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SUBJECT: *The Communication Habits of Engineers* by Derek Steiner

This article essentially covered the struggles and apprehension of civil engineers when it comes to technical writing. Why do some engineers struggle to write? Was it because they weren't taught properly in school? Did they perhaps blow it off because they didn't think their field of choice required much writing? What are the typical strategies they take when tackling a new writing project? This article delves into these topics and tries to see if writing apprehension, composition process and deadlines affect the production of written documents. Below, I'll list five important and useful tips that I learned from Steiner's article that I could use in the workplace.

1. There are two types of methods used when writing a document. The first is the product approach. This approach focusses on spelling, grammar and a well-written finished paper. Essentially, it focuses on how the paper looks and reads. The second approach is the process method. This approach is overall determined to be the better method to use. It essentially focuses on the structure of the document. It looks more at the subject matter and how well it all fits together as a whole. Personally, I don't see why you wouldn't just combine the two approaches. It drives me nuts seeing grammatical errors in published papers (like the ones I found in this article for example). I'm not saying I'm a grammatical

guru (I'm definitely not). But, if I can spot mistakes at my experience level, that's pretty bad and should have been caught during the editing process.

2. The most important points I believe are proper document planning and time management. It is best not to procrastinate and wait until the last minute to write a document. Especially if it is important to the company you work for. Your writing (let's use civil engineers for example) could mean the future of your company. Your ability to write also affects your company's image. Having a good plan and sticking to it will make the writing process so much easier in the long run. By planning it out and using your time wisely, it puts less pressure on you to crunch and speed through important details.

3. Going off the previous point, outlines are your friend! From examples listed in the article to my own real-life experiences, outlines are critical to a well-written paper. I think of them as the skeleton of your paper. They provide a road map to your document. Start with key points you want to address, then add in details and expand on points where needed. Once you have the general flow of the document figured out, that's when you start writing on each point. This keeps you from wandering or becoming lost in the document. The amazing thing is, outlines are universal! They touched on this aspect within this article. Although the subject matter may change, you still use the same methods for gathering and analyzing information. If you have a good outline procedure, you simply cut and paste the points with your current subject matter. Often, proposals and the like can follow the same pattern so this might could make things easier on you in the future.

4. Don't be afraid to ask for help! Peer reviews are basically critical when writing up important documents for a company. It's easy for a writer to make mistakes when reviewing their writing as they are familiar with what they are trying to say and can miss a misspelled word here or skip over a missing word there. Having your peers read over your writing can help fix that issue. They can also provide good feedback regarding your subject matter and if it makes sense or if it's easy to follow.

   In some professions, group collaboration is paramount to the success of a written proposal or contract. Often, no one person does it all. They'll need input from various departments to get all the right and pertinent information to make their document accurate and wholesome.

5. This article made a good point pertaining to writing deadlines. Though no one really likes that feeling of an approaching deadline and the stress that goes along with it, it's still best to have one. When there is a deadline involved, it usually encourages those involved in writing it to start working on it. Whereas when a project is given with no deadline, some may be more willing to procrastinate on it and leave the project lingering for as long as they can. I think if an important project is given with adequate time to complete before a deadline, that's perfect. However, if someone is given a very short amount of time to create an important document, then the stress involved in getting it done on time could negatively affect the finished product. When one is rushed, they are more susceptible to making mistakes. That's why it's important for the one planning the projects to take into consideration just how long to give for their completion.