

Making Imposter Syndrome work for you

Write the Docs Meetup: Melbourne

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Fastmail

Write docs
Support Team

Want to start talking about... YOU!

FRAUD

I don't belong here.

I hope they don't ask me any questions

What even is an adverbial phrase anyway?

Why can't I split infinitives?

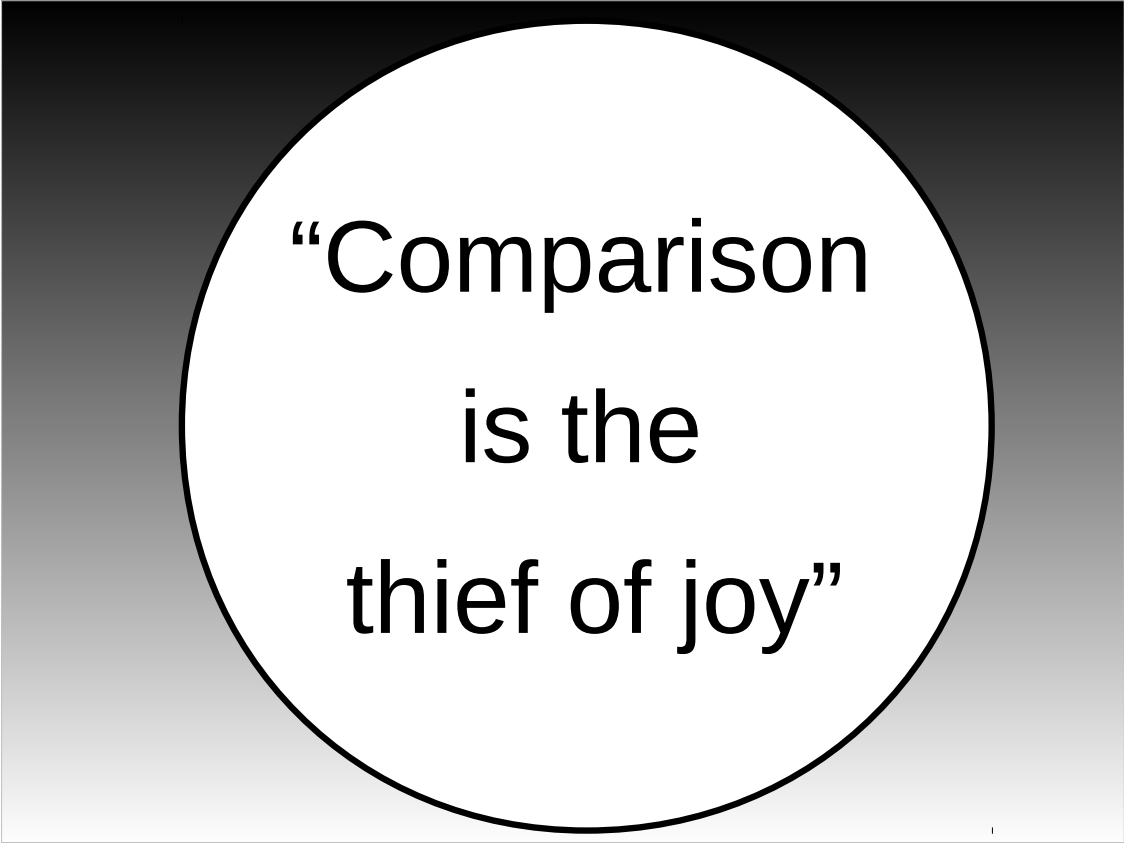
I don't have the "right" qualifications.

I can't or don't: blog, write docs, understand APIs,
spell things right first time, make Word's style tool
work.

Any minute now they'll work out I'm a fake, a fraud,
an imposter.

I'm not a "real" technical writer.

Enough inner monologue. What about everyone
else?



“Comparison
is the
thief of joy”

Everyone else:

- * knows more.
- * They have worked longer in the industry.
- * Read more.
- * Talked at events.
- * Know more about this docs platform/technology/service.
- * They know the CMOS off by heart.
- * They're better.

I SUCK

No need to hyperventilate...



