

Labor Letter

A Special News Report on People And Their Jobs in Offices, Fields and Factories

FIRMS ASK WORKERS who make the products to write the how-to manuals.

At Monsanto Co.'s Greenwood, S.C., nylon fiber plant, worker teams nominate colleagues, who get three days of writer training. Workers who operate the machines do the best job of capturing the process on paper, says training supervisor James Womack. "Because their names go on the manuals, there's a sense of ownership and pride in the work," he adds.

Some companies object because they "can't separate the quality of grammar and English from the content. But documents written in a plant language are better than an engineer's work," says Chris Ford of Manufacturing Technology Strategies, a St. Louis training firm. At Cape Breton Development Corp., a Nova Scotia coal company, workers are paid an 8% premium on wages for writing workbooks.

Canadian Auto Workers member and draftsman Wayne Christoff says writing teaches him about the different processes within the company, while the extra money is "a motivational tool."