

BENCHMARK PUBLICATIONS INC.

...the *next* standard in business communications.

Corporate Profile

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Organization

Benchmark Publications Inc. is a business communications organization specializing in technical, marketing and educational information design and development for major corporations and software developers. Founded in 1987 by the former head of Publications and Curriculum Development at Exxon Office Systems, BPI is incorporated in the State of Connecticut and certified by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC). BPI is an IBM Business Partner {Developer|Software}, a member of the Society for Technical Communications (STC) Globalization SIG, Publishers' Marketing Association and ASCAP (as Benchmark Standards).

"Woman-owned and equal opportunity"

Purpose

To bring an understanding of the technology that supports today's complex business world to the people who need to know; to transfer the knowledge and reusable tools that will enable our clients to leverage their ROI.

Goals

Provide innovative solutions to business problems, deliver quality work at fair prices, do business ethically, treat colleagues fairly and work only with others who do the same.

"Benchmark: Something that serves as a standard by which others may be measured."
—Webster

Business Model

The Benchmark virtual office model grew out of the EOSC experience of building a new system for producing customer and market support communications covering five large product lines with an in-house staff of only four developers and the best consultants we could find (some of whom are still with us). We blended these resources into teams that followed a structured milestone-driven process from design through development, validation, QA, field test and final copy.

That system has served us just as well from this side of the corporate wall. (See [Business Solutions](#), a history of some early BPI projects.) The rewards for Benchmark and its clients are rapid information design and development, low overhead and 100% reduction in water-cooler time. Strong central project management, editorial support and quality control are the keys to a successful virtual office operation.

Extend your reach with a virtual team.



Areas of Concentration

Over the past decade, writing has developed a new texture. There will always be paper, of course, but today we can use what we've learned about information architecture, usability and knowledge transfer to deliver useful, timely documents with measurable impact—in print, on disc or on line. Print-on-demand and online delivery have slashed the costs of production and distribution, and narrowed the gap between change and communication.

From the limitless possibilities we could explore in the field of business communications, we have identified five areas of concentration:

Management Communications

Change breeds unrest. Management's job is to prepare the organization for new policies, new processes, new products and new ideas. BPI works closely with senior executives to articulate change to Management's internal and external constituency.

Typically, these projects begin with informal shirtsleeve executive sessions that help define the most effective message and the required results. Often our outsider questions help the insiders clarify the vision even to themselves.

Then, as in all of our projects large or small, Benchmark conducts the necessary research to flesh out the ideas, and drafts one or more examples representing the "look and feel" of the final product. This is our *style check* milestone.

Once Management has signed off on an example, BPI completes a full draft for client review before going to final copy. These up-front previews assure our clients of seeing their ideas come to life in recognizable form. No surprises.



Roll out is a word that breathes life into our work. Almost no other kind of project generates the excitement that introducing a new product does. We're usually situated neatly between the product development team and the marketing team, or marketing and advertising, where we provide the support functions that put a rollout in motion. For example, BPI has developed several national turnkey programs enabling branch managers to run a product launch, a sales blitz or a value-added customer information seminar.

Together, the teams brainstorm the "hook" that brings in the customer or motivates the sales team. BPI designs meeting collateral, develops product knowledge training or customer education materials, works out competitions and "spiffs," researches and produces competitive selling pieces and job aids—all the support components no one else has time to do.

It has been an interesting ride from green screen to browser. Along the way, BPI has tackled just about every kind of technical writing imaginable: Intermodal CRM, sales information management, business process integration, scientific imaging (DNA analysis), geomarketing, COBRA, financial forecasting, customer service—if you build them, we will come.

*Systems and
Processes*

"If you build them
we will come."

New applications are our bread and butter. As *user advocates*, BPI is dedicated to making difficult concepts clear, and as *IT champions*, we do our best to sell the new system to the user community. The trick to supporting the IT team is hands-on time with the system to get up to speed fast to try to have a complete draft by beta test. Then we pace ourselves through the test cycles so the app and the doc come out of the oven together, a process that has been likened to putting a tire on a moving car.

