Writing Technical Descriptions, Requirements and Procedures

Course Summary

Description

This course provides a comprehensive writing process specifically applied to business and technical requirements as well as to other technical documentation. Through the course, participants learn to improve their technical writing skills, while reducing the total time they spend on their requirements documents.

Through the course, students learn to improve their technical writing skills, while reducing the total time they spend on their requirements documents. Our goal is to allow students to apply their requirements to stand-alone documents or include them in other documents, such as functional descriptions, design specifications, project plans and reports, test plans and fault management documentation.

Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Use various methods for analyzing an audience, depending on the document written
- Structure technical information according to specific models for requirements documents
- Organize technical procedures and descriptions
- Integrate text and graphics effectively
- Make documents more readable, persuasive, and effective
- Gather requirements through effective interviewing (optional material)

Topics

- Planning Phase
- Design Phase
- Drafting Phase
- Revision Phase

Audience

This course is designed for Business Analysts, Technical Experts and Implementers, Product Managers, Customer Service Specialists and those who produce or review business and technical requirements.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Duration

3 days

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Course Summary

I. Introduction
- A. Course objectives
- B. Your current writing habits
- C. Overview of the writing process
- D. The writing process and total quality management (TQM)
- E. A "total-quality" writing process
- F. The writing process and PROPS
- G. The writing process with the computer
- H. What is a technical requirement?
- I. Three pillars of good technical writing

II. Planning phase
- A. Overview of the planning phase
- B. Confirming the objectives of the document
- C. Translating “need” into “requirement
- D. Translating “need” into other technical documents
- E. Conducting an audience needs analysis
- F. Example: Conducting an audience needs analysis
- G. Practice session: Conducting an audience needs analysis
- H. Charting the context for requirements
- I. Example: Charting the context for requirements
- J. Practice session: Charting the context for requirements

III. Selecting the type of documentation for technical documents
- A. Examples of documentation types
- B. Examples of documentation types for audience needs
- C. Doing required research
- D. Gathering your research materials
- E. Organizing your research
- F. Annotating your research information
- G. Brainstorming DOs and DON'Ts
- H. Practice session: Doing effective research

IV. Design Phase
- A. Overview of the design phase
- B. Distinguishing between structure and format
- C. Building the document structure
- D. The top-down approach to structuring any document
- E. Model for a requirements document
- F. Recommended structure within requirements sections
- G. Structuring email with technical detail
- H. Using the “headline” approach for email subject lines
- I. Providing negative news in email
- J. Using attachments and comments in email
- K. Case study: Email
- L. Structuring technical reports
- M. Tips for writing executive summaries
- N. Tips for writing introductions
- O. Tips for writing conclusions
- P. Structuring procedures
- Q. Structuring descriptive information
- R. Structuring end-user documentation
- S. Structuring a status report
- T. Case study: Status report with an executive summary
- U. Example of a detailed document structure: Business requirement
- V. Example of a detailed document structure: Corresponding technical requirement
- W. Detailed document structure: DOs and DON'Ts
- X. Proper headings for procedures
- Y. Structuring for clarity and coherence
- Z. Practice session: Structuring for clarity and coherence
- AA. Formatting conventions
- BB. Using graphics
- CC. Using structured text
- DD. Step-by-step notation
- EE. Playscript
- FF. Information mapping: References table
- GG. Information mapping: Procedure
- HH. Ensuring an effective document hierarchy
- II. Practice session: Ensuring effective document hierarchy
- JJ. Formatting conventions

V. Drafting Phase
- A. Overview of the drafting phase
- B. “Writing” vs. “Document Assembly”
- C. Drafting pieces into the whole
- D. Drafting effective technical descriptions
- E. Drafting effective paragraphs for your descriptions
- F. Lists vs. blocks of text
- G. Proper notation for procedures
- H. Effective sentence structure for procedures
- I. Step-by-step-notation
- J. Separating description for procedures
- K. Making recommendations for action
- L. Practice session: Drafting the document

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Course Summary (cont'd)

VI. Revision Phase

A. Overview of the revision phase
B. When does drafting become revising?
C. Revising your document
D. Revision checklist
E. Revising sections/subsections
F. Revising sentence/word
G. Passive voice
H. Buried actions
I. Jargon
J. As vs. Because
K. Subject/verb agreement
L. Pronoun/antecedent agreement
M. Practice session: Agreement
N. Using the colon
O. Using the semi-colon
P. Using the comma
Q. Practice session: Using punctuation
R. Lazy phrases
S. Noun strings
T. That vs. Which
U. Case study: That vs Which
V. Abbreviations and acronyms
W. Latin abbreviations
X. Practice session: Revising a document

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