flexibly to enter dialogues with geographically dispersed members. Writers adopted organizational personas instead of valuing individual creativity, and most collaboration with members occurred through texts instead of talk. Like Alford's hospital trade association, IHIRA has geographically dispersed members and emphasizes collaborative writing—though collaboration occurs through many channels. Edenfield (2017) examined worker cooperatives, which are mutually owned like trade associations but differ as they have no outside members and emphasize a balance between profits and member needs. Cooperatives, like technical communication, value relationships between people and texts, and Edenfield advocates bringing technical communication theory to bear on co-ops' challenges, successes, and failures.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This dissertation examines how speakers who work at a smaller trade organization created and delivered slide presentations at a large buying market called the Market Expo. While I briefly described this setting in Chapters 1 and 2, below I further describe the setting and context, as well as how I negotiated researching in such a space.

Context: Some Background on IHIRA and the Market Expo

The Independent Home Improvement Retail Association (IHIRA) is a trade organization for the home improvement industry and explains its mission to help independent home improvement centers, lumberyards, and hardware stores, regardless of their wholesale affiliation become more profitable retailers (company website, 2017). According to one of my participants, there are about 35,000 independent home improvement retail stores that exist in the US and in Canada. These stores carry hardware items, lumber and building materials, and farm and home supplies in various combinations. The term independent retail means the stores are owned and operated by local people, rather than large corporations like Home Depot or Lowes. As described in Chapter 2, Literature Review, independent retailers then purchase goods to sell from product distributors at buying markets—unlike big box stores like Home Depot and Wal-Mart who have large corporate buying resources, as well as resources to help run operations and other aspects of the store. These big box stores directly compete in the same markets as independent stores, both in small towns and large urban areas. Increasingly independent stores are also competing with e-commerce sites like Amazon and its vast and quick delivery network. Competing against such big entities means independents must carefully run their businesses from products offered to marketing campaigns to in-store operations. Unlike big boxes that have entire departments for these areas, independents might only have one or two people, and, many times, each employee wears multiple hats. To get access to some of the resources to help them run their business, independent stores are members of the Independent Home Improvement Retail Association (IHIRA).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Literature Review, trade associations or organizations are the agents for disseminating and sharing information within industries (Rajwani, Lawton, & Phillips, 2015). Therefore, a trade organization offers knowledge products to members; in this case, IHIRA offers a news source and magazine discussing issues in the industry, market tools and studies, and educational opportunities like online training programs for employees, among others. Trade association texts help explain how IHIRA enacts its mission through three ways: education, advocacy, and association.

1. Education resources include paid and free online training modules and a college-level certification program, as well as the IHIRA print and digital magazine offering industry news and how-to advice.
2. Advocacy initiatives include a state of independents conference, an advisory group, and research studies on topics like social media, employee compensation, and operations costs.
3. Association resources include roundtable networking events to discuss issues like financial affairs, human resources, and marketing, as well as an all-industry conference.

These initiatives, as well as seminar presentations and other informational products produced by IHIRA emphasize the association's devotion to their members' concerns and show the importance trade organizations place on asking what their members need and developing resources to help them in response. Association members then drive much of the invention and content development for the association's information products, influencing the invention and project management strategies of association workers.

Clarifying Organizations and Actors at the Market Expo

Because many organizations and actors are working together at the Market Expo, I want to reiterate and further explain each entity to help readers understand that HDI and IHIRA are different entities, even though independent store owners can be clients of HDI and as well as members of IHIRA.

Table 2, below, explains a few terms to help distinguish relationships, as well as the acronyms I will use to describe them.

Terms	Explanation
Hardware Distributor International (HDI)	The company who sells products and programs to independent store owners. They also host annual buying events, which are trade shows, like the Market Expo.
Market Expo	The trade show and buying event where store owners come to learn about and order new products to sell in their stores and new programs to help them run their businesses.
IHIRA	A trade association and not-for-profit organization for independent hardware store owners. Store owners are members of IHIRA automatically by nature of owning an independent hardware store. They can request information and initiatives through IHIRA, who supplies them with education programs, advocacy, and networking opportunities. IHIRA also offers training programs and other resources that members can purchase for additional fees. While HDI is one of many distributors who sell products to store owners, IHIRA is the only trade organization for the hardware industry. Therefore, HDI invites IHIRA to the Market Expo so that store owners who attend the Market Expo can also talk with and get resources from IHIRA. HDI also asks IHIRA to present educational seminars on topics that help store owners run their businesses.
Educational Seminar Presentations	HDI offers educational seminar presentations at specific times during the Market Expo where store owners can attend and learn about ways to improve their business. Because part of IHIRA's mission is to educate, advocate, and sponsor networking opportunities for its members, HDI asks them to present a few of the educational seminar presentations.
Market Research Group (MRG)	This is a company who conducts market research and consulting for hardware store owners. It is not a part of IHIRA, though sometimes the two organizations collaborate on projects. Store owners must pay for customized research studies and recommendations. HDI invites MRG to the Market Expo as another resource for store owners to explore.

Table 2: A Description of Organizations and Actors at the Market Expo

To further emphasize how these actors and organizations interact, consider the following example. An independent hardware store in Florida may come to the Market Expo to buy products from HDI for its store. They may also be considering adding a new store or expanding their business. As HDI customers, they can get some information, like a generalized demographic study of their business area, free of charge because they are regular buyers at HDI's Market Expo. They can also visit the IHIRA booth at the Expo, and, as members of IHIRA, they can participate in their Operating Costs Study, which means they submit some of their financial information, IHIRA uses it and the information from other participating stores to compile a benchmarking report, and then returns a customized report to the store as well as the generalized one--all free of charge for being IHIRA members and participating. If the store owners want more specific, in-depth research and consulting beyond those studies, they can purchase a customized study and recommendations from the Market Research Group.

Background: My Initial Experiences at the Market Expo

I conducted a pilot study in spring 2015 with the goal of examining how texts, people, and other objects interacted in the space of the Market Expo, taking field notes from a booth in the Services location of the show floor. I also attended some of the educational seminars offered to attendees.

I've attended the Market Expo for many years when working as a research analyst at MRG, the market research company who specifically works with the hardware and home improvement industry. As explained in Table 2 and the previous example, MRG and the research products it offered were one of the many spliced in actors (Spinuzzi, 2008) as a service HDI offered to dealers. That is, HDI didn't have its own, in-house market research division. So, in order to provide that service to its dealers, they outsourced it to another firm. My role at that time, as an MRG analyst, was to answer questions at the information booth and help dealers understand how they could benefit from market research and consulting. I worked at that research firm because a family member was a senior partner and consultant there. His role at the Market Expo also involved staying at the booth to answer questions and meet potential clients and retailers, but he also was asked to present various topics at educational seminar presentations. These topics incorporated market research and industry trends he and the firm had examined, and the topics varied by market. Aside from proof-reading his slides, making minor design changes, or emailing the slides to attendees who had requested them after the presentation, I was not involved in my family member's seminar presentations. Instead, I got to hang back at the booth in case dealers stopped by with questions.

After beginning graduate coursework, I started to see my experiences at the Market Expo in a new way. As I learned about theories of workplace writing and the messy, polycontextual settings of distributed work, I realized how some of the writing and texts at the Market Expo could help to flesh out those theories. I returned to the Market Expo hoping to see some of this writing in action, following Berkenkotter (2001)'s advice to "follow the texts" and "follow the actors." While attending the seminars, I realized that the types of multimodal texts mediating interactions between these speakers, their audience, and the other actants spliced into the Market Expos were often slide-deck-style educational seminar presentations. Furthermore, with so much going on at the Market, I needed to scope my study to a boundary object (Star & Griesemer, 1989) that bridged motives into a single activity, and the seminar presentation would work.

Designing the Study

After conducting pilot research and deciding to focus on the slide-deck seminar presentations by IHIRA members, I had to think about how to observe, record, and analyze that activity. Drawing from Writing Activity and Genre Frameworks (as described in greater detail in Chapter 2, Literature Review), I decided to consider the presentation not just as one text or event but as a set of genres to collect. In this case, the seminar presentation is such a text, and because we understand genre as social action (Miller, 1984) and as functioning as sets (Devitt, 1991), systems (Bazerman, 1994; Russell, 1997;Yates & Orlikowski, 2002), genre repertoires (Yates & Orlikowski, 1994) and genre ecologies (Freedman & Smart, 1997; Spinuzzi & Zachry, 2000; Spinuzzi, 2003), or genre assemblages (Spinuzzi, 2004), we can look at all the texts in the seminar presentation system: the slide deck or visual materials, the speech of the presentation itself, the dialogue and questions from audience members, feedback forms, and the texts referred to (like previous studies or articles) and developed consequently (like later presentations developed using images and templates). This system of both official and unofficial genres serves as a unit of analysis that focuses on the object of the presentation--teaching and learning best business practices while still accounting for the differing objectives described by each of the stakeholders. Furthermore, examining this system of texts shows how the messages and objectives live on past the seminar and past the Market Expo, acting as a bridge for distributed work.

My originating research questions (Bazerman, 2008) were broad, but I wanted to keep a focus on questions that would get to the heart of how these writers work and what looking at them can tell us about the different types of workplaces our students may enter. Bazerman (2008) uses the term "originating questions" to describe "the fundamental questions that form basic curiosities and motivations for inquiry" (p. 303), and such questions also "help us remember the serious stakes in the research and help keep the rest of our work in focus" (p. 303). Originating questions aren't necessarily answered through one study or by examining one site or situation, but they help us remember the larger goals of our work. As we move through the research process, we can generate more "specifying questions" to help us "focus our research attention, letting us know what we are looking for and suggesting criteria for knowing whether we have found it with sufficient certainty and detail" (p. 303). My originating questions included: how are people using texts to link their work across boundaries? What kind of skills do writers entering adhocratic workplaces need, and what kinds of texts do they produce? In distributed work, who is creating the texts that coordinate work? As I began specifying to the local site of the Market Expo and the IHIRA speakers, I focused on:

1. What specific literate activities are performed in the course of preparing and delivering the seminar presentations? Who performs these activities?
2. How does the work done to compose, present, and experience these seminars at the Market Expo illustrate or challenge existing theories of distributed work?

Negotiating Insider Status and Making Familiar Strange

My background and familiarity with the Market Expo and IHIRA gave me some insider knowledge of some of the writing processes and workflows happening. I made a point not to just run on my assumptions and previous knowledge, however. I drew from Tavory and Timmermans (2014) suggestions to defamiliarize myself by making the everyday, mundane activities strange. One way to take a step back was to look at how IHIRA described itself and mission during the seminar presentations, using their own words as much as possible. I found it much easier to reflect on what I'd observed and how my previous experience might be informing that when I reached the coding stage, where I had more time to write reflective memos about the process. I knew qualitative research could be "messy" (Rickly, 2007), and I wanted to remain reflexive, which McKinnon, Asen, Chavez and Howard (2016) describe as remaining mindful of the relationship we have with the research topic. Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006) recommend researchers examine their relationship to the area of interest, looking to uncover the links between the personal and emotion and more intellectual operations as a way to make assumptions explicit to the researcher. Drawing from Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory approach, they recommend researchers journal how they are thinking about the research area and how that might influence analysis of the data.

I was trying to negotiate my own subjectivity throughout this study, aware of my position as a writing studies researcher but also as a former colleague and friend. I wanted to reciprocate, and serve as a participant-observer, but I had to negotiate what that meant in my position. Initially I'd considered doing some freelance profiles for them free-of-charge, but my own time and financial constraints didn't permit that option. I decided my participation and reciprocal contribution would be to help collect the feedback forms and return them to the HDI person for the speakers, which saved them a bit of time and helped to get some follow-up remarks as they were leaving. I scheduled separate, post-reflective interviews long after the show to get their perspective because they did not have time to meet with me during the show. They also didn't stay for the full two days; other IHIRA members ran the booth while those who presented headed off to other speaking engagements or back to the main office for their "day-jobs"--again, this reflects the fractured, competing objectives in this type of work.

Methods – Data Collection

Over the five Market Expos, and with IRB approval and consent gained, I audio recorded IHIRA member's educational seminars, then collected the slide decks or other texts included in the presentation, like audience feedback forms. While recording the presentation, I sat as a participant in the audience, taking notes on audience reactions or comments or ideas for things to code for in the future. After transcribing the audio recording, I triangulated those transcripts with the slide decks and my own observations. Table 3 below shows the titles of presentations and slide decks I collected.

Market Expo	**Title**	**Speaker** [4]
Spring 2016	Five Tips for Growing Transaction Size	Max
Spring 2016	A Look at Leading Edge Home Improvement Retail Trends	Noelle
Spring 2016[5]	A Look at Leading Edge Home Improvement Retail Trends	Noelle
Fall 2016	Quick Wins: 20 Retail Ideas	Noelle
Fall 2016	Secrets of Strong Retail Leadership: Leading by the Numbers	Ned
Spring 2017	Quick Wins: 20 Retail Ideas	Max
Spring 2017	Secrets of Strong Retail Leadership: Leading by the Numbers	Ned

Table 3: Summary of Market Expo Seminars

Following the seminars, I interviewed the speakers through semi-structured interviews. Initially, I'd hoped to also interview attendees to ask if they found the seminar helpful and how they would use the

[4] Names listed are pseudonyms.
[5] Noelle presented "A Look at Leading Edge Home Improvement Retail Trends" two times at the Spring 2016 market, both of which I attended and recorded. She used the same deck both times.

information. However, I quickly realized that tracking audience members down was nearly impossible because they left quickly to return to the market floor and their many planned activities to accomplish in the 3 days of the event. If I did have a minute to talk to them, I certainly didn't have enough time to give the consent form and background for my project.

Post Reflective Interviews

I also conducted post-reflective interviews with the speakers after the show, recording them via phone. Immediately following the presentations, the speakers were busy, often collecting the cards and feedback forms while sticking around a few minutes after the presentation and telling audience members how to meet up with them at their own booth on the show floor. While I was dismayed, I also marveled at how these circumstances only further reinscribed the notion of adhocracy and competing objectives--everyone was on a tight schedule because they had multiple goals and objectives to accomplish during this event, including the speakers.

I treated these post-seminar, semi-structured reflective interviews (see Appendix A for questions), much in the spirit of DePew (2007). DePew advocates going beyond textual analysis to triangulate data by interviewing digital composition researchers regarding published studies. These interviews allow the authors to explain certain choices and constraints faced in their study, shedding additional light on their findings. For my study, these interviews helped to explain how the seminar presentations fit into a larger content management and invention process of the association—processes that have changed greatly over the past few years in efforts to better manage projects.

Interview participants included three current and one former upper management association employees. Interviews took place following the Spring 2017 Market Expo, though recorded phone calls, except for Sue's interview, which had to be conducted through email due to her travel schedule. I was also able to interview Max following his Spring 2016 presentation, as well after his Spring 2017 presentation. Through the course of the two-year study, participants' job titles changed, but all participants had worked for the association in various text-producing roles for at least five years:

- Noelle, (she/her) a former director of membership services, who presented two of the recorded seminars
- Max, (he/him) a publisher and executive vice president, who presented three of the recorded seminars
- Ned, (he/him) an education initiative executive director, who presented four of the recorded seminars
- Sue, (she/her) a communications director, who did not present any recorded seminars but helped design and author slide decks and other texts, in addition to other project management initiatives

Observing and collecting the presentation decks showed me how much speakers drew from previous content or an ecology of resources to create their seminar presentations. In the spirit of "following the texts" and "following the actors" (Berkenkotter, 2001), when interviewing speakers, I asked about those other texts that they referenced or repurposed, which led me to asking for additional materials, like slide decks they had reused or IHIRA studies they referenced, like the annual Operating Costs Study (OCS). Learning more about their processes in interviews also drove me to talk to a graphic designer and communications director to ask about how they managed these processes and how they had changed processes for creating and reusing texts. Table 4 summarizes my data collecting methods and output.

Method	Output
Audio recording and attending seminars	6 Seminars total, each about one hour in length, were recorded, resulting in 6 presentation transcripts
Collecting artifacts used in the presentation	5 slide decks total (one per seminar, because one speaker presented the same seminar 2 times at the same market); 36 audience feedback forms; 25 from Max's "Transaction Size" and 10 from Noelle's "Home Improvement Trends" presentations
Post-reflective interviews with Speakers	One interview after the "Transaction Size" presentation with Max totaling 13 minutes; interviews with Max, Ned, and Noelle after collecting data from all presentations each lasting 50 - 60 minutes;
Following initial Post-reflective Interviews with Max, Noelle, and Ned	
Post-reflective interview with Sue, the graphic designer, about processes for creating slide presentations and other IHIRA texts	Interview with Sue via email resulting in 8 pages of typed responses and 8 pages of handouts regarding team structures and policies when creating texts for IHIRA
Additional artifacts collected	When talking with Ned about his process for creating the leadership slide deck, he mentioned slide decks from previous events he had pulled from and sent them to me, resulting in 2 more slide decks; similarly, because many of the presentations mentioned IHIRA's Annual Operating Costs Study, I collected PDFs of the study for 2015 and 2016.

Table 4: Data Methods and Outputs

Analyzing Data

Starter Codes

I began coding interview transcripts using starter and open codes (Spinuzzi, 2013), drawing from a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Some of the initial themes I found generated codes focused on strategies of invention, member interaction, processes, job and team descriptions, expertise, recycling content, managing documents or tools, processes of composing, and skills desired for future workers. I used a similar approach of starter and open codes for analyzing seminar transcripts. These starter codes focused on rhetorical strategies like directing the talk or asking questions to the audience, sources they referred to, and specific ways they described IHIRA and the industry. I then went through and coded using the same starter codes for the interview transcripts and creating axial codes. Axial codes, according to Spinuzzi (2010) help draw connections between open and starter codes and get created as the researcher looks for codes that appear together between coding rounds and then develops codes to describe the relationship between them.

For analyzing slide decks, I followed a similar open and starter code process, initially looking for images or ideas and templates reused from one presentation to another. I compared slide decks to each other (image to image) as well as comparing transcripts to the decks. Following the WAGR framework of genre as assemblages, I sought to consider each of the slide decks and their presentation transcripts as part of a larger document cycle and created the following spreadsheet, featured below in Figure 2, to keep track of how each deck was compared to each other and how each transcript was compared to each deck as I searched for images and design reuse as well as ideas or anecdotes reused in the

Slide order #	Slide counter # (if there)	Slide	Slide Summary	Slide text	Tran-script	Quick notes- Transcript	Transcript coding	Slide coding-reuse	Source (where else reused)	Source Picture	Transcript Source	Similar transcript

Figure 1: Coding Spreadsheet Example

transcripts.

Refined Codes: Looking for Broader Patterns of Reuse

After a few coding rounds, I came to focus on creating codes to capture broad patterns of reuse, particularly focusing on the ecology of documents, texts, images, and stories that speakers drew from when presenting. This focus on the ecology of recycled content and sources resulted in the following coding categories, listed in Table 5.