FRAUD

DON'T PANIC

DON'T PANIC!

Imposter Syndrome: definition.

- * Persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud.
- * Can't own your own accomplishments

Look beside you. They have it (probably).

Look up the front. At me. (Eeep). Yep, I have it.

Chances are all of us in this room have it.



It is GREAT!

Imposter Syndrome is AWESOME!

It is the best thing to ever happen to us!

Before I can tell you why it's so good,
let's look at why every single one of us has IS.

... 4 insights into why technical writers are especially
prone.



Why us: #1

Documentarians are the last to be hired, the last to be involved.

We are often hired because the rest of the team has run out of time to document.

We often fight to be viewed as relevant, or important.

Nothing says fraud like the sense that we don't belong.



Why us: #2

No one path into the field.

Programmer.

Customer support.

Administration.

Arts.

Writing certification.

Project management.

Wormhole space time.

So many overlaps. So many places a documentarian can/does live. Beyond being a core writer.



Why us: #3

Often solitary role

no validation

No external checks/people to learn from

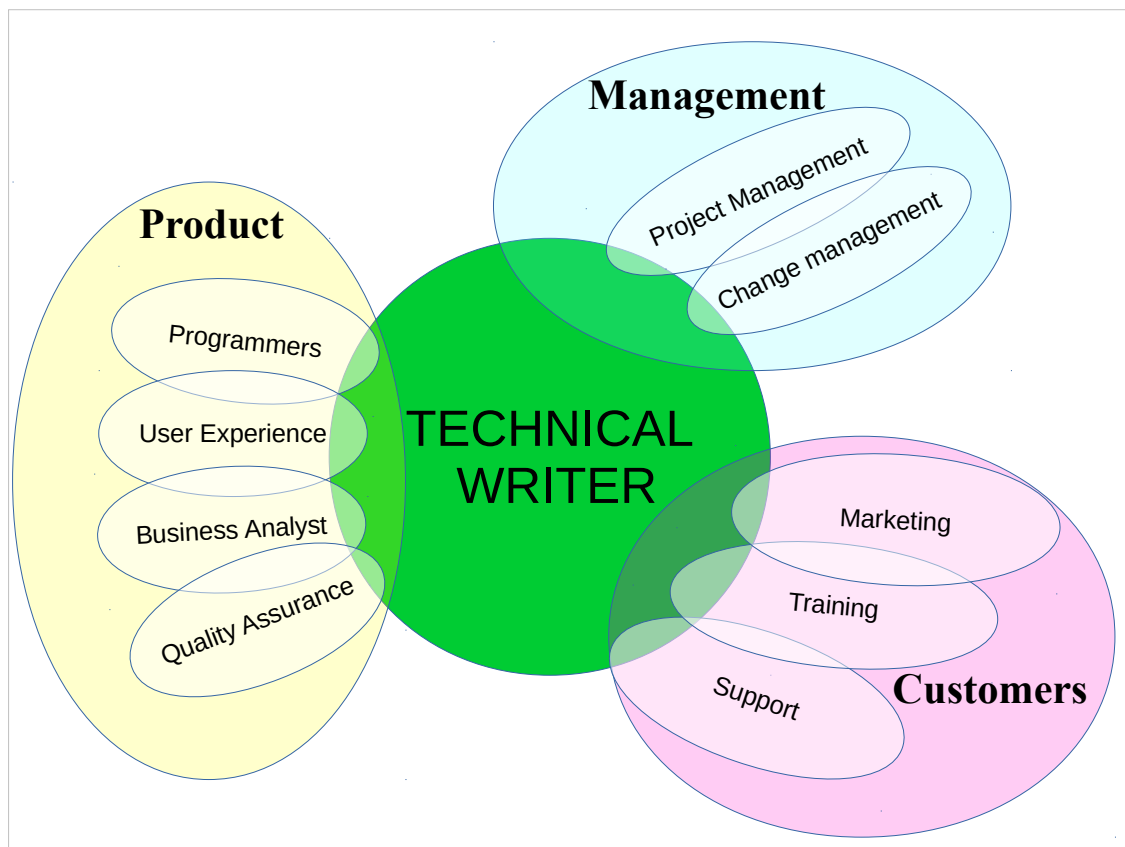
Even the people we deliver to can be dismissive of our efforts.

