

About

The Manual Makers

Request for Info • 2014 • The Manual Makers

# We look forward

to getting to know you.

How can The Manual Makers help? By bringing our understanding of the topic and experience in developing clear and specific processes to the creation of manuals that can be quickly understood and disseminated.

**How do we do that?** The Manual Makers excels at breaking down information into parts that are easily grasped and presenting it in an interesting (sometimes even fun!) format that lends itself to readability.

And the results? Policies and procedures that are actually useful and engaging.

## The Manual Makers Team

It's in our name—we're a team of "makers."

Every member of our team is a "maker." What do we mean by that? Documentation can be a dry field, but we approach it with two minds: analytical and creative. These two hemispheres allow us to create a productive work atmosphere that is logical and interesting, but also fun and creative. This is what helps us attract bright and engaged minds that love a challenge. Because in order to be a maker you have to be able to break down complex topics into chunks that can be easily understood, and then present them in a format that is engaging. Definitely a challenge!

Our work stands out because of our drive to create and connect with our audience. This is what has kept us busy for more than ten years. Our documents can be found in the offices of restaurants and retail stores across the world. We've done work for some really famous names and also for some obscure upand-comers, but each client gets a level of personal engagement that makes even the most complex process understandable and (we hope!) enjoyable.

Almost all of our work is carried out by a team of dedicated makers who excel at thinking, writing, editing, formatting, and engaging. The Manual Makers principals, Michelle Newcome and Katherine Guntner, have experience in a variety of fields and came together to found the company after experiencing success doing this kind of work in other companies. Our team works both in our office and remotely, and we enjoy giving them this structured flexibility.

It's hard to find people who do what we do. It's even harder to find people who make it as enjoyable as we do.

### The Process

#### Moving the project from idea to product in three steps.

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time! For the complex work we do, it's easy to get mired in the details, but after more than ten years of making manuals we've gotten the elephant down to bite-sized and digestible pieces. We apply the same three steps to every project we undertake.

#### **Definition and Discovery**

To know where you want to go with your project we need to immerse ourselves in your world. We read everything you've already developed, then we research industry best practices. We literally consume words and ideas looking for the underlying philosophy and thinking about areas where there are holes in the information. We usually complete this stage with a thorough understanding of every aspect of your brand and business. From this immersion we are able to begin to define the skeleton and structure of the project. Once we have a good understanding of the background and the defining philosophies, we spend time learning your people and observing their processes. This step includes interviewing any subject matter experts, visiting your location if that's practical, poking around in the back room a little, and generally getting a feel for how your environment dictates how your product needs to develop.

#### Content Development and Design

Because our goal is to make excellent documents, we spend time shaping all of our research and content into formats that will reach your audience and be truly useful. Behind everything must be a unifying philosophy that drives how the content is written and presented. We know your audience—we understand that the document has to not only cover the bases, but must also be easily understood by someone in a harried and fast-paced atmosphere. The framework we develop will not only put the right content in the right hands using the right format, it will look visually appealing and be a great representation of your brand.

#### **Implementation and Execution**

We oversee the project from start to finish. We coordinate with the printer, IT department, communications department, legal department, and seek their approval at every turn. We research and present options for the final product and how it reaches your audiences, and make the best option happen.

## The Manual Makers Philosophy

We follow an approach that emphasizes that document management is a process, not a task. We believe that the materials and programs we create yield sustainable processes and a clean and well-documented operational approach, which in turn leads to an increase in profit and a pleasant engagement between audiences.

**Who?** We are The Manual Makers, a full service documentation company specializing in operations, marketing, training, emergency/crisis response, and human resources.

**Our Name:** It's what we do—we make things. For us, those things happen to be manuals and documents, but it's important to us that the word "make" is in our name.

**Our Start:** We got our start as an off-shoot of another company, Gossamer Marketing, which specialized in creating marketing systems and manuals for franchised restaurant systems way back in 1999. We spun off into our own company in 2011.

**Our Principals:** Michelle Newcome and Katherine Guntner. Michelle has over 15 years of experience providing operational and marketing services. Her background is in education. She also has an MFA in poetry, which is not great for earning potential, but excellent for making succinct bullet lists. Katherine is a documentation specialist with over 20 years of experience; she also provides copywriting and editing services to many marketing agencies in the Atlanta area. Katherine's eye for detail is the foundation of the beautiful formatting of our projects.

**Our Clients:** We've done work for franchise clients such as Brinker International/Chili's Bar and Grill, FLIP Burger Boutique/Richard Blais, Raving Brands (Moe's Southwest Grill, Shane's Rib Shack), Schlotzsky's Deli, Ross Stores, Hyatt Hotels, Kohl's, and Stevi B's Pizza.

**Our Standards:** The Manual Makers is a values-driven company. We prize integrity, service, creativity, and a strong work ethic. We are proud of building our company with old-fashioned principles. We only work with people who share our ethical standards. We believe in bootstraps and hard tugs.

### Our Tools

We do not believe there is a one-size-fits-all way to make a documentation product. For every client, there is a differing need and a tool that will suit that need. For this reason we won't sell our clients on any one way of making their product. Like any good "maker" we have a workbench neatly organized with various tools to get the job done and we are experts at the use of each one.