Ecology refined codes	Description
eco-housekeeping	"housekeeping" and/or how to share the deck/get access to the presentation materials
eco-IHIRA	IHIRA programs and/or training products; IHIRA book, mission statement, ways to connect
eco-HR & O	Published IHIRA pieces or IHIRA research like CODB, Merchandising for Profit
eco-IHIRA Conf	Other IHIRA conferences like SOIC
eco-HDI	HDI programs and resources
eco-on the floor	could be sample stores, product features, etc., but not specific HDI programs or IHIRA booth, even "let's continue this convo on the floor" or "see me for more info after"
eco-other books	and references, like leadership books, free resources, or pop culture references like "Always be closing"
eco-other retailer	Something another retailer did, could be RMCP student or not, or giving examples of how IHIRA as a business or other businesses operate/their processes
eco-dialogue	asking the audience, shout outs, conversations with audience members, encouraging participation and asking questions during the presentation

Table 5: List of Ecology-Refined Codes

Finally, narrowing for a last focus on slideware practices, I drew from previous coding rounds to focus specifically on how speakers followed “best practices” advice regarding presentation concepts like reading from slides and balancing text and images.

CHAPTER 4: FLEXIBLE PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROCESSES[6]

Despite the overall study's focus on presentations, this chapter concentrates on the project management strategies of generating informational products at IHIRA, as gleaned through post-reflective interviews with seminar speakers and IHIRA senior management. IHIRA is a distributed workplace, and studying texts there showed how much of the writer's composing processes were shaped by their workplace's project management strategies. Explicitly focusing on project management at such an ad-hoc workplace, instead of a larger, more siloed corporation, enriches our understanding of the varieties of project management technical communicators face.

Coding and analysis revealed that at IHIRA, texts are managed and assembled across teams of association workers and their member constituents. In this type of workplace, project management is an iterative and rhetorical process as teams interact with each other and outside customers (association members). As technology and rhetorical demands change, this organization actively modifies their project management strategies. For IHIRA workers, project management strategies emerged from and responded to rhetorical situations as workers developed expertise and content in conjunction with their member constituents. As one participant explained: "I'd like to say it has some sort of tie-in to higher function process management, but no, it really kind of developed out of what we thought made sense." Looking at what "made sense" to these workers, developing informal project management strategies shows how TC work in distributed environments involves both authoring texts and developing systems to manage their own work processes.

These initiatives, as well as seminar presentations and other informational products produced by IHIRA emphasize the association's devotion to their members' concerns and show the importance trade organizations place on asking what their members need and developing resources to help them in response. Association members then drive much of the invention and content development for the

[6] Parts of this chapter were first published in Technical Communication in 65(2). By the Society of Technical Communication © 2018 Society for Technical Communication

association’s information products, influencing the invention and project management strategies of association workers.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Methods, this study’s original research questions sought to examine how these speakers composed and delivered presentations in a smaller, more distributed work environment. Bazerman (2008) suggests a framework of moving from “originating,” or more general research questions to “specifying questions” which help us focus our research attention, so to examine the project management strategies underlying those processes, this chapter narrows to more specifically examine the following questions (More detail is provided in Appendix B):

Research Questions:

1) How does the trade association manage projects and content in conjunction with member needs?
2) How have processes developed and changed for producing content over the past few years?
3) How does this case study compare to other TC research on project management and symbolic-analytic work?

Managing Projects in the Trade Association and Sharing Expertise

Members of IHIRA, as an interactive audience, have a direct influence in the content and information products the association produces. To keep up with their needs, many of the IHIRA employees stay in contact with members in multiple communication flows, as Figure 2 demonstrates.

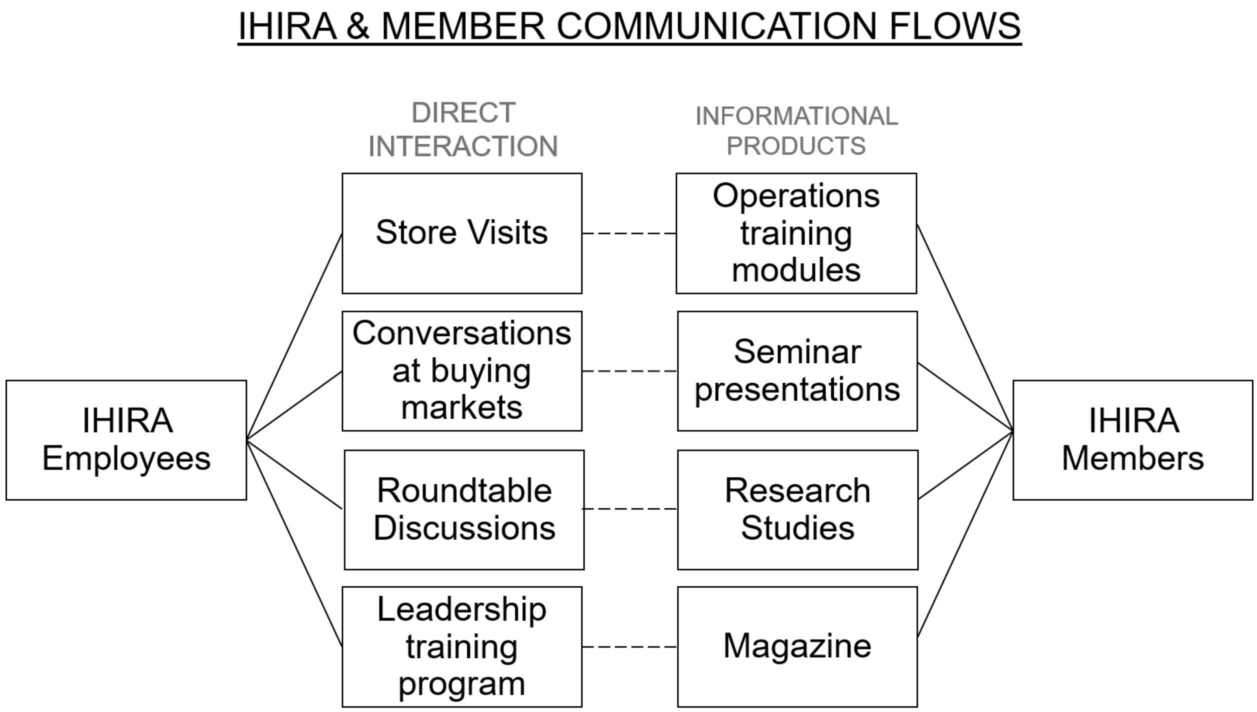


Figure 2: Communication Flows Between Members and Association Workers

Max explained how association writers visit stores across North America to talk to retailers and research stories, while other workers might talk to retailers in informal conversations at distributor shows or after presentations. Retailers come together to meet with IHIRA employees at more formal settings like roundtables. All workers who engage with retailers in any setting come together once a year in a content development retreat.

Roundtable discussions, conversations at markets and store visits offer a place for IHIRA employees to gain subject-matter expertise and hear constituents' needs and ideas, which directly figure into the content writers create and ideas they bring back to IHIRA. In each of the post-reflective interviews, participants described member interaction in conjunction with invention, or generating and developing content packages. The retreat provides a place for IHIRA employees to discuss what topics are concerning members or happening in the industry and then plan content for the magazine, training courses, and other informational products. Sue explained that each team brings a few story ideas to the retreat, then divides the work tasks amongst the team members. Team members range in age and experience, so the retreat also helps to put them in conversations with Max and Ned, both of whom have over 20 years in the industry.

In some instances, Max and Ned act as subject-matter experts and quickly coordinate with team members to find sources. In other ways, however, editors and team members have devoted time to talking with retailers on multiple levels, including attending various roundtables and turning to social media to engage with members and research for stories. Developing expertise as a writer then becomes an integral part of the project management process at IHIRA. Writers can develop expertise by connecting with other association workers, and they can also work directly with their audience to develop content pieces. The unique structure of a trade association means it must constantly interact with the members it serves, allowing the audience (association members) to become more active in the rhetorical situation. The audience is involved, drawing from Johnson (1998), meaning they are actively engaged and participating in communication. According to Lauren (2018), such participation facilitates a rhetorical agency. Writers at IHIRA have the opportunity to actively participate in learning opportunities with their audience of members through the multiple communication flows.

This rhetorical situation also means a top-down, prescriptive approach to project management could constrict writers or limit their agency to develop expertise. With multiple points of interacting with the audience, writers have to develop and refine flexible processes for managing projects. Noelle explained how researching for the development of training modules and attending the roundtables helped her develop expertise in the industry:

> I personally made a lot of effort to not only put on those things but sit through them and learn and ask questions. I had to become confident in my own abilities to know what I was talking about too, so spending time with [Max] and [Ned] or in those classes and roundtables and being able to develop some of that training as well was very helpful. (personal communication)

IHIRA employees' direct interaction with members helps facilitate ideas for content packages and feedback, as well as helping to initiate newer employees into the industry. Knowledge and expertise then get passed through various processes between newer and experienced writers and association members, which IHIRA's project management strategies must accommodate.

Roundtables and Certification Programs: Sources for Invention and Expertise

The retreat represents one spot where IHIRA draws from audience member suggestions to create informational products to meet members' needs. Ned also explained how roundtable discussions came out of conversations with retailers who wanted to get together with other members to discuss issues like marketing and merchandising. Roundtable discussions led to suggestions for other topic roundtables, like human resources and financial management. Conversations with members involved in roundtables led to creating a college-level management certification program for store employees who want to take on greater leadership roles in their organizations, which one of my participants described as an important need to address, as the average age of an independent home improvement retailer is around 60. Students in the program must complete a business improvement plan for their stores, which they enact, write up, and present to their classmates. Alumni from the class come back to help present case studies and network with new students. As Ned explained, IHIRA stores these capstone improvement projects and shares them with new students each year, as well as uses some ideas in seminar presentations or magazine stories. Storing and sharing the capstone projects marks another way IHIRA collaborates with members to create and share information assets.

Breaking Down Department Silos: Considering New Ways to Manage Projects

Like many organizations in the past few years, IHIRA has gone through a process of reorganizing its production team to break down siloed departments in which workers kept processes, ideas, and information within their department instead of collaborating across departments and sharing resources. While perhaps not the flattened co-ops (Edenfield, 2007) or all-edge adhocracies Spinuzzi (2015) describes, IHIRA sought to reorganize teams from marketing, design, training, and research to better utilize resources and produce more interactive content packages. Figure 3 demonstrates their original model of working, which visualizes how, just a few years prior, IHIRA had separately operating teams for areas like training, research, and the magazine, and few team members interacted or shared knowledge.

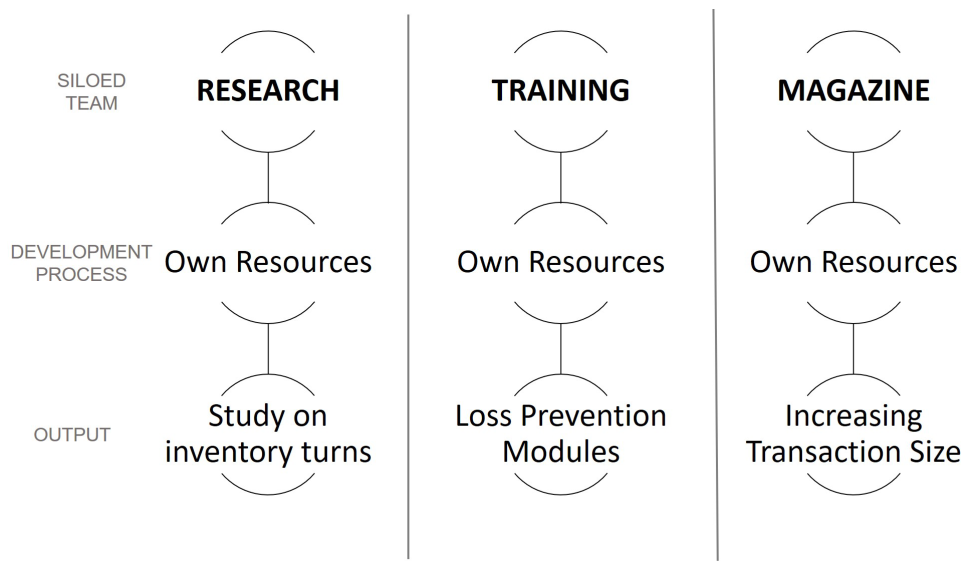


Figure 3: Original Siloed Model

Max gave an example of the training department working on loss prevention modules while the magazine department worked on stories about increasing transaction size and the research team conducted a study on inventory turns. Because each department was siloed, no one was sharing resources, even though some resources could be helpful to other departments. To change this process, IHIRA brought everyone together in one area and created teams with a peer-feedback loop. This meant everyone would think about loss prevention as an organizational topic, where one team would research loss prevention and then all teams would figure out which elements of the findings worked for magazine stories. Figure 4 shows how organizing teams around a research topic meant sharing resources.

Figure 4: Organizing Resources Around Project Topic

Max extended the loss prevention example: "a story in a magazine might talk about here are three retailers who had a huge loss in the business and what they did to mitigate those losses in the future." Training materials could include quizzes and videos on how to spot potential loss vulnerabilities. A seminar presentation could walk audience members through five steps of training employees. Max further describes:

> We look at what's this topic? Then how do we tell the story differently using these different resources we have? We have a pool of information, and 50% of that might cross over into each one of the different ways we use it, but each one still has a unique element to it. (personal communication)

New Job Titles, New Processes

Restructuring teams also meant changes in job titles. Sue started at IHIRA in 2008 as a graphic designer before advancing to a design supervisor, art director, then creative director. Through these roles, she noticed a disconnect between editors and designers. Typically, editors determined topics to cover, wrote most of the story, and then handed a finished draft to designers without much collaboration or communication. She explained:

> This seemed like such a waste of talent and opportunity to create more meaningful story packages. When writers and designers work together on stories from beginning to end, they both learn more about the subject matter and provide different perspectives on the best way to present the information together. (personal communication)

Under the new team concept, Sue's title became "Director of Communication," and editors, developers, and designers began reporting to her. Max worked with her to determine how to best assemble employees into teams and decided on 10 teams of three to five people based on subject matter. No team leaders were assigned, so each team could autonomously divide labor and hold each other accountable, resulting in a democratic and employee-led structure. Figure 5 shows how teams reassembled and adapted processes to generate different kinds of content collaboratively.

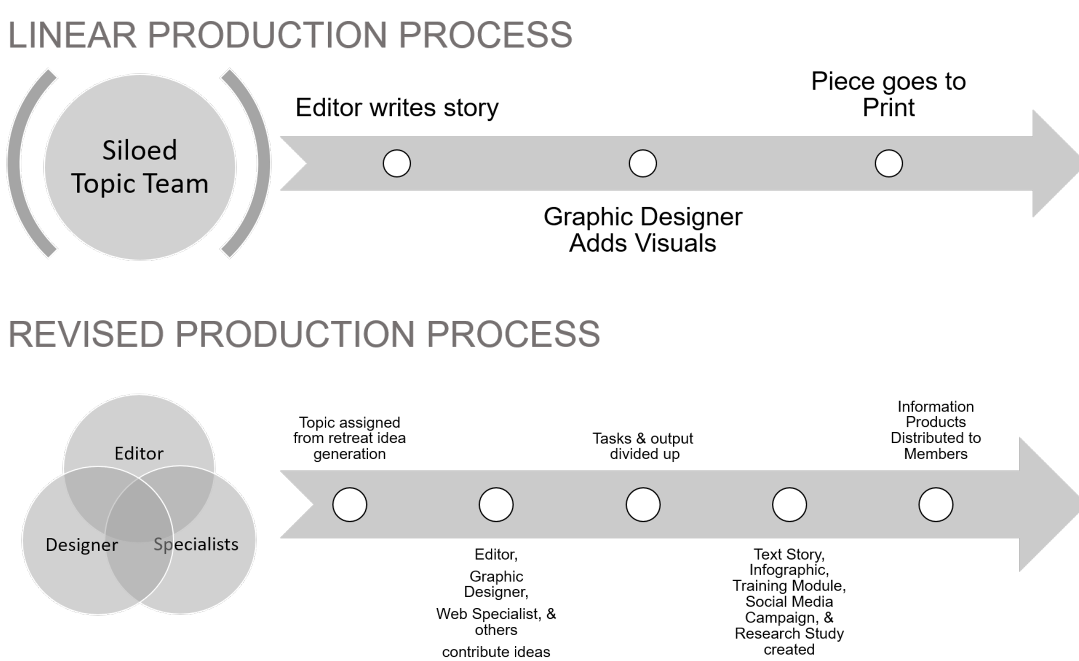


Figure 5: Reorganizing Project Management

Mixed Results

Magazine stories and online elements became more creative and interactive as people with different skill sets worked closer together. More staff members gained industry expertise and became more invested in the organization and the retailers they served. Having 10 teams, however, meant more processes, meetings, and deadlines, according to Sue. Lack of a team leader sometimes led to lack of initiative and accountability; some products were substandard, and workers missed deadlines. Aspects of project management like scheduling and accountability must be strategic, meaning they respond to the audience's needs and broader situation. In this case, the rhetorical situation between Max and Sue (rhetors) and project teams (audience) needed to be addressed.

Max and Sue decided to iterate their division of labor. They consolidated 10 teams until four remained and each team member only worked in two teams. Figure 6 shows how teams were consolidated from 10 topic areas to four broader topics. The four teams consolidated included:

1) How-to, Management, Operations, and Training
2) News and Research
3) Marketing and Outreach
4) Category Trends and New Products

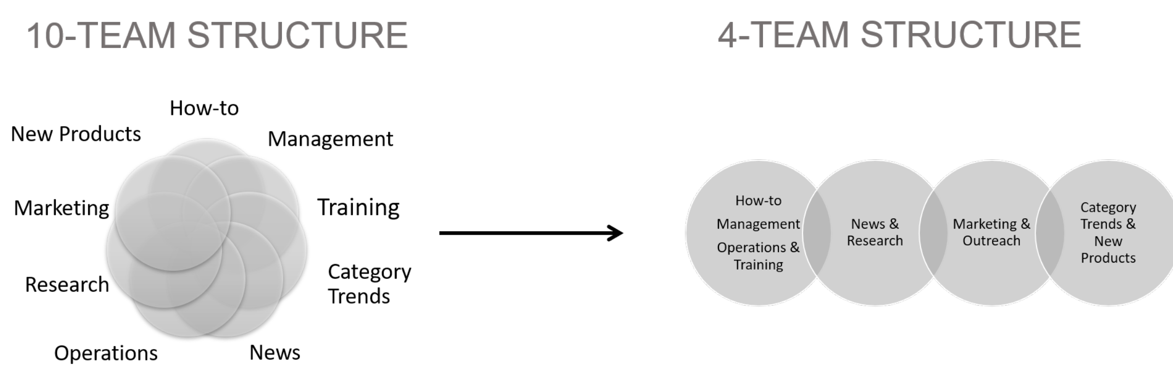


Figure 6: Consolidating Topic Teams

Responding to workers' need for accountability, Sue assigned a team leader for each team and created documents to outline specific member responsibilities. Additionally, each team included at least two editors, at least one designer, and at least one member with “special skills” like Web and video development, research skills, and social media expertise. Bringing these skill sets together for a whole process meant designers could offer suggestions for multiple ways to share information, such as creating infographics instead of text copy, earlier in the content creation process. Figure 7 shows how placing a team leader strategically with two editors, a designer, and a special skills worker was a response to the organization’s need to clarify accountability while maintaining different TCs’ contributions early in the invention process.

