



# **Making a Six-Figure Income as a Technical Communicator**

**Presented by Jack Molisani**

# Overview

- **Career Paths**
- **Compensation Basics**
- **Sources of Income**
- **Income Epiphanies / Do What I Did**
- **Where to Start**
- **Recommended Reading**
- **LavaCon Drawing**

# About the Speaker

- **President of ProSpring Technical Staffing**
- **The LavaCon Conference on Advanced Technical Communication and Project Management**

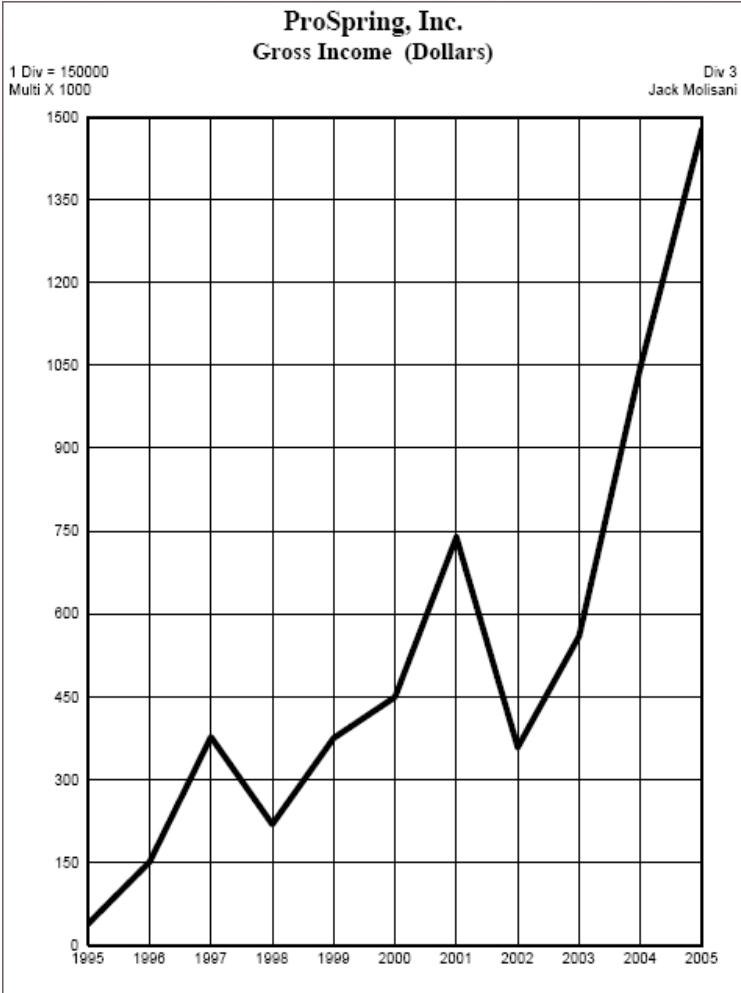
A nighttime photograph of a city street with buildings, streetlights, and a crowd of people. The scene is illuminated by warm streetlights and building lights, creating a vibrant urban atmosphere.

# Ground Rules and Warnings

- **Group Participation**
- **Contrasting Viewpoints are Welcome**
- **Speaking in Hypertext**
- **Chinese Artists**
- **Controversy!**

# Disclaimers

- **I'm not a financial professional, so check with your own tax, legal, etc. professional.**
- **I'm presenting what worked for me. You need to work out what will work for you.**
- **These are my personal views and not those of the STC, etc.**



# Career Paths

- **There are as many career paths as there are career and financial goals—probably more**
- **People choose the paths they walk**
- **People not only choose the paths they walk, they *create* the paths they walk**
- **You'd be surprised at how fast a new path appears as soon as you decide you want one....**

# Career Path: SW Engineer vs. TW

- **Programmer**
- **Sr. Programmer**
- **Engineering Manager**
- **VP Engineering**
- **VP Operations**
- **President**
- **CEO/COB**
- **Other Profession**
- **Technical Writer**
- **Sr. Technical Writer**
- **Doc. Manager (maybe)**