We are an afterthought.

They're pleased to have us because they don't want to write the docs, but they're not invested in it.

Am I doing ok?

In a vacuum, most of us tend to assume the worst.



Why us: #4

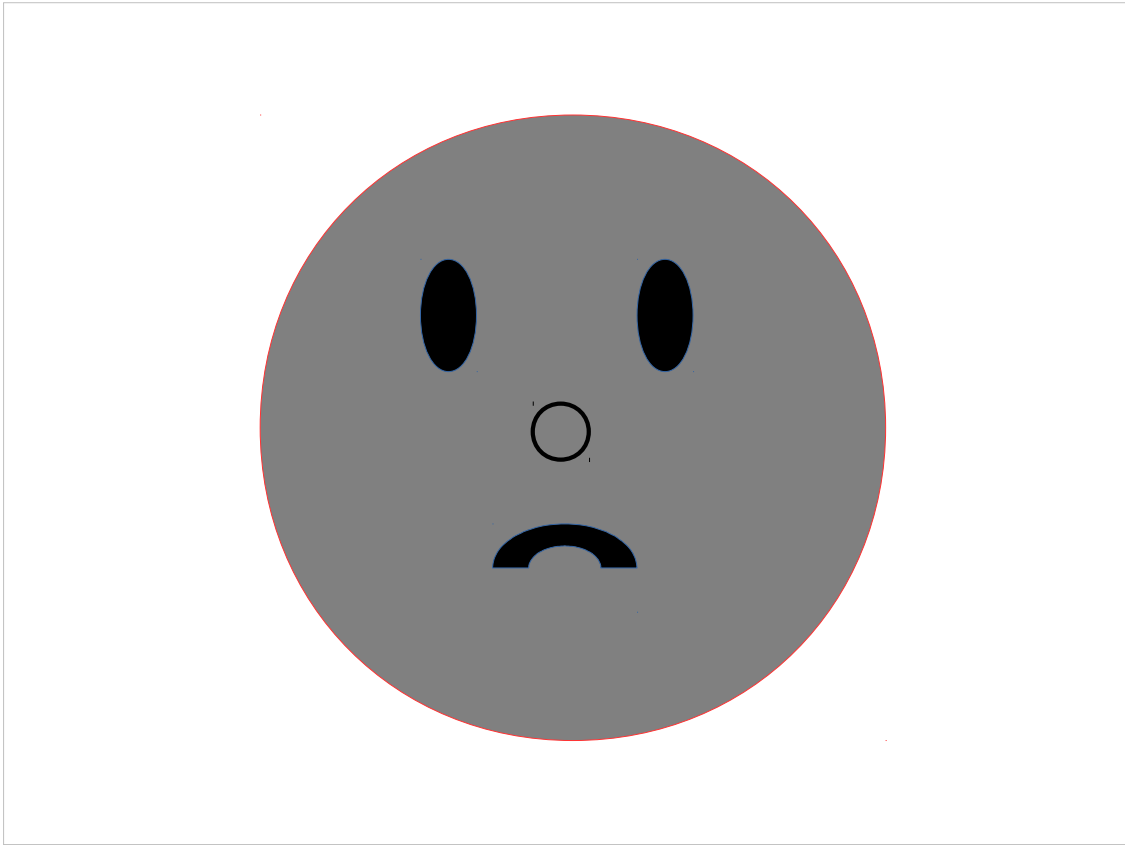
Huge crossover with other areas, who have experts in their own fields.

We learn what they're doing in order to document their outputs, and the interfaces between each area.

We are always learning and always trying to absorb. Infrequent that we get to rest and just write what we already know.

We never get to feel like an expert.

We always feel second best.