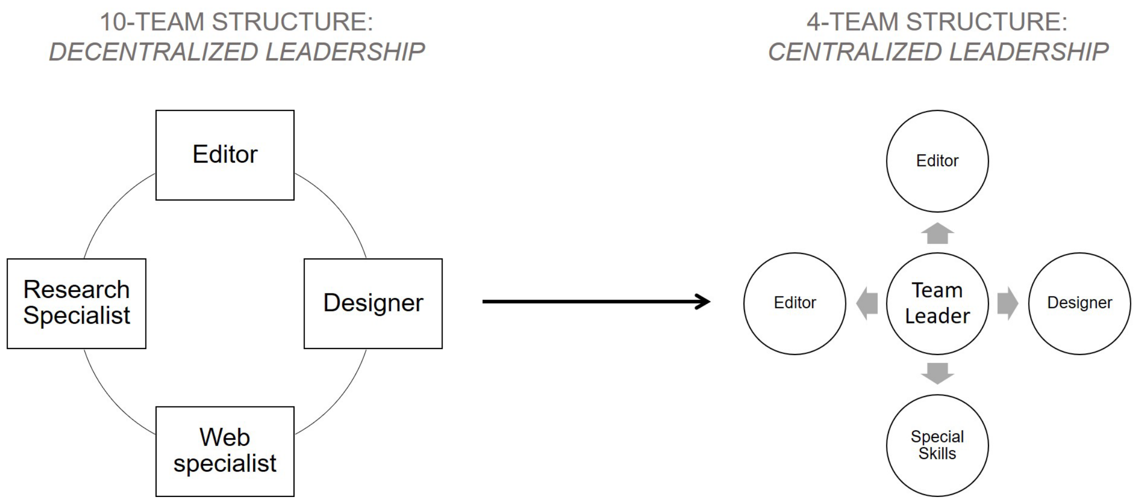


Figure 7: Condensing and Reorganizing Teams

Project Management Documents: Facilitating Distributed Work

Distributed work can lack a central organizing force, Swarts (2010) notes, which often leads to groups building their own infrastructure using information technologies and texts they create. As IHIRA worked with the new team approach, Sue developed documents to help teams manage processes. She created a three-month calendar to help teams focus not just on the upcoming magazine issue but projects three months out. With a project-focused structure, teams needed to plan in greater detail than previously. As a self-identified process person, Sue explained the best way to help people learn is through developing documents, whether through processes for checking out equipment, production process sheets, or roles and responsibilities guidelines. Creating documents helps to manage projects and lets employees take more active roles, but Sue stayed cautious not to create so many documents that workers would feel lost. These documents helped to stabilize work into repeat processes, but Sue developed documents continuously in response to team members asking questions or facing issues with projects. Not all projects have the same process, but these documents help to break down some aspects of work and give team members the chance to teach themselves and act as more empowered workers. This strategy for managing projects isn't a formal system, but it is highly rhetorical—responding to the needs of the audience (team members), with the purpose of giving enough direction for them to complete work but with processes that aren't prescriptive, which allows them to participate in managing the process. Some documents explain how to use the organization's tools, like Google Drive, Slack, Trello, and WordPress, to better collaborate and manage projects. As technical communication research has described (Slattery, 2007; Swarts, 2010; Spinuzzi 2007, 2015), distributed teams coordinate through writing and create processes and texts to manage their decentralized structure.

Example Project Management Process: Annual Operating Costs Study

Following the texts and processes of IHIRA's annual Operating Costs Study (OCS) shows how the four-team structure manages projects and information across each other and association members. For the study, IHIRA compiles financial data submitted by members into a report that shows industry averages and ways to gauge and improve their performance, focusing on metrics like sales, profits, and transaction size. Retailers participate by sending in their financial information through an online form, emailing their information, completing a print survey and mailing it, or faxing documents. IHIRA keeps the information confidential but does return to each participant a free personalized financial analysis of composite financial statements, including a strategic profit model, and a tool to calculate what-if scenarios.

The above process description shows how project management strategies at IHIRA are responsive to the rhetorical situation of the organization's work. Content information comes directly from the audience of association members, while the rhetors of IHIRA work to assemble the information to fit the purpose of the study—helping their members gauge and improve their business performance. First, IHIRA's CFO works with the news/research team to update, design, and print the survey. Then the marketing team steps in to work with the CFO to craft a promotional campaign to solicit responses from members. Members have multiple ways to submit their information, reflecting how IHIRA keeps up with technologies and processes of their members. Providing multiple ways to participate also shows how IHIRA meets the audience needs of their members; some may have extensive technical skills and standardized documents, while others may use less technical tools. The OCS directly reflects the mission and purpose of IHIRA—to help retailers, regardless of size or affiliation, be successful.

Once members send in their information, the CFO works with an intern to crunch numbers and build individual reports for each participant. Again, the participatory nature of these reports requires flexible project management strategies. As authors, the CFO and intern have to craft a report that meets the needs of the individual retailer. Once all the data has been compiled, the CFO works with the news/research team to write and design the study as a report. Together, they also identify numbers or metrics that are interesting and plan additional projects that involve the study. This might include a magazine story, a series of how-to videos about using the study to benchmark performance, or even a training module on how to utilize the study's information. The CFO and news/research teams' work of writing, designing, and planning future projects acts much like the retrospective meetings in Agile processes. The 2016 study came as an interactive package where users could choose their store classification (home improvement center, hardware, or lumber/building materials dealers), then enter their information for a direct comparison. Presenting the information as an interactive package shows again how IHIRA meets the needs of their audience and stakeholders, who can easily compare and forecast their own information and quickly conduct their own analysis.

The project lifecycle of the OCS study and materials extends to other IHIRA texts. Many of IHIRA's seminar presentations in this study referenced the OCS study. For example, two participants mentioned using the OCS as a benchmarking tool in a "Quick-Wins" seminar. Mentioning the study as one opportunity to help improve business also gave the speakers a chance to promote the study and solicit additional recipients.

An Iterative and Reflexive Process

Learning how to best involve people in project management strategies needs to take focus as we examine changing workplaces (Lauren, 2018). For IHIRA, developing ways for teams to communicate also means accounting for team members interacting with association members who participate directly in invention. The process is iterative and reflexive, as TCs work with audience members and in teams to develop broader content packages, but its user testing procedures are not as formal. As a trade organization, IHIRA emphasizes its mission to help retailers by interacting with its members in unofficial feedback loops and multiple methods of communication. Members participate as an active audience because of the rhetorical situation created by IHIRA that maximizes opportunities for their interaction. Prescriptive project methodologies risk losing out on such participation, which may explain why IHIRA iteratively develops strategies in response to audience needs.

Balancing Empowerment and Project Management

As my participants reorganized teams, they addressed the complex rhetorical situation in their organization. Managers had to craft tools to respond to team members' exigencies, but they also had to leave room for agency. The four-team structure, assigned team leader, and documents to help detail processes helped return some autonomy to employees, even though the process documents came from a director instead of being created through a more democratic process.

Developing Expertise and Allowing for Participation

Team members gain expertise and ethos (i.e., credibility) from working closely with member constituents and from learning from senior employees. Condensing to four teams allowed more workers to interact with members, leading to increased subject-matter expertise and buy-in to IHIRA's mission to help independent retailers. More team members interacted with association members, then collaborated to think in terms of content packages involving text, design, and interactive Web tools, instead of a linear process leading from editor to designer to web developer. Again, the organizational situation of IHIRA allowed for these different team members to participate early in the invention stage to conceptualize and manage projects.

Maximizing opportunities for interaction isn't always a smooth process, and project managers should expect "periods of confusion and frustration" (Lauren, 2018). Such periods occurred at IHIRA when trying to empower team members to take initiative and demonstrate willingness to learn—qualities each participant listed as important at their organization. According to Sue, "The biggest thing that I think applicants find difficult to understand is just how much we do and how fast we do it. Being able to multitask, manage time, problem solve and communicate effectively are crucial to organizations that are small and mighty." Communicating effectively at IHIRA also means being honest about one's abilities. Max explained, "Let's don't pretend that you know something that you don't know and don't try and make something appear that is something that it isn't." He described a former employee who always made a point when interviewing or presenting to tell people when she didn't understand and ask them to clarify, which disarmed members' expectations and created trust and credibility. Obtaining trust and credibility, especially with association members, is key to the audience/rhetor relationship in IHIRA's rhetorical situation. Lauren (2018) asserts project management methodologies can control both how teams communicate and what they develop. The organizational structure of IHIRA as a trade organization also allows for writers to interact openly and learn from member constituents. Formal project management strategies often include user testing as an official stage, but IHIRA communicators work iteratively with members throughout multiple project lifecycles.

Responding to IHIRA's organizational rhetorical situation, Sue and Max implemented team leaders, which lead to accountability. At the same time, the invention process of addressing topics with designers, specialists, and editors helped maintain some team member empowerment. Implementing team leaders allowed Sue to help push workers to take more ownership and initiative, and some workers saw this strategy as an opportunity to grow in the company. Fostering initiative can be one of the hiccups of rhetorically grounded project management practices. As Sue explained:

> Small companies really don't have the time to encourage staff to always be looking for ways to improve the things we do. Just because a project is done a certain way for 15 years, doesn't mean we should just do it that way for 15 more. Ask questions, bring new perspectives. It shows you care and you typically learn a lot from it. (personal communication)

IHIRA benefited from a rhetorical situation that valued team members and encouraged them to see content as packages and gain expertise through interacting with members. But they couldn't always explicitly encourage "taking initiative," likely because the distributed nature of their "small but mighty" organization required all workers to wear multiple hats, addressing multiple situations.

Creativity, Initiative, and the Importance of Personal Characteristics

Technical writers, who must often continually read their audience, also need to be aware of the unarticulated values of their distributed workplaces. Such awareness may be increasingly important in sites where project management is not a formalized process. Workplaces like IHIRA show how project management processes grow out of rhetorical situations. As experts in rhetorical analysis, TCs can actively and quickly contribute to these project management processes if they can identify and seize the opportunities. These opportunities don't exist as specific steps or check points in a project lifecycle or strict process; instead, TCs must advocate for early involvement in content processes and demonstrate their value to help develop content management practices that benefit the organization.

The association workers in Alford's (1989) study talked about adopting the persona of their organization and the times it might mean stifling their creativity and initiative. Conversely, at IHIRA, workers were encouraged to creatively solve problems and collaboratively approach designing and developing information products. The flexible processes at IHIRA "made space" (Lauren, 2018) for workers to participate in managing projects. Alford worked with a hospital association, however, and conducted her study before some of the information technologies allowed for trade organizations to be more widely dispersed and for multiple venues of reaching members. In Alford's case, personal characteristics like "problem solving" meant adhering to association guidelines and culture over looking for new ideas or creative solutions. At IHIRA, however, creative solutions and willingness to try led to career advancement, as Noelle stated,

> I would not have had the opportunities to move up and do different things at IHIRA and become a director in five years if I hadn't been willing to try different things or ask to be a part of different things, and I was willing to do that. (personal communication)

Worker initiative and willingness to learn became increasingly important as IHIRA created new products to respond to member needs, as Noelle further explained:

> Part of it is also a necessity of the business. If we wanted to be able to offer new things to the industry, someone had to do it, and the resources weren't there to hire somebody new. I was the one willing to do that, and so I got to try different things. (personal communication)

The personal characteristics Noelle, Sue, Max, and Ned cited as being important echo what Brumberger and Lauer (2015) found in studying technical communication job postings. This study furthers those findings, because as technical communicators continue to work in team and project-based distributed workplaces, they need to be prepared to take initiative and wear multiple hats for each project without depending upon regular reinforcement—or formalized steps like those of specific project management methodologies. Creating process documents at IHIRA allowed for stabilizing some procedures and offered some direction, but these documents did not necessarily provide guidelines to encourage workers to take opportunities and help revisit processes.

Conclusion

Though not drawing on specific project management strategies like Six Sigma or Agile, this organization creates and adapts flexible processes so technical communicators can best serve their organizational mission of helping members run successful businesses. In addition to the mission, processes respond to the rhetorical situation created between members and writers, as well as between managers and technical communicators. Managers work to empower these TCs who are taking on more project management roles, depending on their understanding of initiative. As TC educators, we need to take into account that our students might not be working under formal project management models, meaning they must continue to use their expert rhetorical skills to read their audience of managers as well as end-users. Practitioners must also pay close attention to the organizational needs of their workplaces so they can be prepared to implement or revise project management strategies that best meet organizational goals. TCs can take a more active role in project management, particularly in distributed work, if they recognize and seize such opportunities.

CHAPTER 5: REUSE IS A CENTRAL TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION SKILL THAT'S HARD TO GRAPPLE WITH

To prepare students for how they might reuse texts or elements in the workplace, we need to examine how practitioners reuse content, not as self-plagiarism or because they're lazy, but because they see such content as part of a larger content package and understand how reuse is rhetorical. The previous chapter showed how IHIRA shifted team structures to reorganize resources around a project topic and content package that produced multiple texts. This chapter will focus on what parts were reused throughout presentations and how the participants characterized reuse and their reuse strategies. Specifying research questions (Bazerman, 2008) include:

1) What are the reuse practices of these speakers? What gets reused?
2) How do they conceive of reuse as part of their workplace writing processes?
3) What does that add to our understanding of reuse in distributed workplaces?

Findings: Following Their Own Process, Not the Intended One of Designers

IHIRA, despite managing multiple knowledge products and publications, doesn't have a formal content management system, though at time of writing they were in the process of migrating assets to a Google drive. Designers created a standard PowerPoint template for speakers to use, as Sue explains:

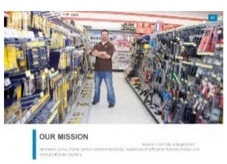
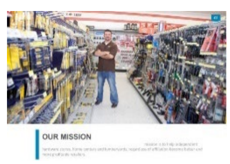
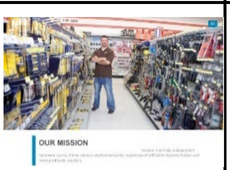
> Right now, I have developed several templates and anyone giving a presentation develops the presentation with that template. Ideally, if they finish in time, they would send it to me to review before it's finalized. This has not been the case with the exception of SOIC. (personal communication)

Sue further noted that she intended to especially focus on presentation decks following a more consistent look for the following year. Despite the new 4-team structure of managing projects, where a designer was included on each team, not all presentation decks started with standardized templates.

Max described Sue's intended process as "best case" but admitted:

kind of worst-case scenario would be, I would take one of the existing templates from a presentation we've done, and I would update it with the information of the story that I want to tell in the presentation, clean it up the best as I can, and just kind of go with it that way. (personal communication)

Whether the speakers followed the designer-recommended best process of starting with the design-approved template or not, the five presentation decks studied used the same overall theme for beginning slides. Figure 8 compares the first five slides of each deck.

"Leadership" Spring 2017	**"Quick Wins" Fall 2016**	**"Quick Wins" Spring 2017**	**"Home Improvement Trends" Spring 2016**	**"Transaction Size" Spring 2016**
				
				
				
				

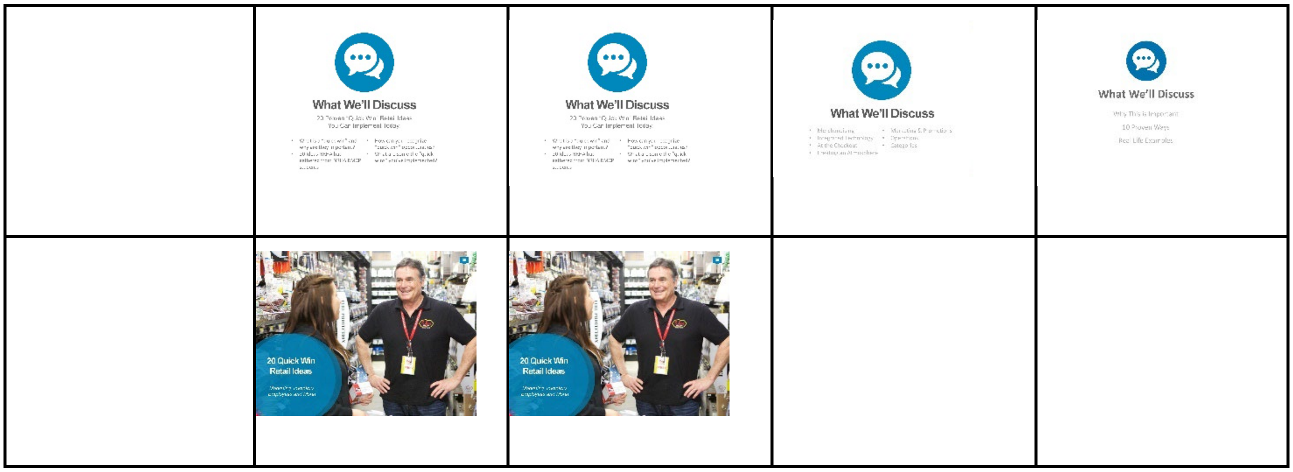


Figure 8: The First 6 Slides of Each of the 5 Presentation Decks. Even When Reduced to A Small Size, Comparing These Slides Shows How Much of The Slide Deck Gets Reused.

Each of the seminar decks started with the same image for the title slide with the organization logo and the speaker's name. Each deck also had a title slide using a similar look and a slide with the IHIRA mission statement beneath a high-resolution image of a hardware retailer at work. All decks also included a "What We'll Discuss" slide to set the context and expectations for the seminar.

Piecing Together and Updating with the Story They Want to Tell: The Evolution of the Quick Wins Deck

Max tends to reuse content from previous slide decks, but not necessarily starting with the blank template from the design team:

> I think we have a blank template. Usually what I do though is I'll just grab one of the presentations that…I'll look at the kind of catalog of presentations that I have that have been designed, and I'll look for the ones that are very similar, and usually what I'll do is kind of copy, like, okay, well I know I have some pie charts. I'll go find a pie chart slide from one of the presentations and I'll copy that. You know and then, so I mean I usually kind of piece it together rather than just starting from a blank template. (personal communication)

Max followed this process when modifying the Quick Wins deck in Spring 2017 after Noelle had presented it in Fall 2016. Presented at the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 markets, “Quick Wins, Retail Ideas” shared ideas from some of the IHIRA’s management class’s (RMCP) projects. (The relationship between members and IHIRA writers and invention processes is explored further in Chapter 4).