# Career Path: TW Alternate

- **Other Profession**
- **Technical Writer**
- **Sr. Technical Writer/Doc. Manager**
- **Independent Contractor**
- **Business Owner**

# The Speaker's Career Path

- **Project Officer, USAF Space Division**
- **Sales Engineer**
- **Technical Writer (staff)**
- **Technical Writer (contractor)**
- **Outsource Writing Company**
- **Staffing Company**
- **Additional Sources of Income**

# Compensation Basics

- **A six-figure income = a gross annual income of \$100,000/year**
- **Notice I said “income” not “salary”**
- **Sources of Income:**
  - **Contract: Hourly and fixed bid**
  - **Employee: Salary, bonuses, benefits**
  - **Business Owner: Mark-up**
  - **Other sources of income**

# Income: Employee

## 2005 UNITED STATES SALARY SURVEY

(By selected groupings. Figures in U.S. dollars.)

Grouping	Base	Mean	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,258</b>	<b>\$67,520</b>	<b>\$44,200</b>	<b>\$53,000</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>	<b>\$79,130</b>	<b>\$93,000</b>
<b>Employment Level</b>							
Entry	79	40,730	30,500	36,000	40,400	44,400	50,200
Mid-Level, Non-Supervisory	546	54,190	39,880	45,000	52,140	61,950	70,000
Mid-Level, Supervisory	281	71,090	48,510	57,500	68,000	84,750	97,000
Senior-Level, Non-Supervisory	1,019	70,430	51,450	60,000	69,000	80,000	91,500
Senior-Level, Supervisory	306	84,610	60,000	70,000	82,500	95,670	111,100
Other	27	74,520	—	48,750	55,000	97,330	—
<b>Education Level</b>							
High School	107	64,930	43,350	51,730	65,000	75,610	90,900
Associates	129	62,440	45,000	50,000	61,000	71,790	85,000
Bachelor, Arts	816	66,660	43,000	53,460	65,000	78,000	91,000
Bachelor, Science	430	65,460	40,800	50,030	64,090	77,000	90,000
Master's Degree	684	70,660	48,040	56,000	67,310	82,000	96,420
Doctorate	92	71,470	44,000	52,000	67,380	86,500	100,000
<b>Sex</b>							
Female	1,511	66,950	44,000	52,260	65,000	78,460	92,000
Male	747	68,670	45,430	55,000	66,000	80,000	94,150
<b>Age</b>							
20-29	166	48,040	35,260	40,000	44,750	54,250	64,530
30-39	640	62,960	44,000	50,000	60,000	73,000	85,000
40-49	696	70,140	47,980	56,000	68,000	81,600	95,000
50 years and over	756	73,230	50,000	60,000	70,000	84,940	99,400
<b>Years of Experience (in technical communication field)</b>							
Less than 2 years	65	42,910	30,280	35,630	41,500	47,000	57,500
2-5 years	376	52,610	38,000	42,440	50,000	60,000	70,310
6-10 years	648	64,540	46,380	53,000	63,000	73,000	85,280
11 years or more	1,169	75,320	52,280	61,810	73,000	86,000	100,230
<b>Job Title</b>							
Documentation Manager	412	79,740	55,000	62,500	78,350	94,330	108,000
Information Developer	238	69,840	48,880	56,000	67,630	80,890	92,000
Online Help Developer	46	61,930	—	48,000	60,000	69,500	—
Teacher of Technical Communication	36	59,430	—	44,000	52,790	62,000	—
Technical Editor	162	61,350	39,620	46,350	61,500	74,680	81,800
Technical Writer	1,049	62,860	42,135	50,000	62,000	73,280	83,000
Usability Specialist	16	85,090	—	—	74,500	—	—
Web Designer	17	62,400	—	—	62,000	—	—
Other	270	70,350	47,000	55,000	67,250	81,600	97,200

# Income: Employee

## MEDIAN CANADIAN SALARY BY PROVINCE

Figures in Canadian dollars.

Province*	Salary	Province*	Salary
Alberta	\$55,750	Ontario	\$63,330
British Columbia	\$59,000	Quebec	\$65,500
Manitoba	\$49,570		

\* This list only includes results from provinces that provided a statistically significant number of responses.