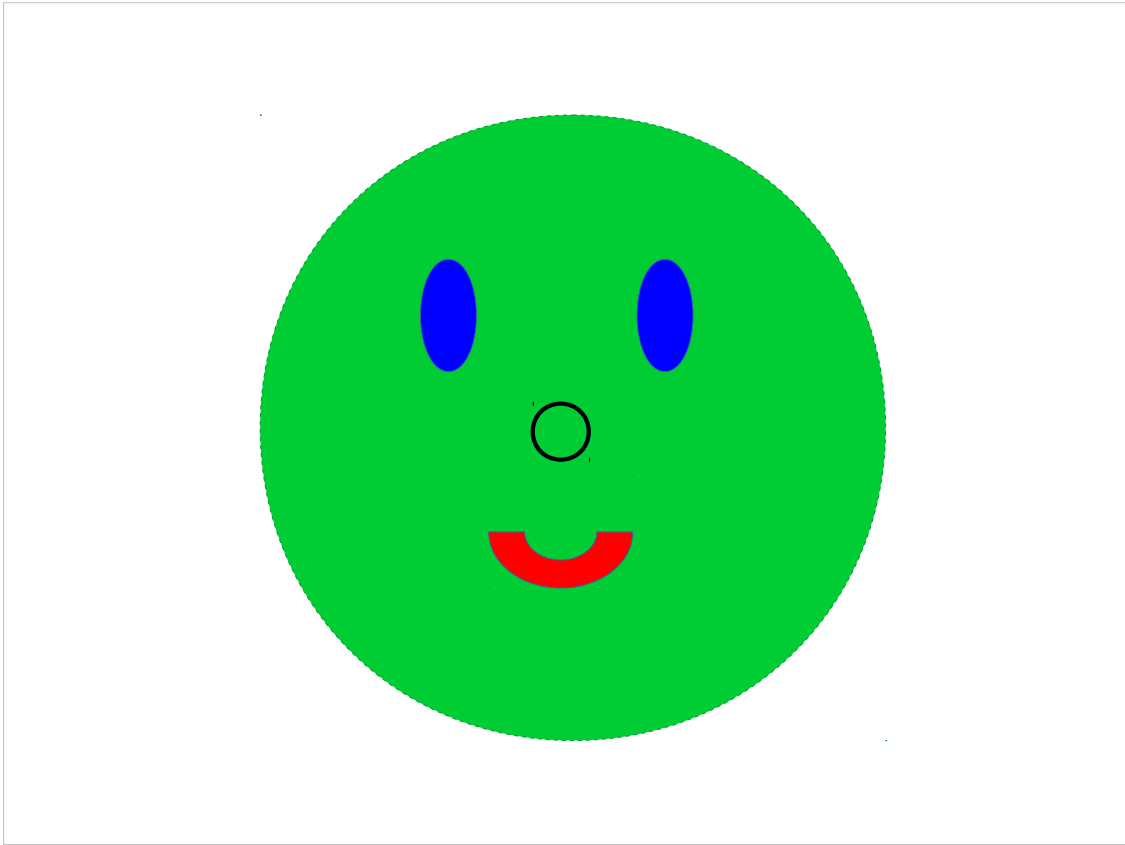


Feeling depressed yet?

Convinced that you suck? That we ALL suck?

Have I just convinced your imposter syndrome that you really ARE a fraud?

Turn that frown upside down!



All of those weaknesses are our strengths.

They are the reason we are special.

They are the reason we are hired.

They are the reason we are invaluable.

Wait, what? How can this be?



Awesome: #1

We might be the last to be involved, but once we are there, our diverse experience makes us invaluable.

Our insight and our extra skills makes people wonder how they coped without us.

They just didn't know what they were missing.



Awesome #2: No one path into the field.

Our depth of experience gives us skills and abilities that set us apart.

We aren't gingerbread people, stamped out by a cookie cutter, from the same training course.

We have all taken very different paths to get to this point.

Yes, this makes it harder for employers to vet our skills and hire us. But we are technical writers. We are experts in writing to our audience. We can write the cover letter and resume to meet the employer's needs.



Awesome #3:

Often solitary role: am I doing okay?

