

# Technical Communication



## WRITING COLLABORATIVELY

# Writing Collaboratively

2

- Most conference and Journal papers have several authors
- Most research projects have many scientists and engineers.
- *Writing collaboratively* = writing a single document with several people.
- Critical skill for scientists and engineers

# Advantages of writing collaboratively

3

- **Collaboration advantages**
  - draws on a greater knowledge base.
  - draws on a greater skills base.
  - Provides a better idea of how the audience will read the document.
  - Improves communication among colleagues.
  - Helps acclimate new colleagues to an organization.

# Disadvantages of writing collaboratively

4

- Collaboration disadvantages
  - Takes more time than individual writing'
  - Can lead to “groupthink”
    - ✦ Groups often times conform to each other.
    - ✦ Groups can hesitate to think critically.
  - Can yield a disjointed document
  - Can lead to inequitable workloads.
    - ✦ One person will have most of the work.
  - Can reduced motivation to work hard on a document
  - Can lead to interpersonal conflict

# Conducting Meetings

5

- **Setting your agenda**
  - Define the group's task
  - Choose a group leader.
  - Define tasks for each group member
  
  - Establish working procedures
    - ✦ When, where will we meet?
    - ✦ What procedures will we follow in meetings?
    - ✦ How, how often are we to communicate?
  
  - Establish a procedure for resolving conflict
  
  - Create a style sheet
    - ✦ Same style = less revision
    - ✦ Many conference / journal provide a style sheet already.
  
  - Establish a work schedule.
  - *Create evaluation materials.*

# Efficient Meetings

6

- Arrive on time.
- Stick to an agenda
- Record important decisions made at the meeting
- Summarize your accomplishments
  - Make sure every member understands his/her assignment.

# Communicating Diplomatically

7

- Listen carefully.
- Let the speaker finish.
- Give everyone a chance to speak.
- Avoid personal remarks and insults.
  
- Don't overstate your position
  - Ex: Overbearing =
    - ✦ *"My plan is a sure thing. There's no way we're not going to be better than Project X."*
  - Ex: Diplomatic =
    - ✦ *"I think this plan has a good chance of success. We're using strengths that we have, which gives us an advantage over Project X's weakness."*
- Don't get emotionally attached to your own ideas.
- Ask pertinent questions.
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication !!

# Critiquing a Draft

8

- Start with a positive statement.
- Discuss the larger issues first.
  - Organization
  - Development
  - Logic
  - Evidence
  - Design
  - Graphics.
- Discuss smaller issues later
  - Paragraph development
  - Sentence level development
  - Word choice.
- Talk about the writing, NOT the writer
- Focus on the group's document, not on the group member's draft.



# Software

9

- **Microsoft word !**
  - Excellent revision software.