## MEDIAN SALARY BY COUNTRY

Figures in New Shekels (ILS) or Pounds (GBP).

Country*	Salary
Israel	ILS 180,000
United Kingdom	GBP 31,000

\* This list only includes results from countries that provided a statistically significant number of responses.

## MEDIAN U.S. SALARY BY ONE-DIGIT ZIP CODES

Figures in U.S. dollars.



ZIP Code	Salary	ZIP Code	Salary
0****	\$73,750	5****	\$59,000
1****	\$63,000	6****	\$56,000
2****	\$65,000	7****	\$67,000
3****	\$57,900	8****	\$61,540
4****	\$52,450	9****	\$75,000

## MEDIAN U.S. SALARY BY TWO-, THREE-, AND FOUR-DIGIT ZIP CODES

Figures in U.S. dollars.

ZIP	State	Salary	ZIP	State	Salary	ZIP	State	Salary
01...	MA...	\$83,000	44...	OH...	50,000	8011...	CO...	67,000
017...	MA...	82,400	441...	OH...	49,000	805...	CO...	66,000
018...	MA...	84,500	45...	OH...	50,000	83...	ID...	57,010
02...	MA...	72,750	46...	IN...	55,000	84...	UT...	43,880
024...	MA...	77,520	48...	MI...	55,000	85...	AZ...	63,000
03...	NH...	67,000	481...	MI...	55,000	90...	CA...	74,150
07...	NJ...	80,000	49...	MI...	54,000	91...	CA...	69,800
070...	NJ...	81,750	50...	IA...	55,000	92...	CA...	71,000
08...	NJ...	65,000	53...	WI...	52,000	921...	CA...	71,000
10...	NY...	80,000	537...	WI...	52,000	926...	CA...	70,760
15...	PA...	61,000	55...	MN...	63,000	93...	CA...	64,000
19...	PA...	65,000	551...	MN...	65,000	94...	CA...	90,000
193...	PA...	67,500	553...	MN...	61,500	940...	CA...	90,800
20...	DC/MD/VA...	72,010	554...	MN...	65,000	941...	CA...	87,300
208...	MD...	74,500	60...	IL...	66,000	945...	CA...	94,850
21...	MD...	65,000	600...	IL...	74,000	95...	CA...	86,000
22...	VA...	72,330	606...	IL...	55,500	950...	CA...	72,000
27...	NC...	65,000	63...	MO...	55,500	951...	CA...	93,500
276...	NC...	63,050	64...	MO...	48,000	97...	OR...	68,040
277...	NC...	66,000	75...	TX...	65,000	970...	OR...	75,390
29...	SC...	45,500	750...	TX...	63,000	972...	OR...	68,040
30...	GA...	61,250	752...	TX...	66,070	98...	WA...	65,000
300...	GA...	68,000	76...	TX...	55,000	980...	WA...	64,250
303...	GA...	64,000	760...	TX...	65,000	9805...	WA...	64,750
32...	FL...	55,000	77...	TX...	78,000	981...	WA...	66,500
327...	FL...	69,240	770...	TX...	87,150	9810...	WA...	60,720
33...	FL...	58,370	78...	TX...	70,000			
35...	AL...	55,000	787...	TX...	71,000			
37...	TN...	55,000	7875...	TX...	74,500			
43...	OH...	56,000	80...	CO...	65,000			
430...	OH...	63,000	800...	CO...	60,360			
432...	OH...	52,280	801...	CO...	66,970			

(This list only includes results from ZIP codes that provided a statistically significant number of responses.)