Max explains the presentation’s evolution:

> I mean that was kind of the idea that we would base it on some of the quick wins from RMCP but I think overtime it morphed like it was like "well, there's some of them that we got from RMCP but oh, here's another one that I like that I'm going to throw in,” and so, it kind of, it's kind of evolved. (personal communication)

Max explains how they know which deck to modify when giving the same presentation:

> If Ned's giving it and he'll say hey, do you have the latest version of that quick wins? and I'll say yeah, here I added this, and I added this, and I added this, and then he might add this or change that, and you know. (personal communication)

Of the 31 slides for Noelle’s 2016 Quick Wins presentation, Max reused 23 with little or no revision. Max switched or added four new ideas to the Quick Wins presentation deck. For another four slides, he just changed some of the wording or subheadings (this doesn’t count the first and last slide where the only thing changed was the presenter’s name and contact info). Each of his changes shows his process of opening an older presentation, choosing the part he wants to update, and cleaning it up from there, as he retypes headings and subheadings.

New Ideas

Max added four new ideas to his version of the Quick Wins presentation, and he did so by taking out some of Noelle’s ideas but using the same template, down to the same number and headings, as Figure 11 shows.

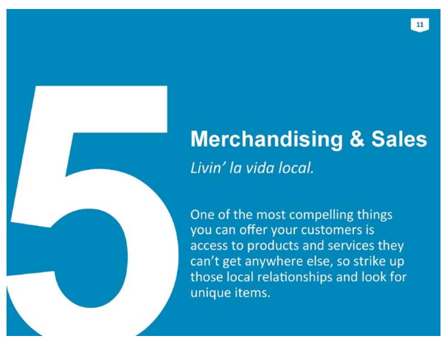
<table>
<tr><th>Noelle’s 2016 Quick Wins</th><th>Max’s 2017 Quick Wins</th><th>Change</th></tr>
<tr><td>
</td><td>
</td><td>New idea</td></tr>
<tr><td>
</td><td>
</td><td>New idea</td></tr>
<tr><td>
</td><td>
</td><td>New idea</td></tr>
<tr><td>
</td><td>
</td><td>New idea</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 9: Reusing The Slide Template But Updating with a New Idea

Of the four new ideas Max added, three come from concepts he discussed in an earlier presentation from Spring 2016, Increasing Transaction Size. Looking at those three shows how he went from wordier slides describing a concept followed by one or more highly visual examples to fitting the same idea into the template of the Quick Wins deck--making it more concise and dropping the images.

3 examples

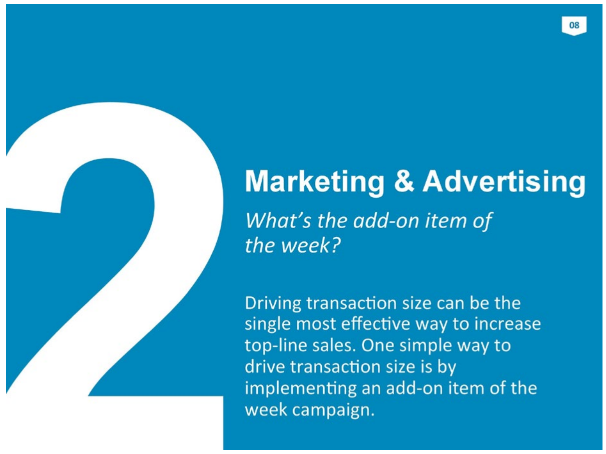
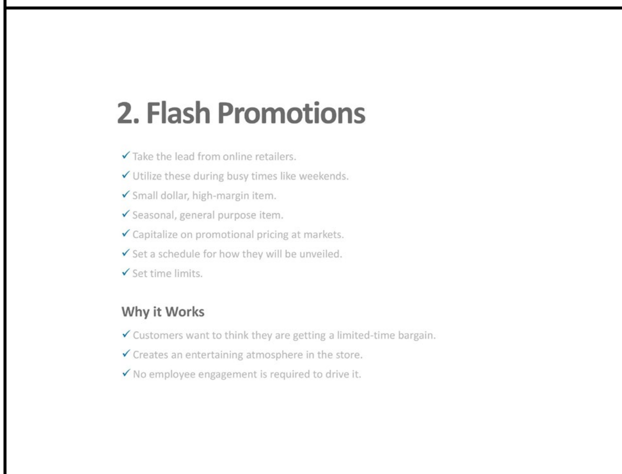
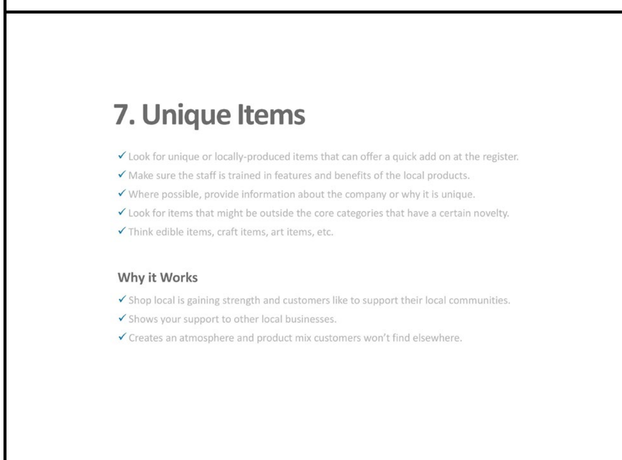
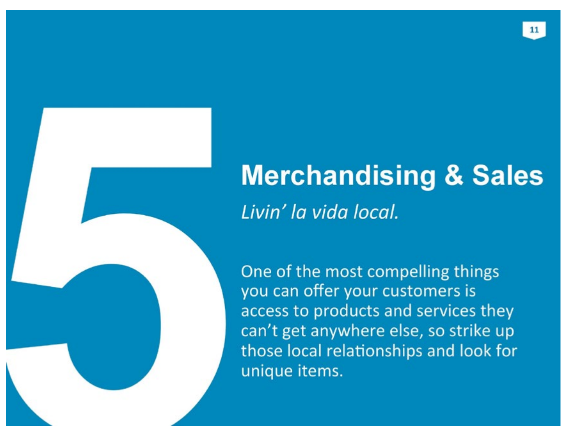
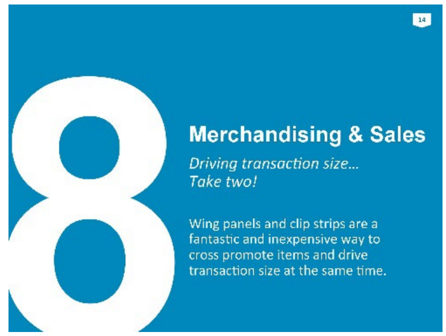
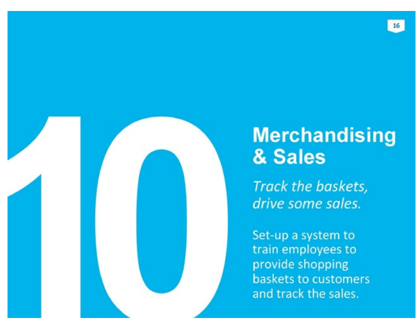
<table>
<tr><th>Max 2016 Transaction Size</th><th>Max 2017 Quick Wins</th></tr>
<tr><td>
</td><td>
</td></tr>
<tr><td>
</td><td>
</td></tr>
<tr><td>
</td><td>
</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 10: Three Examples of Max's Quick Wins Slides Adapted From His Transaction Size Deck

Same Idea But Reworded Slides

For four of the slides, Max reworded parts of the slide but kept the overall concept the same. Figure 11 shows how Max reworded from Noelle's 2016 Quick Wins, and below each slide image the words have been retyped for emphasis.

Noelle's 2016 Quick Wins	**Max's 2017 Quick Wins**	
		Same idea, different wording for subheading and prose description
Heading: Merchandising & Sales **Subheading:** Make Products Fly Off the Shelves with Wing Panels **Prose Description:** These inexpensive merchandisers are a great way to drive end cap profitability and sell through high margin items.	**Heading:** Merchandising & Sales **Subheading:** Driving transaction size…Take two! **Prose Description:** Wing panels and clip strips are a fantastic and inexpensive way to cross promote items and drive transaction size at the same time.	
		Same idea, just different subheading
Subheading: The (insert color here) Basket Program	**Subheading:** Track the baskets, drive some sales	

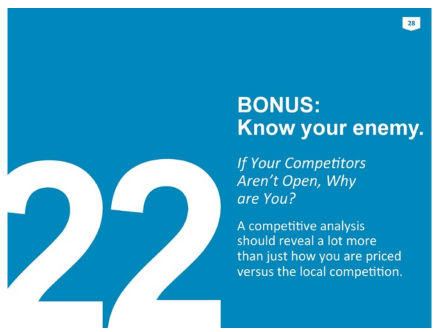
<table>
<tr>
<td>
</td>
<td>
</td>
<td>Same idea - Subheading and prose sentences different even though same idea/concept and heading as in Noelle's deck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heading: Finding & Retaining Good Employees
Subheading: Ask Them
Prose Description: Use a simple, inexpensive survey program like Tiny Pulse or SurveyMonkey to get feedback. But remember, if you’re going to ask, you’ve got to act.</td>
<td>Heading: Finding & Retaining Good Employees
Subheading: ABR
Prose Description: You never know when or where a good potential employee will show up so be prepared and never miss an opportunity to add to your team.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>
</td>
<td>
</td>
<td>Same idea but different wording in prose description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heading: BONUS: Know Your Hours!
Subtitle: If Your Competitors Aren’t Open, Why are You?
Prose Description: Compare your hours of operations to your competition’s and adjust accordingly--you could be losing sales opportunities and/or overpaying staff.</td>
<td>Heading: BONUS: Know your enemy
Subtitle: If Your Competitors Aren’t Open, why are You?
Prose Description: A competitive analysis should reveal a lot more than just how you are priced versus the local competition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</table>

Figure 11: Reusing Same Ideas But Updating Wording in Max’s Quick Wins

The way Max reworded titles shows some of his “updating with the story” he wanted to tell.

Small Slide Differences But Bigger Speech Differences

Examining the slides from Noelle’s 2016 version to Max’s 2017 version shows the minor wording changes he made, but examining the transcripts from both presentations shows how even when slides appeared nearly identical, the way the speaker framed the information could be different. Figure 16 juxtaposes the slides for both Noelle and Max's 8th quick win.

<table>
<tr><th>Noelle's 2016 Quick Wins</th><th>Max's 2017 Quick Wins</th></tr>
<tr><td>


</td><td>


</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 12: Comparing Noelle & Max's 8th Quick Win Slides

For example, as seen in Figure 12,for Quick Win 8, implementing wing panels and clip strips to sell more merchandise, Noelle spends more time on the concept than Max, and she emphasizes more audience participation. Max begins with a transition to an earlier idea saying "we talked about transaction size" then tells the audience to check out the model stores on the show floor. He mentions "merchandising is the silent salesmen" and how it's changing, so retailers should check out some of the leading trends like wing panels. He ties this recommendation into a new study IHIRA did on Merchandising for Profit and the study's findings, "I don't know what HDI sells them for, but they cost next to nothing. And you can almost triple the sales of an item by hanging a clip strip on the endcap." Max adds,

> And if you want something small, go back and a box of clip strips or however they sell them here or, I think they sell pre-merchandised stuff on clip strips and you just have the product you can hang up, but it's a great way to start selling more stuff in your store. (presentation transcript)

Noelle begins the eighth quick win by crediting an audience member who she knows works for the organization that implemented this idea. She tells the audience to ask that member if they want to know more. Noelle then allows the audience to drive the conversation. One audience member asks her to define what a clip strip is. Noelle gives examples of items that work then gives statistics (like Max) of how much the clip strips improved sales, only her source is from the store that implemented it (not a wider research study). She says, “Gross profit improved by over 10,000 across 8 stores...total company GP increase projected to be 153,000 the year they did it, fixture payoff was approx. 2.5 months.” When audience members ask Noelle about which items work, she throws the question back to the audience, then audience members share what items worked for them and how much space they dedicated to the merchandising too. One audience member asks about ensuring enough space in the aisle, and another brings up the ADA requirement for space available. An additional audience member says they can see the clip strip concept on the show floor at the sample stores. So, while Max says, “check out the show floor to see this,” Noelle lets the audience member suggest it and ends with a “cool, thank you very much. That's great" encouraging and thanking the audience for their help. The wording on the slides and the way the speakers discuss the concept is slightly different even though it basically demonstrates the same ideas. Noelle just uses the audience and the statistics she has available to generate a discussion.

Max and Noelle’s approach to sharing the information from the eighth quick win aren’t drastically different, but they show how each of them tells a story with slides that are reused and adapted. When Max talks about “updating with the story he wants to tell,” looking only at the slides might make it seem like updating doesn’t involve more than polishing some cut and pasted slides. Transcripts of the presentation speech show the larger rhetorical skill in reusing presentation slides. Speakers are presenting the same information in both Quick Win suggestions, but they tell the story about it differently depending on their own styles and in response to the audience.

Quick Win #16, “ABR” and “Ask them” about finding and retaining good employees was an example where the wording changed slightly, and the theme stayed the same (finding and keeping good employees), but the discussion was really different. Figure 13 displays the wording for both versions.

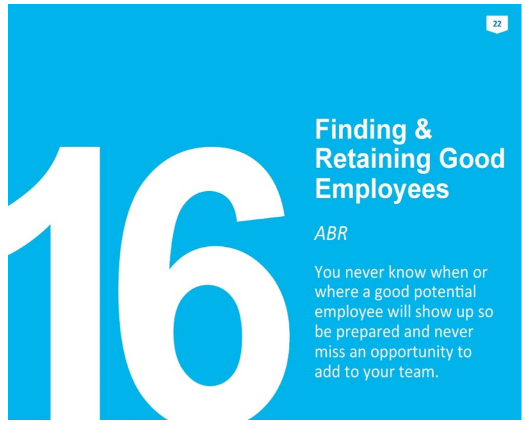
<table>
<tr><th>Noelle’s 2016 Quick Wins</th><th>Max’s 2017 Quick Wins</th></tr>
<tr><td>
</td><td>
</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 13: Noelle And Max’s 16th Quick Win Slide Comparison

Noelle focused more on ways to anonymously check in with employees to find out what training they might need or to hear more about career goals and things they wanted to learn and issues in the store, while Max referenced the SOIC (State of the Independents Conference) research about challenges (staff and keeping good staff) then talked about the SOB/curmudgeon, referred back to people being most important resource, then described how bad people hurt the store and brand long term so have to get rid of them. He pointed to a recent HR story about how to have those conversations.

Both ended with an emphasis on taking action regarding the findings. Noelle said if requesting feedback from employees, “the key is if you're gonna do this, you've got to act on it in some manner. You've got to respond to the feedback constructively and openly. If you're going to ask for it, you've got to do something about it” (presentation transcript).

Max said, “if you have a surly employee who is hurting business, you have to let them go.” In terms of suggestions, Noelle offered easy survey programs to ask employees and Max shared the story of a retailer who made ABR cards in case came across someone who gave really good service. In both cases, speakers used the same narrative techniques/outlines, even if different examples and conversations about it.

Swapping Out Ideas and Bringing in The Previous Day's Discussion

Noelle admitted she'd sometimes add ideas right up to the last minute, if something came up at the hardware show or from another source: "if I had heard a different point, you know, maybe someone stopped by at the market earlier that day and like gave me this awesome idea and so I swapped it out"

Noelle described her reuse strategies as swapping out ideas, sometimes the same day of the show if she heard a good one, and "owning our content" even when she and her colleagues presented the same information. This sample size reveals no instance of her changing a slide to update an idea mid show but looking at her Day 1 versus Day 2 version of Home Improvement Trends Spring 2016 shows how she does bring the discussion from the first presentation into the second iteration.

For the most part, Noelle's Home Improvement Trends presentation doesn't change much between the two days, although for certain parts, she updates her second day presentation to include what was discussed the previous day.

The first time she presents the Home Improvement trends seminar and shares the idea of integrating video monitors into endcaps in stores, she begins by referencing a specific store in Florida

Figure 14: Integrating Technology Video Monitors Slide

that utilizes the concept. She emphasizes how the image on the slide shows only one monitor and leaves other endcaps the same so that customers aren't inundated with technology. Figure 14 shows the slide and image she mentions.

She mentions the upcoming study IHIRA will conduct about Merchandising for Profit, which might look at technology integration. She asks audience members if any of them use video monitors then invites them to speak on it. The audience member talks about how the video monitors help to refocus customer attention from their phones to the videos and talks about the types of content they share. Noelle continues the discussion with the audience members and ends by emphasizing how we will probably see this trend moving forward and that new products offer a good place to integrate technology in stores.

The second day when she presents the same seminar with the same deck, she talks about video monitors on endcaps first by discussing how retailers' customer base has become more millennial, which means more of their customers are more comfortable with technology in the store. Next, she mentions the discussion with the audience member from the previous day's presentation and how the audience member mentioned that videos kept customers focused on the monitors and in the store instead of one their phones. She asks the audience if anyone is using such technology then asks them to elaborate:

Audience Member : People aren't watching it yet

Noelle: Not watching it yet

Audience Member: They just walk right by it

Noelle: Okay. Yeah. So I think that there's definitely a game there, right? You have to kind of play um, and think about what's going to be the most effective thing to push there. What are you guys, are you guys pushing new products through there?

Audience Member: uh, yeah, new products or products we haven't merchandised well, people don't understand the endcap

Noelle: Sure. So that's really I think the struggle is finding, making sure you're picking the right things to promote. Right? Um. And some people yesterday were saying they find the most success with new things that are a little more flashy, or um are making a bit more splash in their store that they want to push. Um, so thinking more and more about how you can integrate technology into your store. (presentation transcript)

Next Noelle mentions the store in Florida (just like the day before) and emphasizes avoiding inundating customers with too much technology and carefully choosing a few spots instead of using every endcap. She ends by saying IHIRA thinks video monitors will continue to be used on endcaps and other ways as promotional tools and so hopefully, moving into the future, the organization will continue to do more research on how effective the monitors are and the future of some of the technology.

Both days she covers the same content, and much of the same information, but she takes up the conversation with the audience from the first day and relays it to her audience the second day, which adds to her credibility and adds another example to her idea. The slide itself stays the same, but she updates a little bit of the information between presentations and reuses the audience member’s comments.

Pull One Out of The Hopper, Make A Few Tweaks, And Off We Go: Ned’s Reuse in The Leadership Presentation

As described in Chapter 4, each year IHIRA writers gather to plan content for the magazine and other products for the following year, and during that time, Ned, Max, and Noelle discuss which topics might work or could be reworked for seminar presentations. For many buying shows, including the ones I observed, the host organization asks speakers for a few ideas then chooses from those topics.

Ned elaborated on this process while also emphasizing just how many presentations they give.