It's fun. For one memorable system, we produced reasonably finished installation guides for four unique prerelease installations, one per week!



*Courseware
Design &
Development*

Sound instructional design, appropriate selection of delivery media, and rock-solid organization-specific, educationally sound, field-tested courseware marks every BPI training project on virtually any topic: technical, sales, project management, product knowledge and others. Two particular BPI specialties are the pilot program: training the client's staff to deliver ongoing courses, and dual-purpose models and tools for future in-house courseware development to leverage the initial investment.

Training should be fun as well as informative. Our original cartoons make a point memorable, and original games teach, entertain and bond at the same time. One of our on-disk tutorials even has original music!

We saved our favorite area of concentration for last.

*New Media,
New Magic*

For a while now, BPI has routinely delivered great technical education on clients' intranets, and repurposed educational content for marketing uses on clients' consumer websites. With such a great head start, in early 1999, we launched BPI², a practice offering web architecture and interface design, content development and the repurposing of existing resources for web delivery.

"The BPI Team is not limited to what we've done before."

The blend of marketing, education and technology has always fascinated us. Now we're happily mastering what seems like a brand new toolset every week to stay ahead of the ongoing technology explosion. An unusual recent e-learning project for a major client validated our commitment to this incredible medium. So much information can be delivered so fast in a lively, low-cost package, the challenge is to steer the voyager through the maze without dulling the excitement of discovery.

BPI is always ready for the Next Big Thing.



Benchmark Publications Small Press

*“Books and tools
for business, education and the public
interest”*

In 1996, BPI launched our Small Press imprint, publishing books for the express purpose of generating a complementary revenue stream for the service business. Over time, the Press has evolved as a scholarly publisher, producing one or two books a year on the subject of Perceptual Control Theory (PCT), a brilliant system of ideas now taught in universities all over the world and used in at least one major Corporate University leadership forum. PCT has been making its way into virtually all of the Life Sciences: Education, Psychology, Philosophy, Linguistics, Leadership Training, Clinical Psychiatry, Counseling and more.

We’re very proud to bring this important work out of the research lab to a wider audience through our high-value books: *Living Control Systems I and II, Introduction to Psychology – a Control Theory View, Making Sense of Behavior* (BPI, 2nd printing 2004) and the first paperback edition of *Behavior: The Control of Perception, 2nd Edition, Revised & Expanded* (BPI, May, 2005). The first edition was published in 1973 by Aldine deGruyter. The 2nd edition has been published in China by the Guangdong Higher Learning Press, translated by scholars at Sun Yat Sen and South China Normal Universities. Plans are underway for translation and publication in German by 2007.

The next book in the series is (working title) *Methods and Models*, a “proof of concept” work with testable models and usable examples.

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<i>Apple Computer</i>	<i>HBO</i>
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<i>Cendant</i>	<i>Metaserver</i>
<i>Concentrex</i>	<i>Océ Business Systems</i>
<i>Dictaphone</i>	<i>Northeast Utilities</i>
<i>ExxonMobil</i>	<i>PricewaterhouseCoopers</i>
<i>Eastman Kodak</i>	<i>Pitney Bowes</i>
<i>GE Financial</i>	<i>Reader's Digest</i>
<i>GE Corporate IS</i>	<i>SBC/SNET</i>
<i>GE Corporate HR</i>	<i>The Stanley Works</i>
<i>GE Industrial Systems</i>	<i>United Parcel Service R&D</i>
<i>GE I&PSS</i>	<i>United Parcel Service IS</i>
<i>GE Capital Mortgage Insurance</i>	<i>United Parcel Service L&D</i>
<i>GE Capital Transportation</i>	<i>Verizon</i>
<i>Grolier Electronic Publishing</i>	<i>Xerox</i>

It's a BIG world...someone has to explain it.