# Income: Employee vs. Contract

- **Hourly rates vs. annual salary**
- **40 hours x 50 weeks x hourly rate**
- **\$50/hr x 40 hours x 50 weeks = \$100,000**
- **Rule of thumb is to double the rate**
  - \$30/hr = \$60,000 / year (approx.)**
  - \$40/hr = \$80,000 / year**
  - \$50/hr = \$100,000 / year**
  - \$60/hr = \$120,000 / year**

# Income: Hourly

- **The rule of thumb is only true if you work a full 40 hours x 50 weeks**
- **Also consider the cost of “benefits”**
  - **Medical insurance**
  - **Sick days and vacation time (non-billable)**
  - **Education (tuition, conferences, etc.)**
  - **Matching 401k, stock options, etc.**

# Income: Fixed Bids

- **You agree to produce X for \$Y**
- **High Risk vs. Big Profits**
- **Good if the deliverable is well defined and you control “mission creep”**
- **Document plans and prototypes are essential**
- **Great if you are a fast producer**

# Income: Business Owner

- **Entrepreneur: One who creates jobs**
- **Make money on (most) everyone you employ**
- **Income not limited to how many hours you can work**
- **With power comes responsibility**

# Income: Other Sources

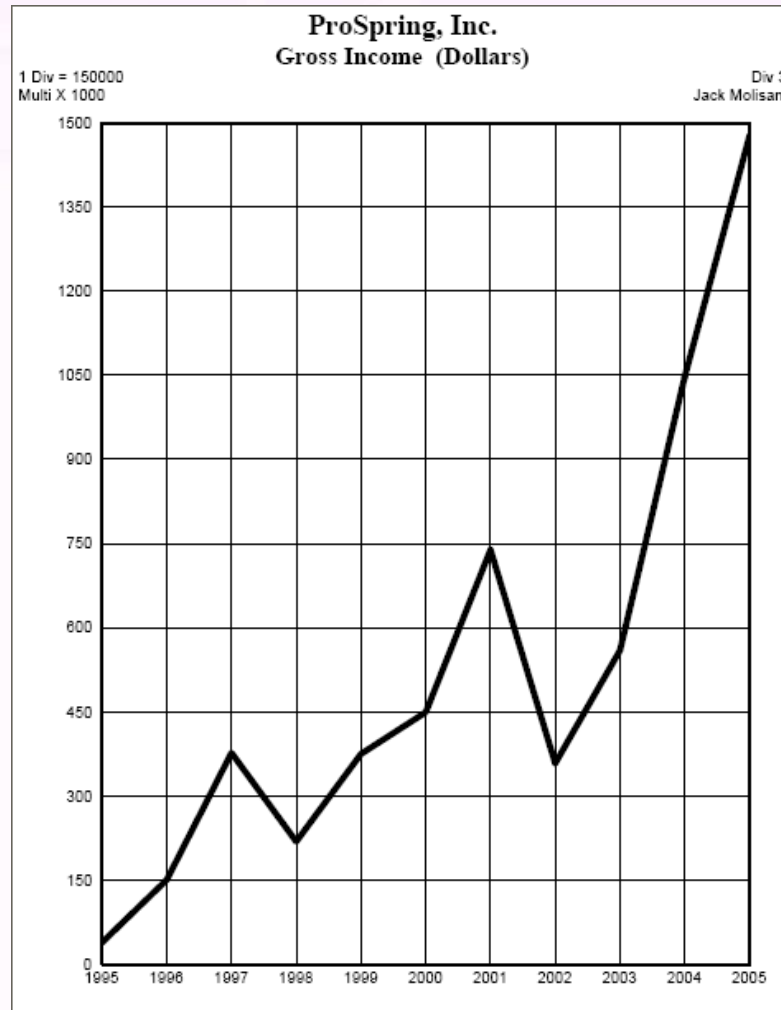
- **Usability Testing**
- **User Interface Design**
- **e-Accessibility**
- **Project Management**
- **Instructional Designer**
- **Trainer**
- **Other — What are you interested in?**

# My Income Epiphanies

- **Employee vs. Contractor**
- **Contractor vs. Business Owner**
- **Multiple Sources of Income**
- **Hands-on Business Owner vs. Hands-off Business Owner**

