

November 2013

Techno Talk Your Way To Success

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Recommended Citation

Leisner, Tony (1994) "Techno Talk Your Way To Success," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 6: Iss. 2, Article 13.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1465>

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Our corporate customers in Europe mostly are European branches of American customers because we don't market to Europe at all. We ship things to locations if our customers are going there. Any other business is usually by referral from one of our customers.

ATG: What do you do when you are not working?

JPS: I love to go to casinos and play black jack. It is a complex, evolving system and I have paid my dues. For my

wife's birthday this weekend we are going to Atlantic City. Recently I got my very own passport and my wife and I are planning to spend two weeks in Paris after ABA.

I spend my time reading books and watching movies. Just saw *Schindler's List* and *In the Name of the Father*. I am Irish and liked the latter a lot though I felt that they cut out significant sections of the movie not to make it too long. I am reading a wicked book right now — *If You're Talking To Me Your Career Must Be In Trouble*, by Joe Queenen. It

is wickedly funny and vicious movie criticism. I am also reading the book on the Warburgs at a slow and casual place and a couple of books from Kodansha about Japanese military heroes.

Well, y'all, an interview with John Perry Smith was as interesting as you might expect! We'll have to catch him at the next Charleston Conference and get him to say more controversial stuff since we won't see him at ALA, will we, John?
— KS ☞



Techno Talk Your Way to Success

by Tony Leisner (Dawsons)

At the extremes, Electronic Publishing can mean everything from an electric typewriter to laser skywriting. Perhaps this is just what is so confusing about new technologies. They often lack common definitions when they are in their infancy and as a result it always appears as though some people know how to techno talk better than others. These astute techno talkers know they can get away with this game because their subject is usually so new as to lack standards and thus any position is defensible. When technology is introduced at such a rapid pace as is the case in publishing, standards evolve. When the technology matures then the standard is what new revisions are written to just before obsolescence sets in. Examples abound! For all the early enthusiasts of computers who took the time to learn DOS, along came mouse-driven Windows. If you took the effort to learn how to program your VCR (most people still can't and don't use it to record anyway) then the advent of on-screen programming didn't surprise you a bit. If you are one of the estimated 18 million Internet address holders the chances are that you still struggle with it from time to time. When you consider that the 18 million people are from all over the world it is really a drop in the proverbial bucket and the vast majority of potential users

still await a friendlier standard. So standards are clearly the critical key to acceptance of technology by large groups of users. You wouldn't want to get in your car each day and wonder if the factory had magically changed the location of forward and reverse on your shift mechanism. Yet many electronic publishers think nothing of doing this to their online subscribers on a fairly irregular basis. This means that only the very hardy techno talkers are willing to hang on and most of the rest of us find that it is too tiring keeping up with constant change. We patiently await the stabilization that comes with standardization.

Good news, kind of! There are some standards in electronic publishing. The most important one is ISO 8879. There, you see how easy it is to become a techno talker. ISO is, of course, the International Standards Organization and they assign numbers to things that meet a global standard. ISO 8879 is the standard which SGML must meet. SGML, which is more techno talk but by now you are starting to learn, stands for Standard Generalized Markup Language. This is important to librarians. When you pick up a book you can expect to find a familiar pattern to its structure. The title page is customarily in front and the index is in the back. A table of contents will be in front and an appendix at the back and so on. Well SGML sets these kinds of standards for electronic publication structure and this means that

you can find things where you expect them to be every time.

A book, when it gets sent through the mail, stays in the same format throughout its entire trip. Not always the case with electronic data so knowing what the structure is at both ends of the transmission becomes crucial. Some similar standards exist for multimedia as well. HyTime defines how graphics, video, sound and text will be identified and linked so the performance is the same each time the product is played/read/used. Where the application of these ISO standards really shines is in the case of non-English languages. Standards that deal with structure don't differentiate between sentences which are horizontal and those that are vertical. Starting at the so called back of the book and reading forward is not a challenge for a properly SGML-designed document. Things will always be where they are supposed to be for the user of that document. So, now you too can become a techno talker and dazzle your friends while at the same time keeping your eye out for electronic publications that adhere to ISO standards for SGML. ☞

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