We are asked to speak at a bazillion of these things, and always at HDI, sometimes at Ace, sometimes at AllPro… and I, you know, it's just you've got to have three or four good ones ready to go. I'll just pull that out of the hopper, and make a few tweaks, and off we go. (personal communication)

Ned's leadership presentation shows how he reused slides from various presentations, even though they had different templates and designs, to modify a presentation to better address his audience at the Market Expo. Ned presented "Retail Leadership" at the Spring 2017 market. When describing the broader context of the Spring 2017 presentation, Ned talked about the list of leadership books they recommend for students in the leadership programs and condensing the principles from them into one presentation:

I thought, why the hell wouldn't we just do a presentation on all of these great leadership books, cut through all the clutter of the, and what we really focused it on are the books that we thought were really timeless principles of leadership, not the latest fad. (personal communication)

During our interview, Ned explained he had done an earlier presentation on retail leadership for a specific group of people and used some of the content from that deck (referred to as the Earlier, Targeted Leadership deck or ETL) to create the Spring 17 deck. He pulled the ETL deck "out of the hopper," and his tweaks to the deck meant he changed the overall narrative to better suit his broader audience at the Market Expo.

As demonstrated in Figure 15, Ned uses the "What We'll Discuss" slide to set the narrative for both decks:

Ned ETL	Ned 17 Leadership
	
Provide Practical Tips on Becoming a Better Leader	Provide practical, time-tested findings from top leadership "thought teachers" on:
Leadership Styles Team Building Employee Engagement Best Practices	Differences between managers and leaders, common myths of leadership, Characteristics common to leaders, Team Building Principles.

Figure 15: Ned Setting the Narrative for His Presentations Through the "What We'll Discuss Slide"

Ned's earlier deck drew from a variety of sources to create his narrative of "Practical Tips on Becoming a Better Leader," as the figures and tables below illustrate:

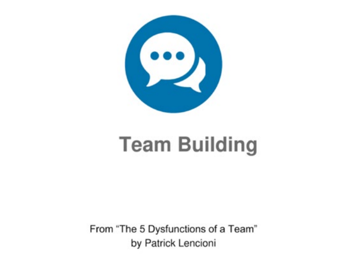
Ned's ETL Narrative (as stated in What We'll Discuss Slide, or WWWD)	**Slide Sections**	**Source**
Provide Practical Tips on Becoming a Better Leader		
Leadership Styles		6 Primary Leadership Styles from Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*
Team Building		Team Building from *5 Dysfunctions of a Team* by Lencioni
(doesn't get mentioned in WWWD but related to team building)		Mutual Accountability from Wil Davis's *Creating a Culture of Excellence*
Employee Engagement		Employee Engagement from Research by The Gallup Organization
Best Practices		Best Practices of Leadership from Kouzes and Pozner's *The Leadership Challenge*

Table 6: Sources Ned Draws from For Each of the Sections of his ETL Presentation Narrative

Figure 16: Another Look at Where Ned Integrates Sources in his ETL Presentation Narrative

Ned 17 Narrative (as listed in What We'll Discuss slide)	**Source**
Provide practical, time-tested findings from top leadership "thought teachers" on:	
Differences between managers and leaders, common myths of leadership,	What Leadership is Not - Drawing from John C. Maxwell's 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership
Characteristics common to leaders,	The Importance of Emotionally Intelligent Leaders - Drawing from Primal Leadership by Daniel Goleman
Team Building Principles.	Team Building &Teamwork drawing from From: Patrick Lencioni's The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team
Characteristics common to leaders, (Not listed 2x in WWWD)	5 Practices of Exemplary Leaders From: James Kouzes and Barry Posner's Bestseller The Leadership Challenge

Table 7: Sources Ned Draws from For Each of the Sections of His 2017 Leadership Presentation Narrative

Differences in the ETL (Earlier, Targeted, Leadership Deck)

Ned's reuse isn't so much about changing the examples or tone in how he presents the same slides but in bringing in new sources of information to tweak the overall narrative for his audience. For

Figure 17: Another Look at Where Ned Integrates Sources in his 2017 Leadership Presentation Narrative

the earlier presentation, he has a specific, target audience--one company, who is familiar with IHIRA and its leadership institute, and has at least two employees who have gone through RMCP--one of the Leadership Institute Programs. In his slide notes, he references those former students and other specific things about the company, like analogies to local sports teams. He also has a more direct purpose listed in his "What We'll Discuss" slide: "Provide Practical Tips on Becoming a Better Leader."

Because of this context, Ned doesn't include a slide with IHIRA's mission statement or multiple slides citing specific research regarding investing in leadership because the company has already done so. He has one quick slide for an overview of the leadership programs and then one with some leadership statistics "leadership crisis." He starts his summary with *Emotional Intelligence*, then moves to *Dysfunctions of a Team*, followed by slides summarizing findings about mutual accountability and employee engagement. The Spring 2017 Deck doesn't include the mutual accountability nor employee engagement sections. Ned ends the deck with some best practices in leadership.

Adapting For Context--Reusing Slides From an Industry Update

For the Spring 2017 Secrets of Retail Leadership presentation, Ned has to give more context because the audience is broader--retailers who purchase products from HDI who may or may not be familiar with IHIRA, their mission statement, and their leadership programs. They also may not be as aware about issues with leadership prevalent in the industry, so Ned spends more time setting that context. To do so, he pulls and edits slides from a deck he presented at an IHIRA conference for all independent retailers--the State of the Independents Conference (SOIC). Interestingly, these slides followed the "ideal process" Sue described of following template standards and passing through the design team after the speaker drafted them for a final clean up.

From the SOIC 2016 presentation, Ned directly pulled slides numbered 20-22,25,27,28. From the original SOIC deck, these are the changes he made:

SOIC Slide Number	Reused in Leadership 2017
20	Reused but changed observation note
21	Reused but changed observation note
22	Reused without change
23	Did not reuse/skipped
24	Did not reuse/skipped
25	Reused but removed observation
26	Did not reuse/skipped
27	Reused but removed observation
28	Reused without change

Table 8: How Ned Reused SOIC Slides

In total then, of the nine total slides in the SOIC deck section Ned pulled, he:

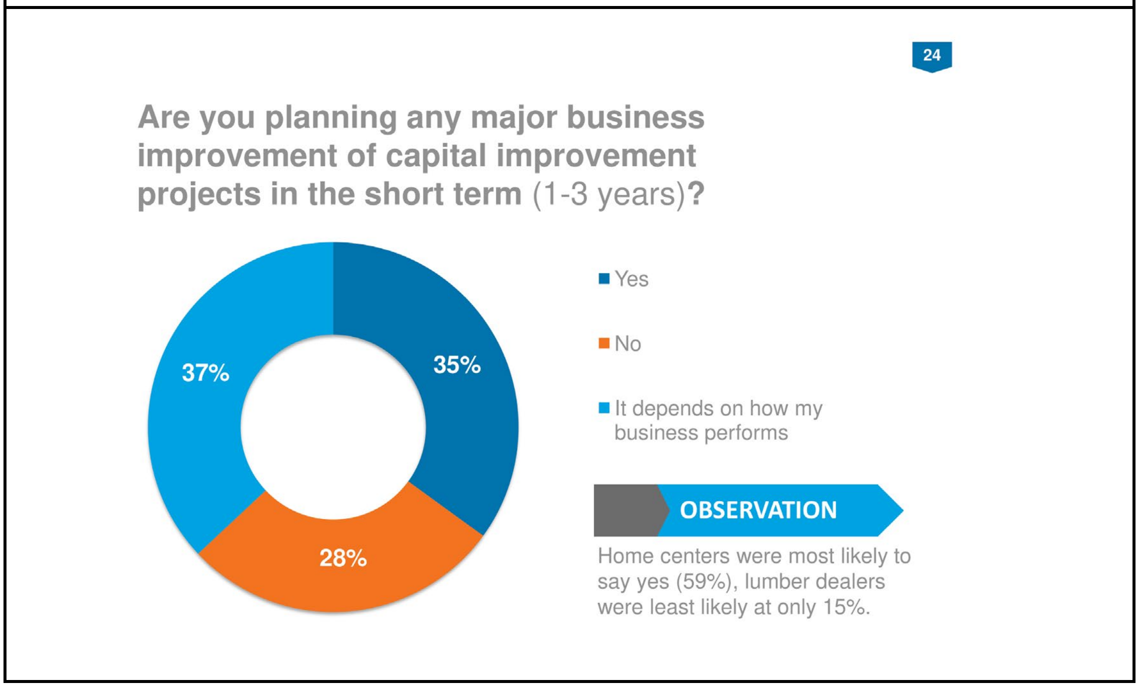
1. removed/didn't include 3 slides,
2. reused 4 slides but revised or removed their "observation note"
3. reused 2 slides without change

Slides Removed From SOIC Deck For 2017 Leadership

Ned doesn't include slide number 23 or 24 from the SOIC deck, probably because those slides focus more on capital improvement and investing projects, not on leadership and finding employees specifically. Similarly, he chooses to not add Slide 26: Which of the following areas of your business do you feel the LEAST in need of investment?" because it also deals less directly with leadership.

On Ned's SOIC's slide 26, "Which of the following areas of your business do you feel LEAST in need of financial investment?" note that the tag arrow at the bottom of the graph on slide 26 focuses on home centers and lumber dealers, explaining they "were less likely to cite 'adding a new location.'" Again, for the Market Expo 2017 Leadership seminar, the information presented on this slide isn't as relevant to the content Ned will be presenting. Part of the reason he's using data (and the slides) from the 2016 SOIC seminar is to show and explain why hardware dealers need to think more about leadership.

Slides Removed From SOIC and not REUSED in 2017 Leadership Deck



Slides Removed From SOIC and not REUSED in 2017 Leadership Deck

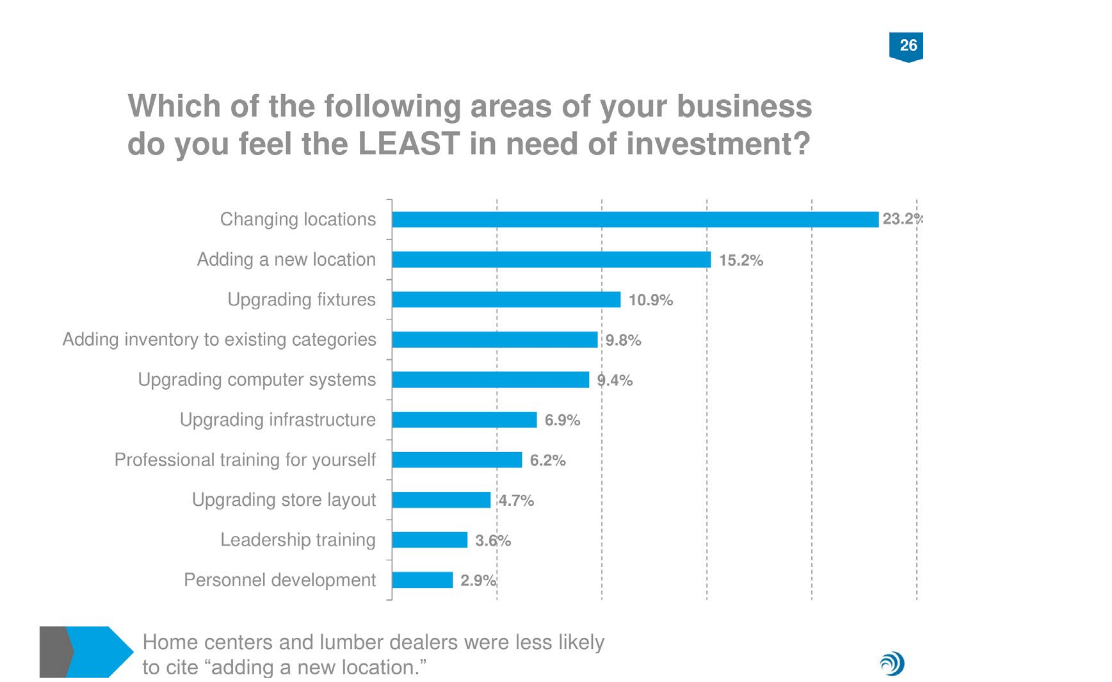
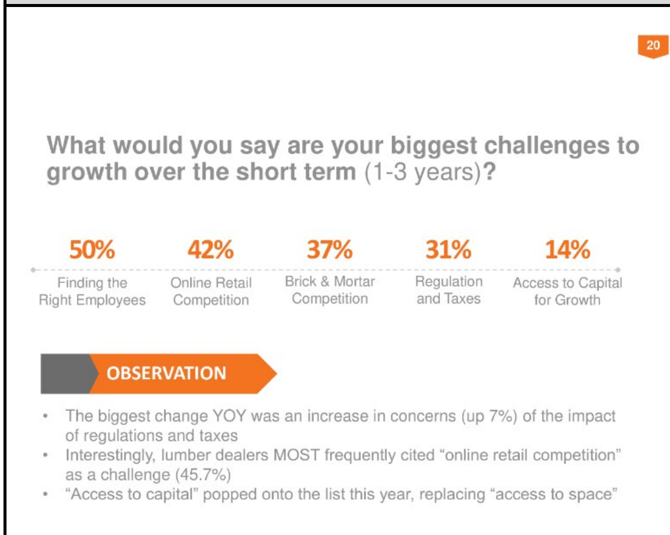


Figure 18: 3 Slides Removed From the SOIC Deck

Slides Reused With Minor Changes

Ned reused slides addressing challenges to growth and modified the "Observation" call out section to better tailor the information to his Market Expo Audience, as can be seen in slides 20 and 21.

SOIC 2016	**February 2017**

<table>
<tr><th>SOIC 2016</th><th>February 2017</th></tr>
<tr><td>


</td><td>


</td></tr>
<tr><td>

“The biggest change YOY was an increase in concerns (up 7%) of the impact of regulations and taxes”
Interestingly, lumber dealers MOST frequently cited “online retail competition” as a challenge (47.7%)
“Access to capital” popped onto the list this year, replacing “access to space”

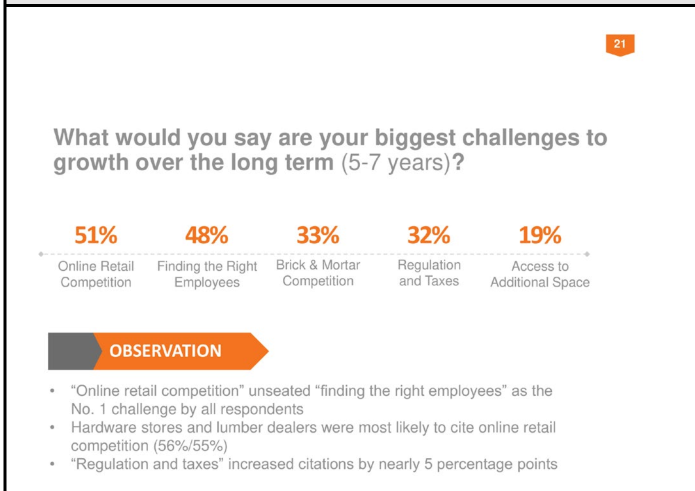
</td><td>

“Finding the Right Employees is a MAJOR Concern for all store types.”
“If finding good employees is a concern, finding future leaders and star performers is even more difficult”

</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 19: How Ned Updates the “Observation” Note When Reusing Slide 20

In Slides 20 and 21, the format, figures, and page count don’t change, but Ned does modify the “Observation” note from 3 bullets to 2 and clarifies, as Figure 20 demonstrates:

<table>
<tr><th>SOIC 2016</th><th>February 2017</th></tr>
<tr><td>
</td><td>
</td></tr>
<tr><td>

- "Online retail competition unseated "finding the right employees" as the No. 1 challenge by all respondents
- Hardware Stores and lumber dealers were most likely to cite online retail competition (56%/55%)
- "Regulation and taxes" increased citations by nearly 5 percentage points

</td><td>"Online retail competition" unseated "finding the right employees" as the No. 2 challenge by all respondents in the long term, but finding the right employees is still a major concern that is as much of a challenge as online competition.</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 20: How Ned Updates the "Observation" Note When Reusing Slide 21

In both revisions, Ned uses the same chart graphic but changes the "Observation note" to focus more specifically on the Market Expo seminar topic of finding good or "the right" employees for future leadership. For both slide revisions, he can cut the bullet about lumber dealers because he knows the audience at the Market Expo will be there to purchase hardware materials (but not lumber materials).

Slides Reused With Observation Notes Removed

For both slide numbers 25 & 27, Ned removed the arrow tag at the bottom left corner of the slides. It looks like the "observation" arrow tag and gives a short prose description of an observation or note in the data, but it doesn't specifically say "observation" in the arrow. For both Slides 25 and 27, the "observations" focused on information specific to hardware and lumber dealers.