LavaCon

# Do What I did

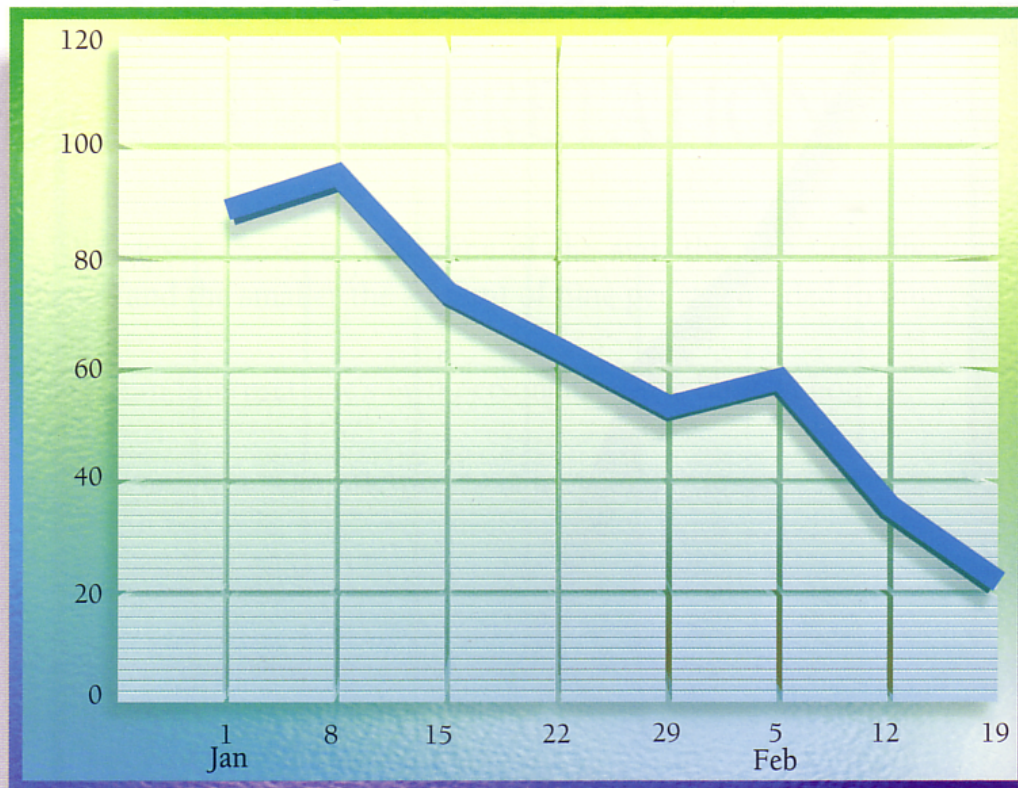


# Do What I did

- **Apply Condition Formulas  
(L. Ron Hubbard)**
- **Think Positive, Send Out Ships  
(Chellie Campbell)**

