Foreword

I have worked with Charlotte Robidoux, one of the editors of Virtual Collaborative Writing in the Workplace: Computer Mediated Communication Technologies and Processes, since 2000. At the time, we were just starting on our single sourcing adventure. We were faced with many skeptics and did our best to present the facts and gain support. We couldn’t get through to everybody. Change and innovation can be a huge challenge. At that time I used to say, “You have to make a choice. This is the bus we’re getting on. You can either get on the bus or get run over by it.” Needless to say, that frank position didn’t go over well with many staff and some in management. Some questioned the lack of the “getting out of the way” option, while others just didn’t want to see the bus at all. In any case, I got my point across. Since Charlotte had been on the bus for a while, we were able to work together to help make single sourcing work at Hewlett-Packard Company.

In April 2005, Charlotte and I presented CMS Solutions: Six Important How To’s at the CIDM Content Management Strategies conference in Annapolis, Maryland. The following year, we turned that presentation into a 3-hour workshop. We engaged in virtual collaborative writing at that time with Charlotte located in New England and me in Colorado. Little did I know that this teamwork would be another step along the virtual collaboration journey and that step would be one in the path of Beth and Charlotte publishing this book.

Beth Hewett also was on the proverbial bus, but with the particular focus that whether an organization single sourced content or not, collaboration among writers had to become a priority and, since writing so often occurs in distributed virtual settings, collaboration had to be addressed within that context. Beth’s work developing and directing a large online writing program and as co-editor of an online journal where all the staff were geographically distributed had taught her much about the benefits and challenges of virtual collaborative writing, training, and team management. Beth and Charlotte have known each other since they met in 1993 in graduate school working on their doctorates in rhetoric. Over the years, they recognized that writers struggle in moving to this new virtual environment and that they badly want to collaborate successfully on writing projects. Beth and Charlotte talked about how they could combine their interests, experience (both academic and business), and knowledge on collaboration into a book. This book is the result of their years of experience and friendship.

As a trained Lean-Sigma Black Belt (an offshoot of Six Sigma), I currently serve as my group’s process improvement program manager. Each day, like you, I am challenged on how to collaborate effectively with a variety of people. Five years ago, I worked in an office and had daily face-to-face contact with most of the people I needed to interact with. Today, I work from a home office and 100% of my business is conducted virtually. Virtual Collaborative Writing in the Workplace: Computer Mediated Communication Technologies and Processes mirrors some of my experiences, validates others, and
introduces new ideas and concepts. The six middle sections of the book cover the key elements facing writers, editors, and managers in today’s globalized business environment. These elements include how to build a virtual writing team, how to manage team dynamics, how to plan and make decisions virtually, how to develop content virtually, and how to support quality.

As a member of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs Professional Writing Advisory Board, I will advocate the use of this book to help influence academic program content. This book will be valuable to a wide audience including academics and business professionals. It will serve as a resource for anyone thinking about or currently engaged in a virtual collaborative writing project. From virtual team novices to experts, readers will be able to learn new techniques and apply them to their own situations or environments. I invite you all to get on the bus and enjoy the ride.

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