SOIC 2016	**February 2017**
	
Home centers and lumber dealers cited "personnel development" more frequently than hardware stores	

Figure 21: How Ned Reused Slide 25, Removing the Callout Information Below the Graph

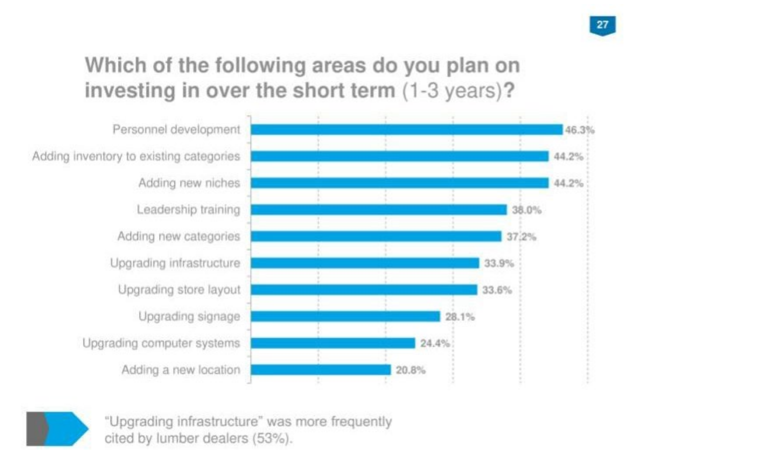
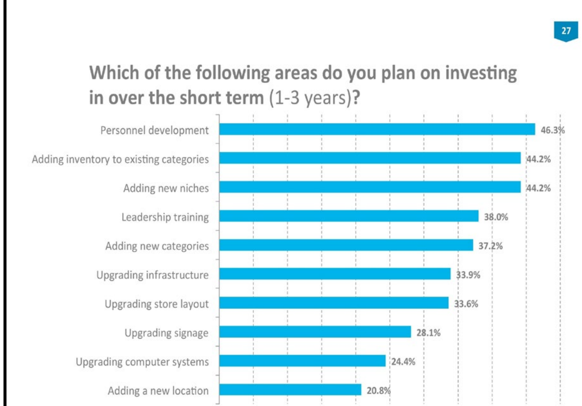
SOIC 2016	**February 2017**
	
"Upgrading infrastructure" was more frequently cited by lumber dealers (53%)	

Figure 22: How Ned Reused Slide 27, Removing the Callout Information Below the Graph

Slides Reused Without Change

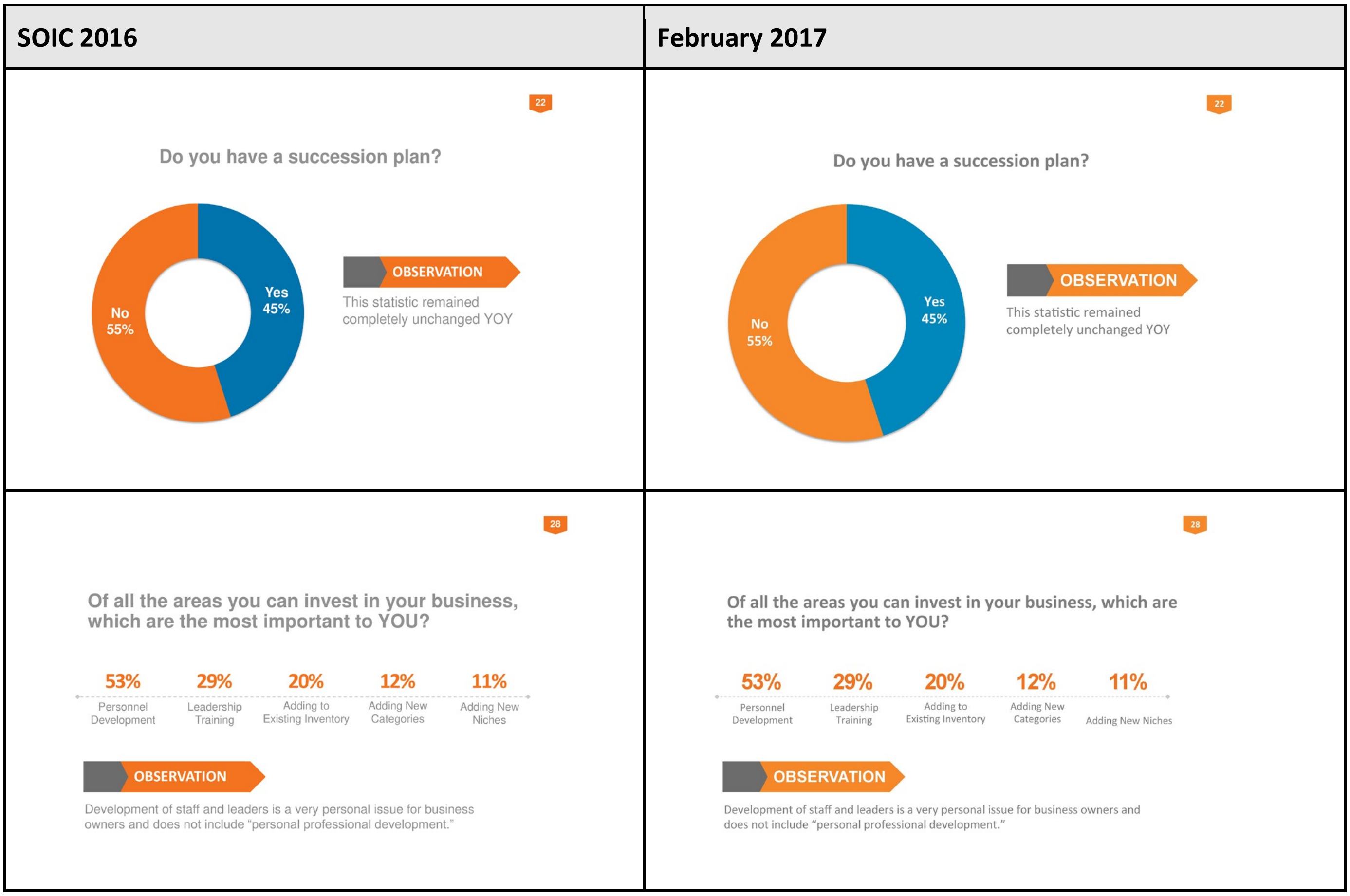


Figure 23: Slides Ned Reused from The SOIC Deck Without Changes

One aspect Ned doesn't change when reusing slides from the 2016 SOIC deck into his 2017 Leadership deck are the slide counter numbers at the top. Even though he places the SOIC slides into the beginning of his Spring 2017 presentation, just after the "What We'll Discuss" slide, he doesn't update their slide counter numbers (or the template he pasted into doesn't automatically update them for him). But missing these details doesn't mean he simply dumped slides into the presentation--he chose which to reuse and adapted them, demonstrating the rhetorical skill necessary for reuse.

Aside from the slide number issue, however, the SOIC slides are easily reusable, especially for setting context. They've already been approved by the design team. Also, the "Observations" call outs make it easy to keep the same graphic representing findings but change the interpretations slightly to better cater to the audience. Whether he modified them slightly, included them without change, or deleted them, the slides from the SOIC deck also help by bringing their context and rhetorical situation with them--a broader audience of independent lumber and hardware dealers who are interested in how to grow their business.

Similarly, the “What We’ll Discuss” slide from the earlier leadership deck is easy to modify slightly to reflect how Ned changes the overall narrative for the Spring 2017 Leadership deck.

Discussion: Reuse and the Path of Least Resistance

Looking at the various reuse practices of Noelle, Max, and Ned shows that they don’t really follow the design team expectations of pulling from a blank template, completing their deck, then running it back through the design team to “clean it up.” Even when drawing from design-approved templates, as Ned does for his Leadership deck, he doesn’t change the design of other slides to match the template. All three speakers are more familiar with their own previous decks and others and prefer to pull pie charts or other parts from them first. Getting the speakers to change their practice to start with a blank but pre-approved template wasn’t as easy as the design team hoped.

In terms of uptake, this shows how the designers expected the seminar speakers to “Take up” and use the templates they created, but the speakers “took up” pieces from other documents and their contexts, then “made a few quick changes.” For Max and Ned, their process of pulling from what they were already familiar with and using their knowledge of how to update things in PowerPoint was faster, or at least required less resistance. They also often revised and worked on presentations “on the road” or right before giving the seminars, so they didn’t always have time to send their decks through design.

Graphic designers did not understand the genre of the seminar presentation deck in the same way, instead focusing on consistent branding and design-based practices of making visual information accessible to the audience. Design-based practices focus on highly visual presentations (like TEDtalks) and less of the slide deck as a deliverable, what context slides and images reused bring to the speaker, and even how the slides might look on a projector. Design-based practices also emphasize fewer words per slide to avoid becoming “slideuments” (Duarte, 2008). If speakers were to start with the blank, design-approved template, they'd still end up copying items from older decks and editing them. For the speakers, this seemed like more work and a less efficient process.

For Max, Noelle, and Ned's understanding of the genre of the seminar presentation and deck however, this made sense because their tacit knowledge of PowerPoint features and branding items is located in other decks they presented or worked on. The speakers in this study similarly deploy tacit knowledge when they rework existing files into new presentations or when "pulling one out of the hopper" and "making a few tweaks." Deploying their tacit knowledge, especially in those private moments of invention as they write and revise, can be hard to see, especially when we only examine the slide presentation deck by itself. Putting the deck together with the seminar transcript, comparing it against other seminar presentations, and asking the speakers to reflect on their processes after the fact helps to show some of that tacit knowledge, particularly when we focus on strategies of reuse.

Tacit knowledge is embodied, habitual craft knowledge that is often transferred through coaching and one-on-one apprenticeships (Spinuzzi, 2015). It's also "unformalizeable " (Spinuzzi, 2015, citing Castells, 1996), as well as "what people know without knowing it, like habits and expectations that have become second nature" (Spinuzzi, 2013) In other words, the knowledge of how to do something might not be something a worker can explain or put into words, even if one can observe them doing it.

Presentation writing isn't the only kind of writing that deploys this kind of tacit knowledge. Citing Geisler, 1994, Swarts (2000) explains that everyday uses of language can index the kinds of tacit knowledge people rely on in practice. He ties this idea into Geisler's (2001) claim that writing, even in multiple drafts and revisions, often takes place behind closed doors. Swarts says these "private stages of invention" are the times that tacit knowledge actively shapes a piece of writing. For Spinuzzi (2003) drawing on Engestrom, 1992, tacit knowledge shaping writing can be seen when workers successfully manage genres. He calls the workplace's "tacitly assumed traditions" their "genre knowledge." Tacit knowledge comes from being on the job, not something that can be learned in school (Orr, 2016; Spinuzzi, 2003).

All the more reason for technical communication pedagogy, then, to help students learn to recognize these situations and adapt their skill sets as they learn at workplaces and develop their own tacit knowledge. A novice TC might look at speakers not using the intended templates and at designers not understanding why speakers reuse older slides and think “these don’t necessarily apply to the design or slide-based practices I learned about in school,” but they can also go beyond that initial analysis to see how different workers put information together and learn their own best practices as they acquire tacit knowledge. This study offers an example of how TC educators can explain that being rhetorically savvy, and applying a student's own skills, might look different in different circumstances. While school can teach certain best practices, school teaches a rhetorical stance that can be applied across contexts, not necessarily universal rules. Their TC education background can help prepare them to recognize these situations and think about how to best address the situation rhetorically as they adapt to a new workplace.

Verbal Conversations and Acquiring Tacit Knowledge as Speaker’s Reused and Adapted Slides

Tacit knowledge passed through time spent working at IHIRA, and verbal conversations especially contributed to reuse in seminar presentations. Max described the presentations as “living breathing things” that originated from one person creating a deck drawing from content resources then sometimes passed to another person or repurposed for another event:

> If Noelle put it together first, she would give it, and then you know, I might give it somewhere else down the line, and then at that point, I might add to it or change it a little bit, so it would kind of evolve over time. (personal communication)

Ned demonstrates this process regarding the “Transaction Size” presentation: “I'm presenting it coming up, and I didn't do that one, I didn't pull that, but I've given it before, and I think Noelle might have built that in her day, and I can't remember which one." For the speakers, knowing the first person to start a deck wasn't as important as knowing the last person to present it, mostly so they could talk with them to see what they added or thought of later.

Not Just About Efficiency: Seminars Are Repeatable Rhetorical Situations

Max and Ned pulling slides and images from earlier decks instead of starting with a template, Noelle's responsiveness to new ideas that might come up during the show, and Noelle's critique of one of the pre-approved templates aren't just about following processes they already know. These are all examples of the speakers thinking about the rhetorical situation and what they want to say first, and then getting it down to share with the audience. They have tacit knowledge of how PowerPoint works and some of the templated/branded items, but their knowledge of the industry and what they've learned that they want to share comes first when they use the tools to construct the narrative of their presentation. Their expertise in content and familiarity with the seminars, which are repeatable rhetorical situations, means the tweaks they make in the slide decks they do without really being able to explain why.

These speakers' processes echo Orr's (1996) findings regarding copier technicians who pull from their own expertise as well as expertise gleaned from discussions with other technicians to repair machines. During the process, they don't always explain exactly how they know what they know because it's become part of their tacit knowledge:

> The fact that the technicians cannot readily remember where a board is in the machine by the name of the board is not surprising; when technicians are not actually at a machine, they seem to have difficulty thinking about it in such detail. Orr, 1996, p 44)

Reuse Is Part of The Invention Process Through Content Packages

Again, IHIRA doesn't have a formal content management system, but it does have processes developed so that workers share their knowledge and work to create content packages (See Chapter 4).

Speakers share their work and present the same topics, and presentation topics nearly always have to do with other content for IHIRA packages. Max explained:

> Most of these situations are somehow tied to projects that we're doing here. So, I mean, it's on a rare occasion that we're just creating a presentation out of, you know, kind of for the sake of creating a presentation. It's usually because we've either done some research that we're using in a variety of ways or we're working on an article for the magazine that relates to the same topic, so, so we usually have a pretty good pool to draw on for the subject matter. (personal communication)

Noelle described a similar process for thinking about content: “we had all of this how-to content, and we wanted to find a way not only to present it to consumers but be able to repurpose that content for um, our retailers,” (personal communication).

Especially for creating web content and training modules, reuse became an important strategy:

> So, um, we would always try, when we were building training, even up to like, some of these small pieces you'll see like with trainer’s toolbox, like one of the big things we're always trying to do is like not reinvent the wheel. So if we were, if we had a resource that was already available, or if we were doing, you know, new research like how could we add a component or utilize that information or maybe there was, you know, an interview we did that provides, something they couldn't fit in the story but it made like a really cool worksheet, or something, we would try and find ways to repurpose what we were already doing. (Noelle, personal communication)

In this process, even from invention, reuse became an important consideration. IHIRA writers weren’t plagiarizing or being lazy; instead, they were thinking of how to pool resources to get content to members across multiple channels.

Furthermore, these speakers aren’t working with a formal content management system, or in a large corporate environment where it’s easy to lose track of drafts and get mixed up (like Yates and

Orlikowski's participants' "slide graveyard" that had too many slides for new organization members to make sense of). From their yearly retreat to discuss story ideas as content packages to check in meetings (as described in the previous chapter), they are developing knowledge and expertise as they repurpose material for magazine stories, teaching modules, and seminar presentations.

How Do We Teach Students About Rhetorical Reuse?

These speakers' practices contradict some of the ways we teach self-plagiarism to students. As discussed in Chapter 2, Literature Review, Academia can be quick to dismiss "self-plagiarism," as Hall, Moskowitz, and Pemberton (2018) explain. While policies differ across institutions (Roig, 2016; Halupa and Bolliger, 2013 & 2015; Halupa, 2019) and across disciplines (Roig 2016; Hall, Mosckowitz, and Pemberton, 2018), some institutions or instructors specifically consider students submitting a paper in one class and then resubmitting it for another class to be an academic offense, and Halupa (2019) found that number to be rising since 2013. Named policies also emphasize reusing an entire paper (Bretag and Mahmoud, 2009) instead of examining reuse more critically and what might constitute acceptable forms of reuse (Roig, 2016). Further complicating the issues are plagiarism detection services like Turnitin (see Davies and Howard, 2016 and Weber-Wuff, 2016 for extended discussions about pitfalls and affordances of Turnitin and its effects on how instructors look at student writing and plagiarism). When policies forbidding reuse occur, such a school framework makes it seem that students who repurpose papers are missing opportunities to learn because learning comes from crafting a new text in response to a different prompt. At the same time, composition classes often assign a slide presentation at the end of a project or after submitting a final paper (Gries and Brooke, 2010), and some degree of reuse can easily be present in such a remix.

Fortunately, writing studies and other fields are researching "self-plagiarism" attitudes and practices and beginning to advocate for distinctions in different kinds of student reuse. Some instructors do allow students to reuse, provided they explain the situation in advance (Halupa, 2019). These findings about teachers considering student reuse are promising, but they aren't the same as constructing a unit in a class that aims to teach students how to reuse. Teachers should continue to incorporate reuse strategies, and further research on intentional school reuse practices can help to show contexts in which workers and students can reuse rhetorically or consider their own practices of content management or develop their own ways to "update with the story they want to tell.

While not focused on classroom approaches, this study seeks to demonstrate reuse practices in the rhetorical context of a workplace. True, these speakers' reuse practices are tacit, which often means something students can't learn in school. But we can teach them ways to look at rhetorical reuse and how it functions, analyzing the ways texts and images are repurposed across documents, so they understand how to better learn the genres of their own future workplaces. Looking at this type of reuse in PowerPoint decks for educational seminars helps us to see how practitioners see "reuse" outside of content management systems or some academic conceptions of self-plagiarism. This example of one organization's ad hoc process for repurposing content can help to show how reuse is rhetorical, and reuse practices, like project management practices, arise from the unique rhetorical situations of each workplace.

We also need more accounts of reuse in workplace settings, particularly smaller, more distributed workplaces that don't have formal systems. Examining their reuse strategies can help reinforce how reuse is rhetorical and draws especially from background and tacit knowledge. My analysis shows that speakers reuse slides and other pieces from earlier presentations because they are acting in repeated rhetorical situations, see topics as part of a larger content package, and work collaboratively to discuss and pass on ideas.

CHAPTER 6: SLIDEWARE

"PowerPoint application especially but slideware in general is socially embedded in complex ways and engenders attitudes ranging from enthusiastic acceptance to suspicion and hostility," cautions Farkas (2008). As Chapter 2, Literature Review describes, writing studies research and other communication consultant books have lots of recommendations in designing and delivering presentations, particularly regarding using too many words per slide, or creating a slideument, and using the slide deck as a visual presentation aid as well as a deliverable such as a handout or report. Because of the tone of PowerPoint recommendation texts, Farkas also reminds us "claims about deck design and presentation should be careful and nuanced and fully respectful of the contingent and local" (n.p.)

In this chapter, I take the previously mentioned research into consideration and take a few steps back to describe a local, contingent instance of PowerPoint presentations. These presentations blend sales pitches with educational genres, and speakers have improvised to share the slide deck as a handout after the presentation (through what Yates and Orlikowski might call a "corollary genre"). As established in (Chapter 4), the unique relationship between member constituents and IHIRA workers drives much of the content creation process, and seminar presentations at a buying show are just one instance of that relationship. These aren't the kind of purely "sales" pitch type presentations Tufte bemoans PowerPoint can turn reports or other textual information into. To help examine these changing genre expectations, I describe slide presentation and dissemination practices of IHIRA speakers. This chapter focuses specifically on how the speakers used slideware technology and other rhetorical strategies when presenting. It also addresses the ways speakers share decks after live events. Specifying research questions (Bazerman, 2008) include:

1. What rhetorical strategies do speakers use when assembling, designing, and presenting seminars at the dealer market?
2. How does that add to our understanding of presentations?

Understanding Situatedness of the Market and Tying Back into the Show Experience

Speakers' strategies for presenting decks drew from the unique rhetorical situation of the twice annual buying market. One of the benefits of presenting at a buying show is that visual examples don't have to be limited to slide deck visuals. All three speakers used various techniques to relate their messages back to the audience's whole show experience. Max explained this strategy:

> What I try and do a lot is, tie it back into their show experience, by saying, you know
>
> Here are some things you could do. Now, the tools to do it are down here on the show floor. If you're looking for impulse items, there's a whole 30,000 sq ft of impulse items. We talked about why you should look at impulse items, now go buy these impulse items." (personal communication)

Max Drawing on Examples from the Show Floor

Specifically, Max applied this strategy during his Quick Wins presentation. Displayed in Figure 26, the slide text says attendees should show their customers how they come to the market to get new products to bring to them, reminding attendees to promote what they find at the market to excite their customers.

