

Portrait of a Contender - Salome Abungu - By: CONSTANCE E. KAMPF

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Portrait of a Contender



I first met Salome in 1998, when she and I both were grad students at the Department of Rhetoric at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Having finished her BA in 1996, Salome left her native Tennessee for Minnesota to pursue her Master's degree in Scientific & Technical Communication. Salome graduated from the Rhetoric Department in 2000.

We took a course in teaching technical communication together that first semester, and spent many long hours designing learning activities, grading papers and reflecting on the teaching process.

Salome is a great cook and I profited from her fabulous southern food- much more flavourful than the standard Minnesota fare. Her talent with cooking is only rivalled by her talent with words.

Catching Up

When I left the U.S. after having successfully defended my Ph.D., Salome stayed in Minneapolis building her career as a technical writer and professional communicator. Even if we have lived on different continents for a few years, we still keep in touch.

Before I left the U.S., Salome had just gotten a new position at Thiele Technologies Inc. When I travel home to the U.S I always set up meetings with old friends at a cosy place called the Blue Moon Café near downtown Minneapolis. Among the guests was, naturally, Salome. Over a steaming cup of hot tea, Salome gave me a run down of her career.

Tracking a Career

Listening to Salome talking enthusiastically about her career, I couldn't help but wonder how she managed to do all that and still be only in her early thirties.

While doing her MS, Salome doubled as a project manager at Minnesota Translation Laboratory. At the same time, she also managed to be well-liked and competent instructor at the Rhetoric Department while writing her MS graduate project.

After graduation, Salome was immediately hired as a project manager for a company called LodgeNet Entertainment Inc., where she - among many other things - was responsible for managing all phases of project life cycles. Salome kept the job until 2002 when the University of Minnesota beckoned once more and she took up a position as data manager. Apart from managing data, she also functioned as a mediator, as it were, responsible for communicating with doctors and nurses about the status of patient's health. Since 2005, Salome has been a technical writer at Thiele Technologies, Inc. She is currently responsible for designing and developing operation and maintenance manuals for packaging machinery, managing translation projects as well as interviewing subject matter experts.

A New Breed of Technical Writers

In fact, Salome's resume reads like a catalogue of what a young and ambitious technical writer could and should do.

Salome Abungu is a fine representative of a new brood of self-

confident technical writers, who have deconstructed the traditionally narrow confines of the trade. The new generation of technical writers feels equally at home talking to subject matter experts, overseeing, managing and streamlining the complex life cycles of technical documents as well as, say, producing high quality training materials for end users.

The professional field of technical communication is currently undergoing a metamorphosis and Salome's career so far is one very clear indication of where the field is headed. And believe you me: Salome is going places! And so is a whole new generation of technical writers.

Author



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