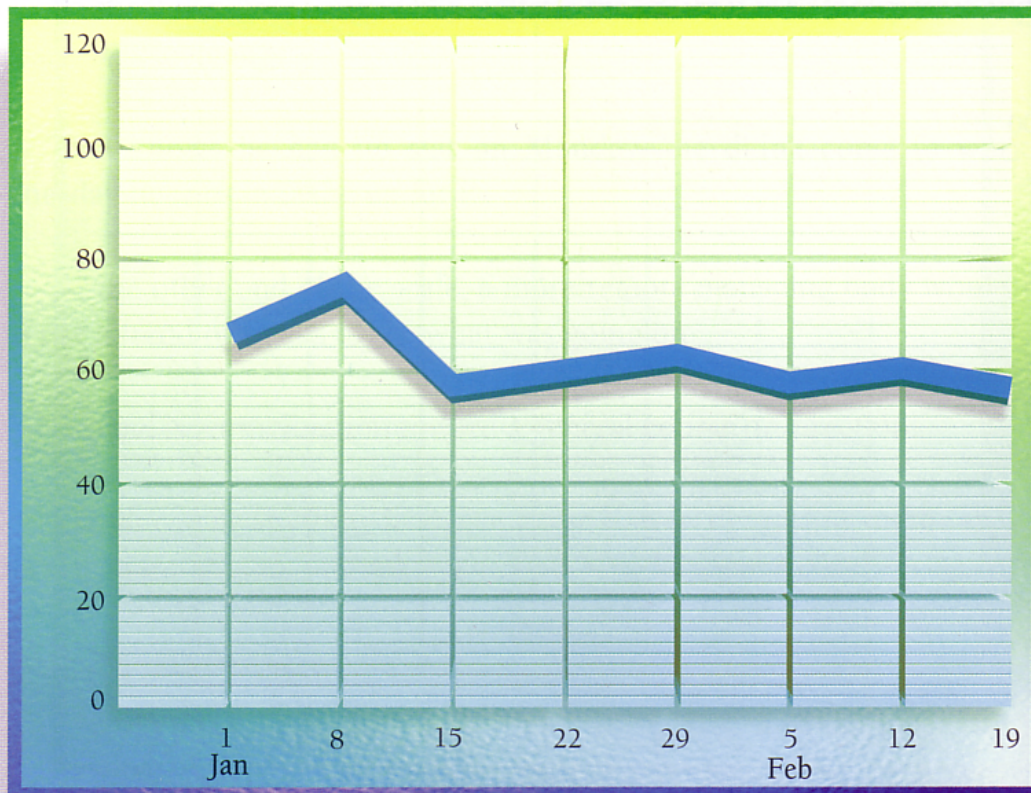
# Condition Formulas: Danger

This would be a Danger trend:



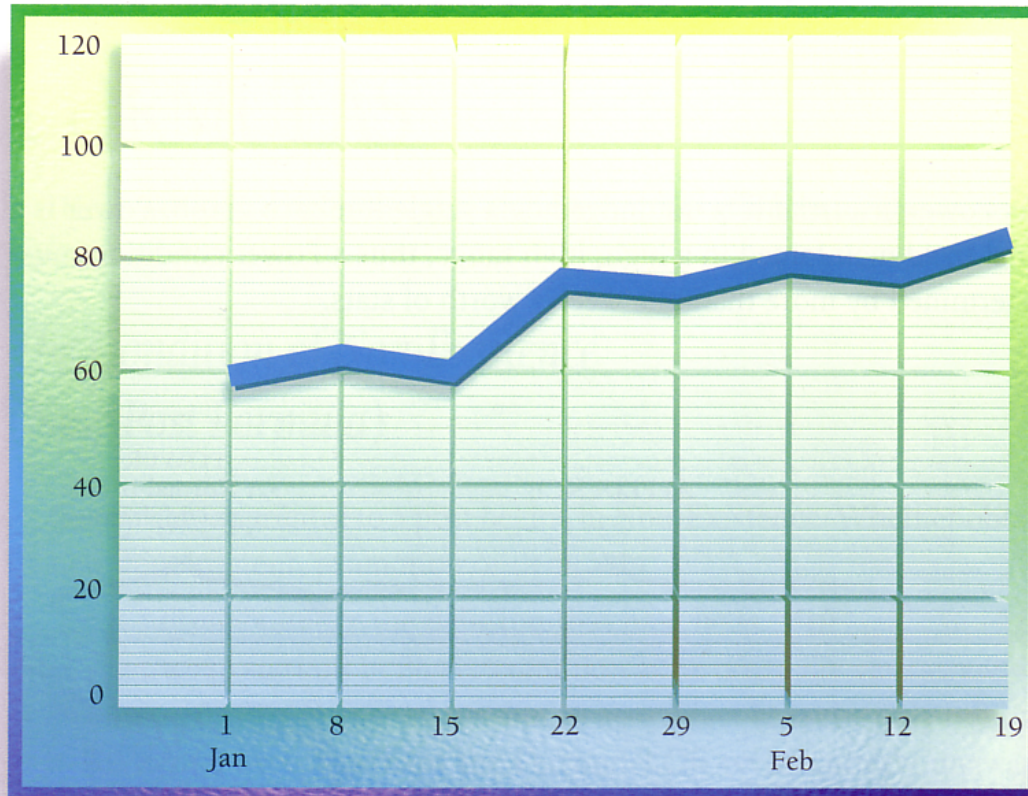
# Condition Formulas: Emergency

This would be an Emergency trend:



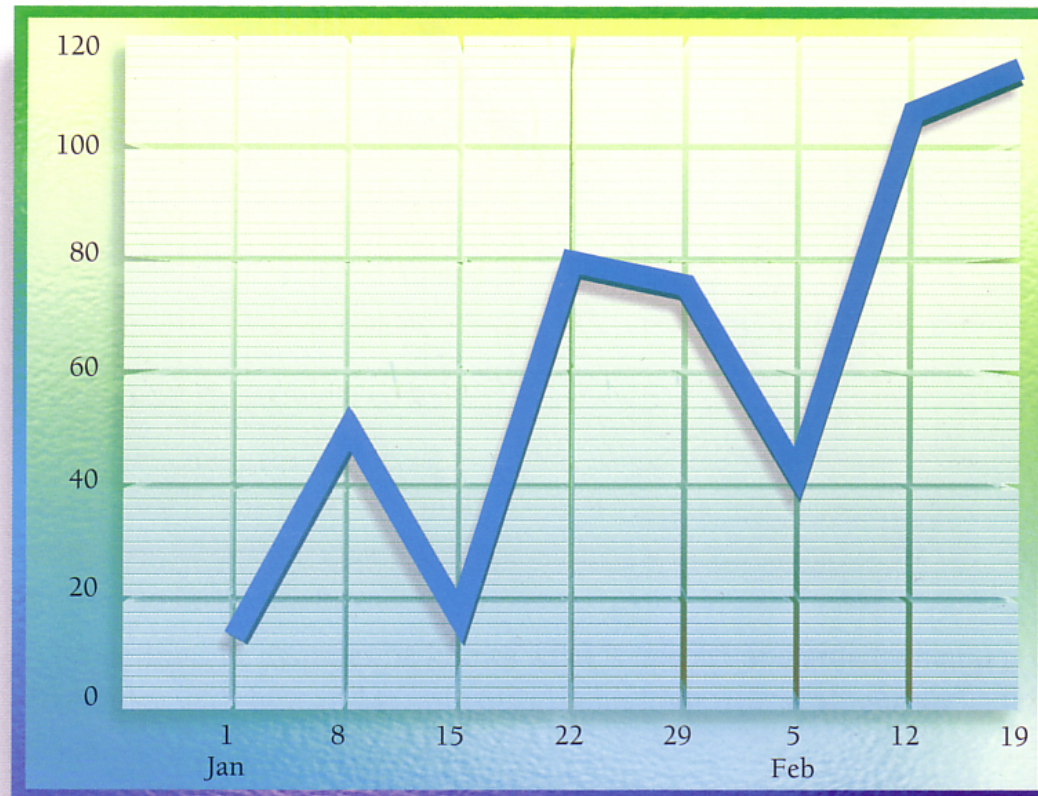
# Condition Formulas: Normal

This would be a Normal trend:



# Condition Formulas: Affluence

This would be an Affluence trend:



A nighttime photograph of a city street with buildings, streetlights, and a few people walking. The scene is illuminated by warm streetlights and building lights, creating a bokeh effect in the background.

# From *The Wealthy Spirit*

- **Think Positive**
- **Send Out Ships**
- **Count your Money**
- **Swim with Dolphins**
- **Survive the Storms**
- **Seek Balance and Enlightenment**

# Where to Start

- **Start contract work on the side**
- **Build volume until you are “losing money” by working as an employee**
- **Continue to build volume and subcontract when needed**
- **Continue to build volume until you can hire employees (if desired)**
- **Build multiple streams of income**

A nighttime photograph of a city street with buildings, streetlights, and a few people walking. The scene is illuminated by warm streetlights and building lights, creating a vibrant urban atmosphere.

# Recommended Reading

***Speaking from Experience*, L. Ron Hubbard**

***The Wealthy Spirit*, Chellie Campbell**

***Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, Robert Kiyosaki**

***The Millionaire Next Door*, Stanly and Danko**

***The Richest Man in Babylon*, George Clason**

The logo for LavaCon, featuring the word "LavaCon" in a white, sans-serif font with a small yellow circle above the letter 'o'.

LavaCon

A nighttime photograph of a city street with historic buildings, illuminated windows, and streetlights. The scene is viewed through a dark metal fence in the foreground.

# Questions and Answers

[www.ProSpringStaffing.com](http://www.ProSpringStaffing.com)

[www.lavacon.org](http://www.lavacon.org)