Figure 24: “1: Promote Your Discoveries and Get Your Customers Excited” slide, 20 Quick Wins, Max’s Spring 2017 Presentation

In his speech for this slide, Max tied in the local experience of the market and the setting in New Orleans, as seen in this excerpt from the transcript:

> What are you guys doing here, this weekend? So, way too often, do I see people come here, they get so excited about a product, you order the product, you bring it in, you put it on your shelf. Oh, that's exciting. I went to a market down in New Orleans, I drank a lot of hurricanes at Pat O'Brien’s, I went to a Mardi Gras parade, I bought some products …and you sit them on the shelves. Do your customers know where you are? It's kind of a silly question, but do your customers know that you're out looking for new products to bring to them? Looking for special deals that you can bring to them? You gotta tell ‘em. Tell them what you're doing that's so exciting here in New Orleans. Maybe leave out the 11 hurricanes, you know, or tamper down to two, but, um, but tell them what you're doing. Set up displays when you go back to say 'I just

went to New Orleans and look at these exciting products and deals I'm bringing back to you." You know what that's so important, it's not only because it will help you sell the merchandise that you get here, but it's so important because Home Depot doesn't do that. The basic essence of being a retailer is you are the advocate for homeowners and shoppers in your market. You should know your market better than anyone else. You're the person that goes out and looks for the products they need at the prices they can afford to do their projects and jobs. And you need to show them that. You're not just some guy that brings in merchandise that you can make a profit on and pushes it to them. You're their advocate that's looking for stuff that they're going to get excited about at prices that are going to be great for them. And that's exactly what you're doing here this weekend. That's all what you're doing; that's everything you're doing here, except for the hurricanes, is looking for those kinds of deals. So why aren't you, "Well, I can tell you and set up a display and show that this is where I went and this is what I brought you" (presentation transcript)

Max's speech for this slide has quite a few words, while the projected slide has 47 words featured in white text on a bright blue background. Using Duarte's criteria, this falls into her "presentation" category, though 50 words pushes it to the "teleprompter" category. Teleprompter slides, according to Duarte, serve as a crutch for a speaker who didn't spend enough time rehearsing. Teleprompter slides are less than engaging, can result in the speaker turning their back on the audience, and force the audience to choose between reading the information on the slide or listening to the speaker. Her criteria can be helpful in reminding speakers to spend adequate time presenting and addressing the audience, but the words on the slide don't capture the narrative techniques Max uses to tie the suggestions on the slide to the audience's experience as attendees of the market in New Orleans. The slide isn't a rich visual image, but it features enough text to give the audience a quick reminder of the suggestion. Max doesn't read from the slides as he expands on the slide ideas with vivid descriptions.

For another concept in his Quick Wins Presentation, Max again draws on programs at the market as examples instead of including them as a visual on the slide. Looking at Figure 27 shows the words in text next to a large numeral.

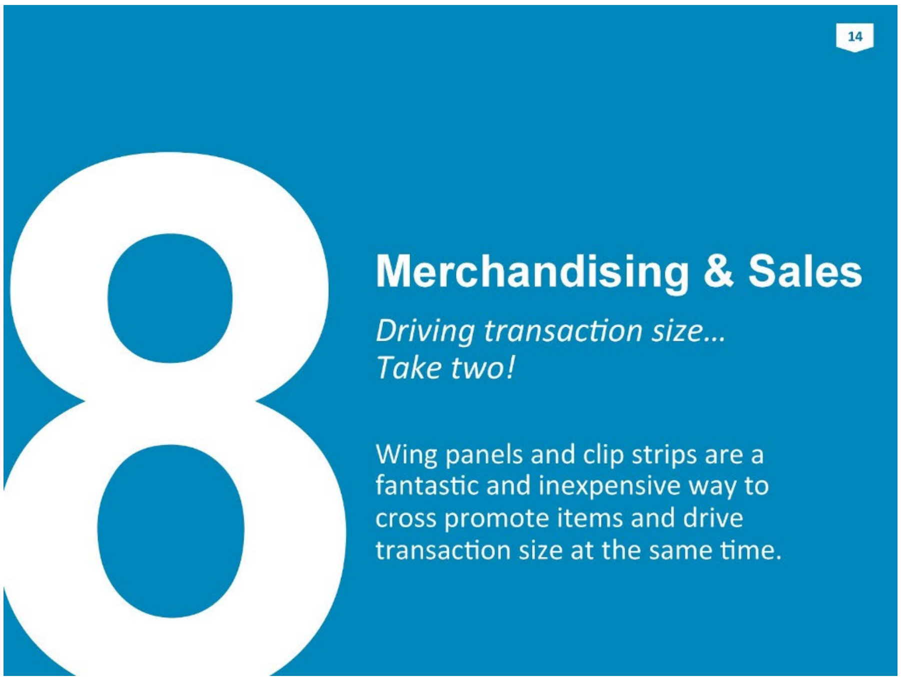


Figure 25: "8: Driving Transaction Size…Take Two!" Slide, 20 Quick Wins, Max's Spring 2017 Presentation

To illustrate or expand upon the concept, he again relates it to HDI programs or resources available at the market: "You should also be focused on increasing prices where you can do that. HDI's got programs in variable pricing that could really help you increase your profitability and price your products correctly" (presentation transcript). Speakers also referenced the show floor as a place to continue their discussions after the presentation. At the end of Noelle's 2016 Quick Wins presentation, she reminds audience members they can continue their discussion at the IHIRA booth on the show floor:

"So um, if anyone has any more thoughts, or any other ideas they'd like to share or quick wins or similar things that you guys have done that you think others might benefit from, I very much welcome that conversation. Again it's 5:59, so, um, we're right here on time though too, so uh, you're more than welcome to continue back on the floor too.” (presentation transcript)

In Max’s Transaction Size presentation, he includes visual examples on the slide as well as relating the content in his speech to examples audience members could find at the Market. For example, see the slide used to discuss creating a dollar aisle in Figure 28.

Figure 26: “Create A Dollar Aisle” Slide, 5 Tips to Increase Transaction Size, Max’s Spring 2016 Presentation

The slide features a main headline and colorful visual (following best practices described in *Slide:ology* and other design-focused texts), but then he links the suggestion to programs offered by the distributor and further examples audience members can find on the show floor:

“I'm not, not trying to do a commercial for HDI. But they have dollar store concept stuff that you guys can look at and buy. It doesn't have to be difficult. You just have to think about if I want to drive my transaction size, and we've talked about how that can be the best way to drive topline sales, what can I do while I'm here so I can go back and start making this happen right away.”

Ned’s Strategies for tying into the Market Experience

Ned managed to tie some of the more abstract leadership material into things the audience could do while at the show. For example, at the beginning of his presentation he showed a graph demonstrating "Which of the following areas do you plan on investing in over the short term?" Figure 29 shows the graph in detail.

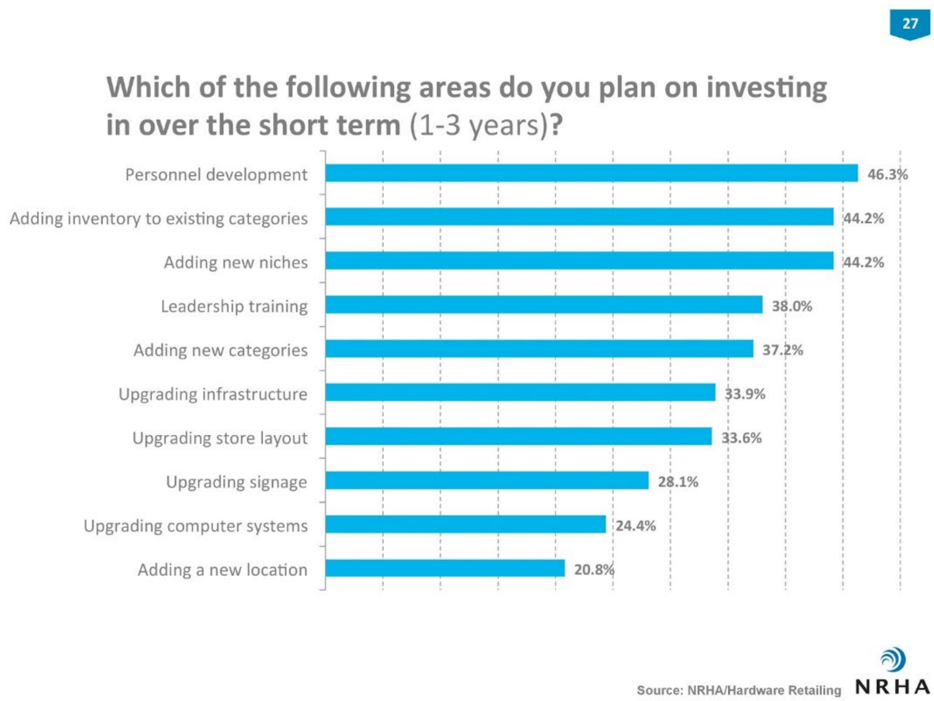


Figure 27: "Which of The Following Areas Do You Plan on Investing in Over the Short Term?" Slide, Secrets of Strong Retail Leadership: Leading By the Numbers, Ned's Presentation Spring 2017

Ned explained:

> Where are you going to spend your money in the short term to improve your business? Personnel development again comes out on top. We get again some inventory, adding new niches, which hopefully you're scouring the show floor downstairs to look for those opportunities or products (presentation transcript).

In this case, his examples of the show's possibilities aren't related to his main topic of investing in people but he's showing how he understands what his audience will do at the show.

Ned, "Challenge the Process" and Relating to Quick Wins

Later in his leadership presentation, Ned ties in his content to his colleague Max's presentation on Quick Wins: "Experiment and take risks by generating some quick wins. And quick wins, ….I don't know if you attended his seminar earlier, he talked, it was all about quick wins,"(presentation transcript). Figure 30 displays the slide below.

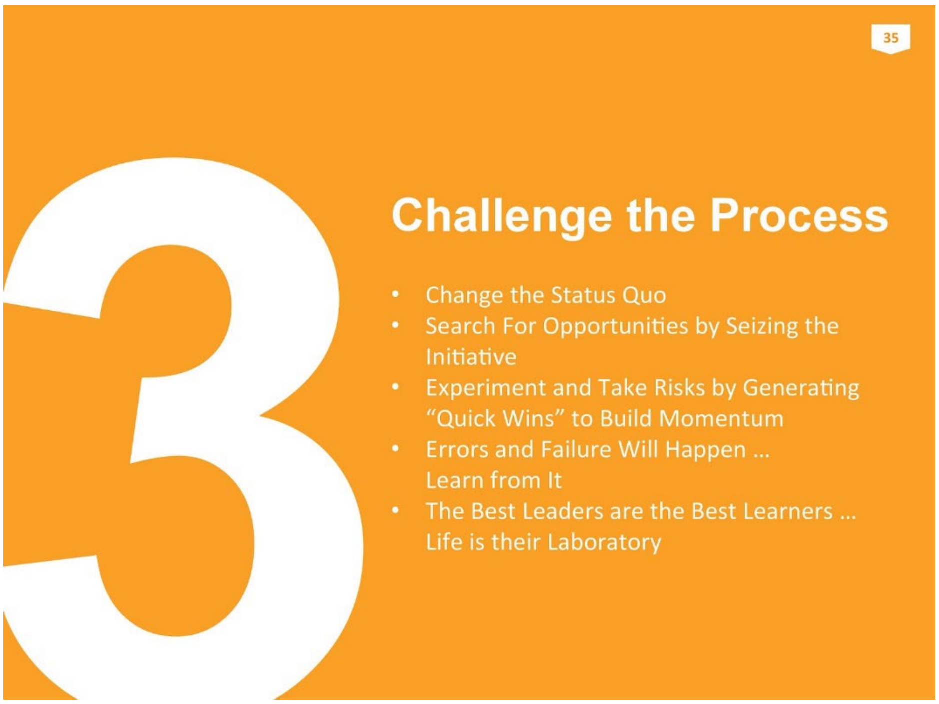


Figure 28: "3: Challenge the Process" Slide, Secrets of Strong Retail Leadership: Leading By the Numbers, Ned's Presentation Spring 2017

Referring to other seminars, just like referring to examples on the show floor, helps the audience to see the ecology of resources available to them from these speakers and the distributor. Again, this is uniquely contextual to the situation of the market—speakers can point to other seminars, written pieces, or physical examples in their setting to make a point to their audience. This connecting of resources also reinforces IHIRA's brand and mission to help independent hardware stores by offering them educational resources. Looking at the slide as a standalone document doesn't make the same explicit ties to parts of the ecology at the market, although “quick wins” is a common industry term that could lead someone reading the slide to IHIRA magazine stories or other resources about “quick wins.”

Closing Presentations by Reminding Audiences of the IHIRA Booth Location

All participants closed their presentation by reminding the audience of their booth location on the market floor—another place where audience members could pick up texts like magazine issues or the Operating Costs Study or drop off contact info to receive slides. They could also stop by to further discuss the presentation topics or other issues. Max specifically mentioned contacting him just to talk about issues in the industry or to try get connected with other retailers facing similar issues, emphasizing the role IHIRA plays in establishing connections and associations among members.

To See the Ecology of Resources Speakers Draw From, We Need to Look at The Performance in Context

Looking at the deck and presentation as visual and one performance doesn't reflect the ecology of resources the speakers draw from, an ecology that's available because of their service as a meta organization/trade organization and because of the affordances of the local setting at the Market Expo. Why include a high-resolution picture of a display if the real-life example is something the audience will walk past? Speakers can direct members to that live example instead of trying to visually recreate it in the space of a slide. If we see just look at the deck as an artifact, outside of this context, we don’t see how it’s used to refer to live context.

Sharing Slide Deck as a Handout and Housekeeping

In each of the seminars studied, neither Max, Noelle, nor Ned created separate handouts for their presentation. Each time, as part of their presentation, they mentioned slides would be available through the event host website or audience members could leave their contact info and they’d be happy to send it to them. They sent presentation decks as PDF files but saved them as slides not including the Notes Pane. Speakers saw mentioning that slides would be available as part of their script, like this excerpt from Max’s Quick Wins presentation demonstrates:

> And I'll tell you guys, just as a housekeeping note, a couple of things. Anybody who wants this presentation, just please bring your business card and give it to me afterwards and I'll make sure you get the presentation, so you don't have to worry about copying everything down. I also have my business cards up here, so if you don't have a card with you or a sticker with you that you can stick on the back of one of my business cards, please just take one of my cards, shoot me an email, and I'll make sure to email you the presentation. (presentation transcript)

Ned mentions sending the slides at the beginning and end of the presentation, acknowledging the words could be hard to read and that audience members can leave their card if they'd like the slides or have further questions. Similarly, Max offers to share the deck with the audience both at the beginning and end of his 2016 Transaction Size presentation. He also tells the audience that the hosting organization should make them available and acknowledges that audience members don't have to worry about "feverishly taking notes."

Even within the frame of "making it easier for the audience to have the information" without "feverishly taking notes" or struggling to read slides with text too small or with too many words per slide, these presentations show the tradeoffs of differing ways to present with slideware. Ideally, the slide deck would be easy to read and include a helpful handout as well as access to the deck after the presentation. If we consider the handout as increasing usability, the speakers' practice of "housekeeping" without a separate handout hints at what Lauer and Brumberger (2017) caution about prioritizing efficiency over usability. At the same time, speakers aren't developing these processes in a vacuum. They have appropriated PowerPoint decks and presentations for their local context, just as culture in general has appropriated genres of PowerPoint use for other contexts.

Housekeeping Shows Attentiveness to the Rhetorical Situation

Calling it "housekeeping" shows how passing on slides so that audience members don't need to take notes is routine for these presentations, as well as the speaker's attentiveness to the rhetorical situation. This process also helps the audience know they can listen to the presentation without worrying about notes, helping them pay more attention to the speaker and overcoming what Abela (2013) describes about maintaining the illusion of audience control.

Housekeeping also helps to keep the audience from flipping ahead of the speaker. Communication consultants say letting the audience know that notes will be available later helps to prevent them from flipping through a handout while the speaker presents. Reynolds cites “expert presenter and one of New York City’s most successful technology entrepreneurs” (2020, p. 70) David S. Rose, who says to never hand out slides before a presentation because it shows that you don’t need to be there to explain them if they can stand alone. Again, this idea deals with balancing information on slide text and other places (the speech, a notes section or handout) as well as dealing with audience control. If the audience can flip through the presentation in advance, even if they stay for the whole time, they can be reading ahead instead of listening to the presenter. This tip might help with certain types of sales pitches (one of many PowerPoint presentation genres), but it doesn’t necessarily apply to these IHIRA speakers and educational seminars (another type of PowerPoint genre) they present. The speakers want the audience members to have the information they present in the deck and through their performance of the slides, but they also want to point audience members to the larger ecology of resources IHIRA has. Max explained one of his goals for the seminar presentations: “to illustrate to the audience that IHIRA as an organization does things that are worthwhile to them, so we'd like to see you get more engaged with IHIRA.” He also acknowledged that a connected subgoal to getting members more engaged is that greater engagement means they have greater value as an association, so “the greater we can leverage and monetize that value to continue to produce revenue that will continue to help us fund projects.” The seminars are educational as well as part sales-pitch for IHIRA as an association, but the speakers aren’t worried about handouts and the audience flipping ahead like Rose suggests. Their improvised system is to offer to share the deck at the beginning of the presentation so audience members know they'll have the information and perhaps can better listen or engage with the speaker instead of furiously copying notes.

Speakers Try to Maintain Audience Interest Despite Fractured Objectives

Looking again at the rhetorical situation of these educational seminars, it's important to remember that as an educational presentation, the audience wants to learn things that they can take back to improve their business, and the speakers' purposes are to help give them information but also remind them of the value of their trade association, which offers them more information and knowledge products. But these speakers aren't selling magazine subscriptions; every independent hardware or home improvement retailer is automatically a member of IHIRA and gets access to the magazine and other informational products. IHIRA does offer training programs that have additional costs, and those are mentioned in the seminars, but that also shows the competing balance of sales and education this seminar genre has.

If we focus too narrowly on pinpointing genre or, like Tufte, bemoan how everything has been turned into a sales pitch, then we might lose out on seeing how these multiple objects are brought together and how they influence making the information accessible (as a visual presentation aid and PDF stand-alone deck that acts as a handout later) as well as efficient (making one deck for both purposes instead of a handout). Even with handouts used as presentation aids, Abela (2013) acknowledges speakers who worry about maintaining control are focused on "the illusion of control." Handouts or not, no speaker can control the audiences' minds. Furthermore, these strategies to help the audience stay in the moment and engage with the information instead of taking notes speaks to the spirit of the dual-channels theory underlying the words-per-slide arguments: the audience can't listen and read at the same time.

Saving Slides as a PDF Shows Speakers Considering Usability

Saving as a PDF also shows how speakers recognized audience needs and purposes. Noelle explained, “some of that was just to keep the content from people able to be changed,” but also:

> Some of it was also just because, as you know, our presentations were so long they were, you had to save it down to a PDF or you couldn't send it out to people, or it couldn't be downloaded, so. Some of it was just convenience too. (personal communication)

To make the decks standalone resources, they had to be able to be sent easily via email, which required modifying their file size and preserving formatting and content.

Max usually converts the slides to a PDF “because a lot of people sometimes will have a hard time opening a PowerPoint but just about everyone can open a PDF these days.” Again, converting slides to a PDF shows the speaker’s concerns for their audience, who need to be able to open the document and may not want all of the notes meant for a speaker, not necessarily the audience.