We employ these tools (but are always open to learning and exploring more tools as things change. We like being early adopters and on the cutting edge!):

- Microsoft products (Word, Excel, Publisher, PowerPoint, One Note)
- Multi-platform content management systems (Madcap Flare is our favorite, but we can also use others out there)
- Adobe products (Acrobat, Photoshop, InDesign, PageMaker)
- Content sharing systems (SharePoint, SMF, FTP systems)
- Cloud-based solutions (Dropbox, ShareFile, Google-docs)
- Team work solutions/Project management (Huddle, Sage, Workforce, Podio)
- Wiki development
- Presentation systems (join.me, GoToMeeting, WebX)

#### **Team Bios**



Michelle Newcome, Principal As the creator of operational systems for companies as diverse as Flip Flop Shops and Chili's Grill and Bar, Michelle has experience in a wide variety of business models. She consults for clients in process documentation, strategic business decisions, and crisis/emergency management procedures. Michelle has a deep understanding of the needs of a system – both for employees and the corporate owner – and her focus is always on the creation of guidelines that are based in common sense practices. Her documentation solutions are custom developed to meet the needs of each client and make use of current technology and best-practice technical writing. In addition to Flip Flop Shops and Chili's Grill and Bar, Michelle has created systems for Ross Stores, Planet Smoothie, PJ's Coffee, Shane's Rib Shack, Schlotsky's Deli, Mama Fu's Noodle House, FLIP burger boutique, and Stevi B's Pizza – to name



Katherine Guntner, Principal With over twenty years of experience in process documentation and editing for advertising campaigns and major brand catalogs, Katherine brings a critical eye for details and a finely tuned editorial sensibility. Kathy's oversight on the final project deliverables ensure our clients get professional editing and top level design work not normally found in operational procedures. Katherine is also our resident expert in Madcap Flare and multi-platform publishing output. Her focus is on the behind-the-scenes

production deadlines and the final project look and feel.



**Bryan Garner, Writer/Marketing** In his extensive work with franchised concepts ranging from Internet Service Providers to fast casual restaurants and package delivery & business service clients, Bryan has helped create locally based product marketing programs that adhere to corporate messaging parameters, yet are tailored to the local markets. In addition to local store marketing efforts, Bryan has helped to create several brands from scratch and worked closely with UPS subsidiary companies to coordinate electronic marketing efforts during the largest rebrand in the company's 98year history.

A former business consultant for Planet Smoothie, Bryan also has a marketer's perspective of the operational side of the business. This experience helps Bryan ensure marketing programs have an immediate impact and are replicable in the field.



Julie Newcome, Technologist As the resident Geek, Julie uses her twenty years of technical writing and software help systems knowledge to build successful online content delivery systems for our clients.

Julie's analytical mind and ability to streamline design to deliver the best customer experience helps to keep our products and projects on the cutting edge of document design and platform delivery.



Nick Hassiotis, Client Management Prior to joining The Manual Makers, Nick was a General Manager for FLIP burger boutique at locations in Atlanta and in Birmingham, where he helped develop and implement training procedures and manuals.

From 2002 to 2008, Nick worked with PF Chang's as a National Trainer and Manager. In this role, he worked closely with the Regional Training Director to create and update training materials and guides to ensure a smooth and efficient training/opening schedule. Additionally, Nick has helped open six other full service restaurants ranging from fine dining to fast casual.

Nick's deep understanding and first-hand perspective of what restaurant operators need in terms of materials and support ensure a great client relationship.



**Grace Duggan, Document Specialist** Grace is an editor and proofreader with an eye for the details—and the big picture—thanks to her experience in journalism, communications, and advertising. Before she joined The Manual Makers, she was the Managing Editor of an art magazine in New York City, where she also consulted for multiple non-profits on writing and editing projects in both English and Spanish, taught copyediting classes, and wrote for various publications, including *The New York Times*. She has worked for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Road Runners, the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and the New England Review. A graduate of Middlebury College, Grace was awarded a Fulbright in 2009 to teach in Madrid, Spain.



**Megan Reid, Copyeditor** As a product of Georgia State University's Fiction Writing program, Megan's creative knack for detail keeps her editing and proofreading skills on point. She works onsite for multiple agencies in the Atlanta area and is well-versed in both editorial and catalog proofing. With a controlled command of the English language, Megan ensures that clients receive grammatical precision, consistency, and above all: perfection.



Kelly Guntner, Designer Focusing on the aesthetic aspects in the development of each project, Kelly utilizes her creativity to bring visual communication to a new level. She first began her passion for design as a child drawing sketches whenever possible, then as a student enrolling in several art classes, and finally as a graduate from Texas A&M University Corpus Christi with a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design. After four years of practicing as a freelance graphic designer, Kelly joined The Manual Makers in 2014, bringing forth new ideas and a dedication to fulfill the needs of long-term and prospective clients.



**Dianne Hartness, Policy Generalist** With experience in policy and procedure writing, human resources, and office management, Dianne is the sweeper of our team. Dianne has run the offices of several major Atlanta-area homebuilders, as well as performing as the HR coordinator for a chain of restaurants.

Dianne writes employee handbooks for our clients and consults on employment-related issues for our franchise system clients. She is an active member of SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management).

### Work Samples

#### Parties

The best tasting smoothie on the planet!

Parties are another area for Stevi B's stores to increase sales. Maþy Stevi B's have room for a large group in the dining room or a designated party room to accommodate our guests and their party needs. Whether it is a birthday party, sports team party or church party for kids we can accommodate many different needs. For specific operational guidance on parties, please refer to the Operations Manual.

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#### THE APPROACH

#### FOR BIRTHDAY PARTIES:

 Train your staff to upsell party packages by educating the customer on the added benefits of higher priced packages. Use words like "For an additional \$2.00 per child we can take care of everything. Our Stevi B's loot bags are full of toys for your kids to leave with!"



New Employee Training Kit



## **Background Check**

We treat each client's products as the proprietary and copyrighted work that they are, which means we don't really show full manuals to potential clients. But any of these people would be happy to speak to you about our work.

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From copy editing to creating franchise manuals, we make sense.

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