



Freund Associates
Technical Communication

Kawasaki Understands the Value of Outsourcing

A Case Study



SINCE 1912, Yonkers, NY-based Kawasaki Rail Car (KRC) has been manufacturing some of the industry's finest high-speed trains, commuter cars, and subway trains. Kawasaki's facilities are equipped for the complete fabrication, assembly, rehabilitation, and function testing of all its products. In Yonkers, critical maintenance and operation manuals are designed, written, and distributed to train operators and technicians around the world.

The Challenge

In-House Staff at Capacity, Deadlines Looming

Due to their technical complexity, plus numerous safety and compliance issues, each set of manuals may take 3-5 years to compile, review, and finalize. So what happened when multiple manuals had to be delivered to waiting customers, and Kawasaki's in-house staff of seven was at capacity? Paul Dethlefsen, a Kawasaki consultant and former Manager of Manuals and Training, didn't have time to recruit, hire, and train the technical resources he needed for the projects.

"Expansion wasn't really practical," said Dethlefsen, "because I couldn't wait to find someone who had the required technical skills. I needed somebody to take a couple of these projects off my shoulders and essentially manage them without a lot of input from me. The person had to be able to work independently, very, very quickly or it wouldn't have done me any good." The solution was to outsource. But to whom?

Finding a technical writing firm that not only knew the subject matter, but also was available to work immediately became Dethlefsen's next task... until he remembered Freund Associates.

Initially, Paul's main point of contact was Managing Director Annette Freund, with whom he had worked on a couple of proposals. Shortly thereafter, he met with Freund Associates' Senior Engineer John Freund. "I was impressed with John's knowledge," said Dethlefsen, "but it was his

management skills and ability to look at a problem and solve it that really made the difference."

The Solution

A Technical Lead Who Didn't Need Training

Dethlefsen arranged to hire John for a 3-6 month consultancy. His first assignment was to assist in completing maintenance documentation for bi-level cars for the Metropolitan Boston Transit Authority (MBTA). As the Technical Lead, John was responsible for reviewing materials and making sure they were technically accurate before submitting to the customer. This involved providing technical expertise, managing, and coordinating the activity of a number of on-site and off-site consultants. Final deliverables included a full suite of printed manuals—about 10,000 pages in all—including a *Running Repair Manual*, *Heavy Repair Manual*, *Integrated Schematics Manual*, and *Illustrated Parts Catalog*.

"The really nice thing about working with John," said Dethlefsen, "is that I could tell him what I needed, and he knew how to do it. I didn't have to train him. He really saved my life."

John also assumed the role of training operations and inspection people, both as the actual trainer and as an observer, making sure that any technical issues that came up were answered. "John's training is excellent," said Dethlefsen. "He's a very personable guy, he always has a plan, and he knows what he's talking about."



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The Result

A Solid, Long-term Relationship with Freund Associates

When KRC won the M-8 rail car contract for Metro-North Railroad and Connecticut Department of Transportation, once again John was asked to lead the maintenance documentation effort, this time not only as Technical Lead, but also as Project Manager for the Manuals and Training Group. This project is significantly larger than previous projects, and the M-8 rail car is considered one of the most complicated vehicles Kawasaki has produced for the U.S.

As Project Manager, John is responsible for developing the project plan, attending design reviews, and managing the activities of approximately 20 subcontracting firms, plus a number of Kawasaki employees and consultants. As with previous projects, John is also involved with the training

team to develop a training plan and provide technical support during training sessions. In his role as Project Manager, John routinely runs meetings and acts as a facilitator to resolve technical issues.

After a five-year engagement, Dethlefsen concludes, "It's been a pleasure working with Freund Associates." The result is a solid, long-term relationship between two companies that really understand the value of outsourcing.

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*– Paul Dethlefsen
Kawasaki Consultant*



Benefits to Kawasaki

Time Savings

No time was spent training the technical lead.

Expertise

A highly specialized technical writing need was filled immediately.

Leadership

The technical lead is an excellent trainer, project manager, and problem solver.

Reliability

Manuals and training are accurate and complete, and the technical lead can be counted on for the long term.

About Freund Associates Technical Communication

Freund Associates is a full-service communication firm specializing in technical and medical writing for business and industry. Founded in 1996 and located in northern New Jersey, Freund Associates is a certified woman-owned business that provides a tightly organized team of medical and technical writers, editors, graphic designers, new media specialists, engineers, and project managers to serve clients anywhere in the United States.

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