Using The Notes Pane Differently

When speakers saved their decks as PDFs, they did not save them as Notes handouts. In fact, Noelle made sure to remove the Notes section, as she explains, “they're more just private prompts for me, not that they would be inappropriate, but they might not necessarily be the most professional, so I'd take out the notes” (personal communication). This conscious choice shows how speakers continued to consider the needs of their audience after the seminar, as well as distinguished which parts of the slide deck served as visual aids versus personal speaker notes.

While they remove the notes and/or send PDFs of slides without access to the Notes Page view, these speakers still utilize the Notes Pages function. Ned used the Notes Pane the most, tending to write out more of what he wanted to say with each slide in advance. Describing his own process, Ned said he doesn’t always write out a whole script. Sometimes he will for the first version of presentation or for two different versions, but he tries not to read from it: “what I do is just if someone else goes to give the same presentation somewhere else, they'll have a lot of context as to the meaning why” (personal communication). Ned uses his script also as a backup notes resource: “If I just throw up and forget what the hell I'm doing I can at least look at my notes and maybe get back on track, but more so, at least at this stage, you know I've given a lot of presentations and I'm very comfortable doing so” (personal communication).

Using Notes for Reuse Purposes

Ned’s practice of writing a script comes only partially as a backup for speaker notes and more so because he knows each presentation will be passed on and adapted. He further explained:

“We are asked to speak at a bazillion of these things, and always at HDI, sometimes at Ace, sometimes at AllPro…and I, you know, it's just you've got to have three or four good ones ready to go” (personal communication).

Noelle appreciated when Ned provided a full script in the Notes section of PowerPoint and noted she could choose from his anecdotes and customize them to her own experience. Max also appreciated Ned’s “meticulous” preparation for slide decks because they all present and modify from the decks. Max made sure to clarify that Ned does a really good job, even though the two of them have totally different methods. While Max doesn’t create notes for himself, he knows if he’s using a presentation that originated with someone who does, like Noelle or Ned, he should check for them before sending a PowerPoint document.

Future Research Should Look at Different Types of Presentations as Genres-In-Use

In this study, just as in Lauer and Brumberger’s (2019; 2017), Williams, Spinuzzi, and Newbold (2019), and Yates and Orlikowski (2007), writers created slide decks that doubled as text deliverables and could be passed on without oral presentations. A limitation of this study is that it does not examine audience expectations nor how they may wish to engage with the texts in these presentations. Specifically, this study looked at the audience during the seminar presentation, but in collecting emails to forward slide decks, it’s possible that speakers or audience members passed on slide decks to audience members who weren't there; speakers didn't know the exact rhetorical velocity, where the decks would end up. In these same studies, writers crafted decks in that way in response to their rhetorical situations.

This study can help to show how writers are adapting and deploying genres of slide decks and the rhetorical contexts in which they enact them. The speakers here genuinely care about their audience and helping them to improve their businesses (which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4). Their slide designs may have fewer rich visuals or more words than many sources recommend, but these speakers aren't creating wordy slides because they are lazy or in order to read from them like speaker notes. But that isn't to say that the communication consultant and academic research that advocates for separate handouts and highly visual live presentations are wrong either. There's space between the deck as handout/delivery and the separate handout/report that sources recommend, and that space needs to be studied in multiple contexts.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This study was designed to better understand distributed work and writing processes in a medium-sized trade organization, focusing on educational seminar presentations presented at three industry buying shows across two years. Using theories of distributed work and project management, it examined the writing, editing, and reuse processes of knowledge workers at the trade association. The trade association's flat organizational structure results in writing processes where individual authors have near total control over their texts, yet there is significant sharing, reuse, and collaboration at the invention stages as well as resistance to more conventional distributions of labor between design and writing experts. My initial research question included:

1. What specific literate activities are performed in the course of preparing and delivering the seminar presentations? Who performs these activities?
2. How does the work done to compose, present, and experience these seminars illustrate or challenge existing theories of distributed work?

Practices Arose from the Unique Rhetorical Situation of IHIRA's Work

The overarching theme in these chapters is that practices, whether of managing work projects, rhetorical reuse, and composing, delivering, and disseminating presentations, arose out of the unique rhetorical situations of the type of work IHIRA conducted. IHIRA was not an all-edge adhocracy, like Spinuzzi (2015) describes, but as a trade organization, it doesn't have the same traditional silos of hierarchies, and workers consistently worked with member-constituents to learn of their needs and create informational products in response. Trade organizations are the agents for disseminating the information to their industry (Rajwani, Lawton, & Phillips, 2015), and information is a knowledge product. The store owners who are member-constituents draw from IHIRA's knowledge products to help run their business and stay informed on updates in their industry. IHIRA workers interact with members through multiple communication flows, resulting in different assemblages of IHIRA workers and members and ad-hoc processes, as they discuss and develop knowledge products. This means a key part of their rhetorical situation is that they must obtain trust and credibility with association members. This trust and expertise are gained tacitly at work, which results in IHIRA workers reusing and repurposing content as they come together in different assemblages to meet the needs of their members. They present slide decks as visual aids that double as deliverables, while implementing persuasive strategies like drawing from the audience's experience at the dealer market. These speakers' practices don't necessarily match some of the best practices suggestions in our field, but observing and describing them helps us to see the ways they deploy and modify genres in action.

Specific Literate Activities Performed

I described the ways speakers assembled presentations as part of larger content packages of information products they offered to their members (Chapter 4). They developed their own strategies for reuse, pulling images and whole slides from previous presentations into new ones, instead of following the designer-recommended process of opening the blank, pre-approved template and inputting their information there (Chapter 5). Placing their seminar presentations in the context of the larger dealer market showed how they developed rhetorical strategies like tying into the audience's experience and saving the slide deck as an accessible PDF that served as a handout they shared after the presentation (Chapter 6).

Who Performs These Literate Activities

I described how the unique rhetorical situation of IHIRA as a trade organization shows how their member-constituents participate in invention for content package topics and drive many of the project management processes, as demonstrated in Chapter 4. IHIRA's graphic design team created standardized templates for brand consistency that they wanted speakers to use by opening them and "starting from scratch" to import their seminar information into the slides. Speakers, however, preferred to pull images and charts from older presentation decks, especially because these older slides brought with them the context from previous presentations, and the dealer market seminars were repeated rhetorical situations (Chapter 5).

Illustrating And Challenging Current Conceptions of Distributed Work

As a distributed workplace, IHIRA texts coordinate work between the technical communicators and the member-constituents through multiple communication flows, as demonstrated in Chapter 4. Members drive much of the invention processes for the knowledge products IHIRA workers create, and interacting with members is an important part of learning-on-the-job for workers. While different members might interact depending on the project, IHIRA was a stable organization, so project assemblages always had at least one IHIRA worker. The unique rhetorical situation this created meant that project management strategies had to be more flexible and iterative. All IHIRA workers who interfaced with members met once a year to discuss major topics and create content packages for magazine stories, training programs, and slide presentations that addressed those concerns. IHIRA as an association restructured their communication teams twice during the course of this study with the intent to place more IHIRA TCs in contact with members so they could create better content packages. Formal project management strategies like Agile or Six Sigma have been studied by writing studies researchers interested in distributed work, but this study shows how IHIRA needed to create flexible project management strategies that arose from their rhetorical situation, which included direct participation of members. These less formal strategies allowed for IHIRA TCs to take on more project management roles, demonstrating an instance where their skills as symbolic-analytic workers contributed to organizing work in addition to producing texts.

Situating their slide decks in the context of the Market Expo

Chapter 6 discussed how IHIRA speakers adapted slideware presentation technology to serve as a presentation visual aid as well as a handout that can be distributed via email. The seminar presentation is a text that coordinates work between the speaker and audience, or between IHIRA workers and members. IHIRA speakers developed strategies for these repeated rhetorical situations, like mentioning that audience members could share their email to get the full slide deck “instead of feverishly taking notes.” Each seminar mentioned this process near the beginning of the talk and referred to it as “housekeeping.” Current writing studies and communication consultant literature advocates less information-dense, heavily bulleted slides in favor of simplistic design with vivid images and separate handouts. Atkinson (2011) advocated that in cases where the speaker wants to put excessive text on the slide, they can place them in the Notes pane in PowerPoint and then print the slides (or save them as PDFs) in the Handouts view. Speakers followed some of these “best practices” but also improvised their own strategies. Most decks were word-heavy, though none reached the “teleprompter” or “slideument” category. Instead of including rich visuals, they referred to the audience’s immediate show experience, where they could see concepts live at the Dealer Market. They used the Notes pane for their own notes, but they saw sharing them with the audience as unnecessary or even less professional because they were personal speaker notes. They saved decks as a PDF because that was a more accessible format that most people could open. While a separate handout may have increased usability for audience members, they had also adapted to the repeated rhetorical situation of these seminars and of the dealer market.

Reuse practices of Knowledge Workers

As described in Chapter 5, in writing studies reuse is often characterized negatively in terms of prioritizing efficiency over usability. Adapting genres for efficiency doesn’t necessarily mean making the documents less usable, however. Jakobs and Spinuzzi explain how reuse practices emphasizing efficiency “should produce more integrated writers who must combine knowledge, methods, and information with their work processes” (p. 362). There is still rhetorical work in knowing what to reuse and how to produce texts that best meet clients’ needs. In Chapter 5 I analyzed what kinds of material were reused and how, concluding that the reuse drew from speakers' tacit knowledge of the rhetorical situation and their efforts to balance the needs of the audience with the real constraints on their time as employees in a small business.

Examining the reuse practices of the speakers (Chapter 5) showed how speakers used the slide deck as both a presentation visual and a handout or text that audience members could request, rather than producing a separate white paper or report outlining the ideas. This practice echoes findings from Lauer and Brumberger (2017; 2019) and Yates and Orlikowski (2007), though like those studies, it doesn’t examine how the audience perceives such a practice. Lauer and Brumberger (2017) capture this gap in knowledge, as well as the hesitation that writing studies scholars might feel, about reusing slide decks as presentation deliverables, which might go against our best practices for creating slides that aren’t too full of text. Lauer and Brumberger explain that for writers and clients in the situation, this practice might be more efficient, and furthermore, workplaces change practices and adapt genres for efficiency, which might make writing studies researchers feel “unsettled.”

Next Steps in Research

My findings pointed to contexts that need additional study. Because store owner/members interact with IHIRA workers in so many different configurations and assemblages for a variety of purposes, I needed to find a way to bound my study around a specific mediational means (Spinuzzi, 2011; Witte, 2005), and I chose the educational seminar presentations as the object. That is, I focused on the slide show as the mediational means through which different actants achieved their objectives. This includes the authors of the slide shows, who aimed at delivering valuable information to members in an efficient manner (by using slides as presentation visuals as well as handouts) and the audience members, who used the slides to learn about new business ideas. I wanted to see what I could discover about the writing activity and process around the product and how information was learned and conveyed in adhocratic workplaces.

In the process of bounding my study and focusing on the presentation, however, I ran into issues with an important data stream: getting the perspective of the audience members and finding out how they wanted to engage with the presentation materials. The audience might perceive getting the slide deck as the most efficient practice, or they might have other ways they prefer to learn the information presented in the seminar. Because I didn't capture the audience's perspective in this study, the primary finding of this study is the discovery of new questions: In terms of adult learning, what is rhetorically effective? What is the audience's engagement with the slideshow as a live presentation and as a takeaway document? Additionally, this study points to the need for additional research on the relationships between various related organizations (the distributor, IHIRA, store owners, other actors) and how those relationships affect the work processes and writing processes of knowledge workers. Examining these questions can help writing studies fulfill Lauer and Brumberger's (2017) call to continually reexamine evolving genre conventions to see how they suit the communication context, as well as how they balance efficiency with usability.

In addition to examining additional contexts like the audience's perspectives, further studies should also examine more examples of rhetorical reuse in workplace contexts. Much of writing studies and related fields' work on content management focuses on larger companies and formal content management systems, and more research should continue to examine smaller, more ad-hoc workplaces. Workplaces can become increasingly distributed because of economic factors and developments in communication technology (Spinuzzi, 2015), and the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how those technologies and economic factors can directly result in more remote work. Many types of organizations are changing, and research should continue to investigate how smaller or member-driven organizations are reacting to those conditions.

Potential Pedagogical Applications

Teaching Different Genres of Presentations, Helpings Students See Distributed Work

This study discusses multiple genres of presentations, and we should be teaching our students about the different genres of presentations. Activities to do so are beyond the scope of this study, but some potential ideas might include focusing on different uses of slide presentations. For example, when teaching professional writing for engineers, I ask students to create a conference-style presentation in the middle of their group project, after proposing their initial idea and conducting a literature review. The nature of the group project is somewhat distributed as the students are an outside consultant team of engineers determining how to fix an issue at the McMurdo Research Base in Antarctica. Their team is spliced into the US Office of Polar Programs organization to solve a problem, and they are assembling around that problem. This mock-situation gets students to think of some of the conditions of distributed work, to think of the differing motives between their group as consultants (even though they are pretending, for the assignment's sake), the motives of the people on the research base, and the motives of the Office of Polar Programs.

After the students conduct research and propose a solution through a literature review, I ask them to provide more information in the form of a presentation. Instead of having them each stand up and present the one slide they individually created, they must bring a handout (which can be a slide deck or other visual) that includes a project timeline and budget and also answers any questions I asked when providing feedback on their literature review. We sit down with the deck together and discuss the parts, and I individually ask each project member what they think is the most persuasive argument for their proposed plan, rather than asking them to narrate each slide or give a more traditional-style, comprehensive overview presentation. Then I give them approval to create their final proposal cover letter and abstract. This places the slide presentation not as a final product of a remediated paper but as a middle step in illustrating their project steps. It automatically forces them to consider the balance of words on the handout and what they will say in person because each member can't put their own script on the handout. They can also reuse images from their literature review for the handout and refer to our conversation when writing their project cover letter, again emphasizing the audience and process. It's not exactly the same as the presentation genres I witnessed in this study, but it does incorporate the lessons of collaboration, reuse, and using the situatedness of the meeting with me as some of their persuasive techniques.

TED (Technology, education, and design) talks are another genre of slide presentation that might be examined in the classroom. Personally, I haven't assigned students to craft a TED talk, but I do use some in class as examples to start discussions about rhetorical techniques and visuals. Students have found the examples shared tend to lean heavily toward the "sales-pitch" or "motivational speaker" tone, and we discuss how their own presentations for my class and others might adapt or disregard such a tone. Kedrowicz & Taylor (2016) found their students who studied TED talks recognized the engaging narratives and saw presentations as co-produced and mediated, even though they considered the presentations less formal because of the way speakers spoke informally or established connections with the audience, rather than following the more linear or polished models of presentations students have been taught. TED talks are readily available online and easily passed on to others, so students were asked to reconceptualize audience analysis. In our own classrooms, we might ask students to view or analyze TED talks and compare them to what they consider to be more formal presentation models. Some TED presentations might have an accompanying slide deck (or students might find one on LinkedIn or another source), which could be analyzed before or after viewing the presentation and then discussed in terms of how it supports the speaker, works as a handout, or does or doesn't effectively convey ideas to the audience without the audio.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it involved interviewing only senior workers instead of other team members who participate in the project management and development processes. All workers interviewed have worked as technical communicators to gain expertise in the industry, and most cite their journalism or design background as informing their perspective and helping them to become subject-matter experts in the industry—and, consequently, top association employees. Still, discussing processes and initiatives with more workers who have been reorganized and work with the production documents and tools might offer a greater perspective. As previously mentioned, another limitation is that I was unable to interview audience members following the presentations. Getting audience perspectives and initial reactions, as well as following up to see what information they remembered or what texts they requested and why, could add another dimension to analyzing speaker strategies in the context of this work.

Also, this case study of one trade association does not offer generalizable results for every trade organization or workplace involving technical writing and project management. Still, as a smaller meta-organization (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005), it deserves technical communications attention. “Small but mighty” organizations conduct work at an incredible and in-depth speed with fewer resources and informal processes, offering a new take for examining project and content management in action. Perhaps not as empowered as Edenfield’s (2017) worker co-ops, trade associations and their members still work together to produce content. These are some of the networked and federated spaces where technical communication involves distributed work, which leads to creating project management strategies to bridge tasks, as well as adapting reuse practice. These smaller instances and their processes, though seemingly less rigorous, can help us to see what’s at the heart of project management and symbolic analytic work and to argue for the value of our work in many fields.

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APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

For speakers:

1. How did you choose your topic?
2. What are some of your goals for this presentation?
3. What other activities are you involved in at the market?
4. What resources might you be directing your audience toward?
5. How did you prepare/write this presentation?
6. How often and in what settings do you deliver similar presentations?
7. How would you describe your target audience?
8. What goals are you hoping the Market overall achieves?
9. If people request your presentation materials/slides/etc, what is your process for getting them that information?

For communication directors and speakers:

1. What are the IHIRA “teams” who help put together content?
2. How has the structure of the “teams” changed since you’ve been at the association?
3. What are your job titles and responsibilities at the association? What are some of your previous job titles and responsibilities during your time there?
4. Do you have any official systems/databases or schedules to keep everyone on task? Or to organize projects?
5. What about texts/documents that do so (i.e. project checklists for editors? Post-it note systems or calendars?

Regarding content packages/content management

6. How much of that goes through your team?/what is your role in developing, managing, producing these?
7. How do you break up tasks and responsibilities like going through the data, writing the report, designing the print and online products or stories?
8. Who creates online tools, like the calculators and comparison tools?

9. Are you or members of your team coding or working with technology to create content, whether for web or other applications?
10. How is work split up regarding training materials?
11. What has been your role/your team's role in the leadership training institutes?
12. What is your/your team's role in creating seminar presentations?
13. I've heard and seen the association make efforts to present a more consistent brand image---what has been your/your team's role in that?
14. In terms of content management--do you have a system or something set in place as a repository for all the info?
15. How do team members work together to create magazine stories and related content?
    a. How do they share content and topic expertise? Reach out to association members?
16. What other tools, practices, processes have been helpful in terms of organizing work?
    a. Managing projects and content?
17. For students/future workers who want to work in associations like yours, what advice do you have? What skills do you look for/hope to find?

APPENDIX B: METHODS

	ORIGINAL STUDY	PROJECT MANAGEMENT PORTION
Research Questions	1) What specific literate activities are performed in the course of preparing and delivering the seminar presentations? Who performs these activities? 2) How does the work done to compose, present, and experience these seminars illustrate or challenge existing theories of distributed work?	1) How does the trade association manage projects and content in conjunction with member needs? 2) How have processes developed and changed for producing content over the past few years? 3)How does this case study compare to other TC research on project management and symbolic-analytic work?
Site	2 educational seminars at each of the 5 buying shows (10 seminars total)	Phone and email follow-up interviews regarding larger project data collection
Methods	Record and transcribe seminar audio, collect presentation slide deck and other presentation materials	Transcribe phone and email interviews; collect sample documents if available
Coding & Analysis	Starter & open codes focusing on presentation persuasive techniques, content recycling in seminar speech and slide decks, and resources pointed to and drawn from	Starter & open codes focusing on processes of invention, member interaction; expertise sharing; team development and responsibilities, and managing processes in creating presentations and other products