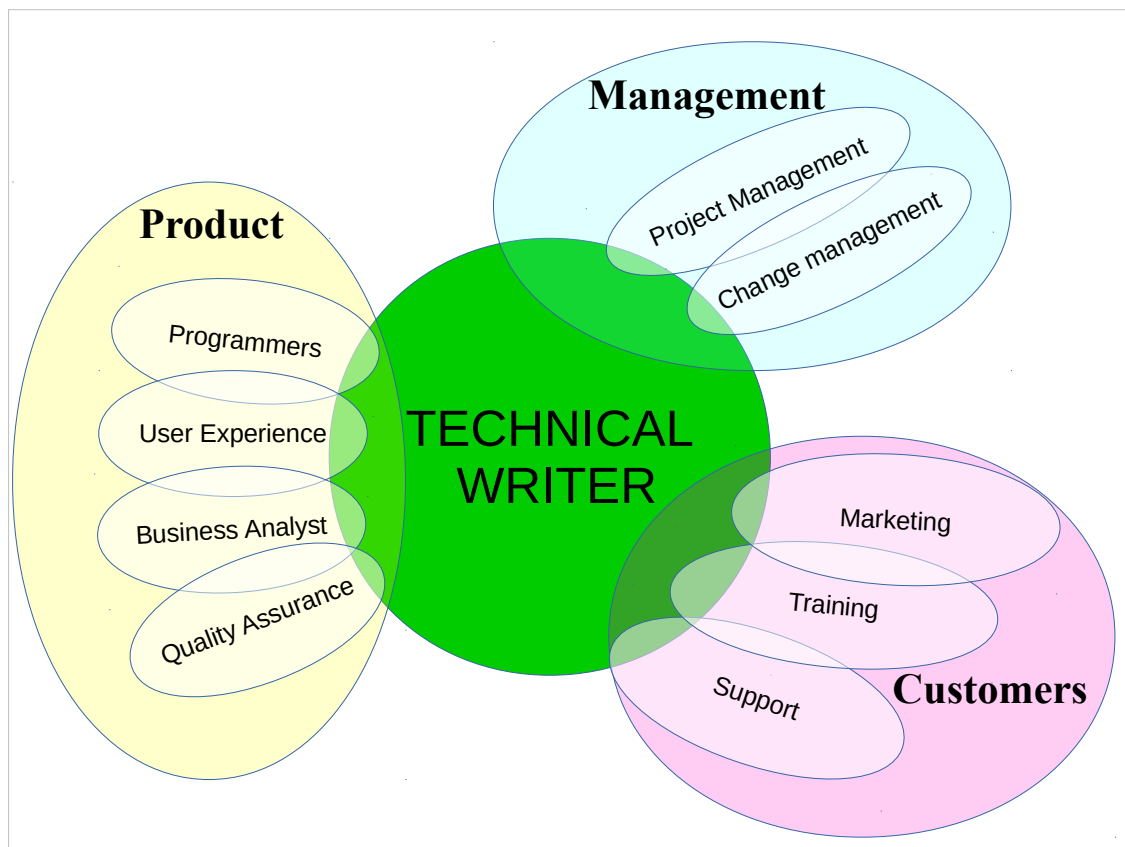
We get to forge our own path. Initiative is (hopefully) rewarded.

And truly, we are not alone.

You're here, after all.

We have a community and it might not be inside our office, but perhaps it is because we are a community of communicators, we are supportive and helpful.

Our biggest problem can be talking too much!



Awesome #4:

We never get to feel like an expert. We always feel second best.

HOLY MOLY! How awesome is that?
Second best at ALL of those fields?

Able to interrogate and investigate and communicate with people across the entire company. Brilliant!

Our networks are broad and deep. We become the go-to person for each department to find out what's happening in other departments.

We get to learn so much, not be narrowly confined. And in doing so, we pick up their skills. In hiring us, an org also gets a PM, QA, marketer, tech support, ...



With that in mind, let's look back at Imposter Syndrome.

- 1) Persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud.
- 2) Can't own your accomplishments.

#1) Fear of being exposed as a fraud.

- You are NOT an expert. This is expected. It does not make you a fraud.

REPEAT this and wait.

What are our core skills? Words.

- Do you love words and care about helping people?
THAT IS WHAT MATTERS

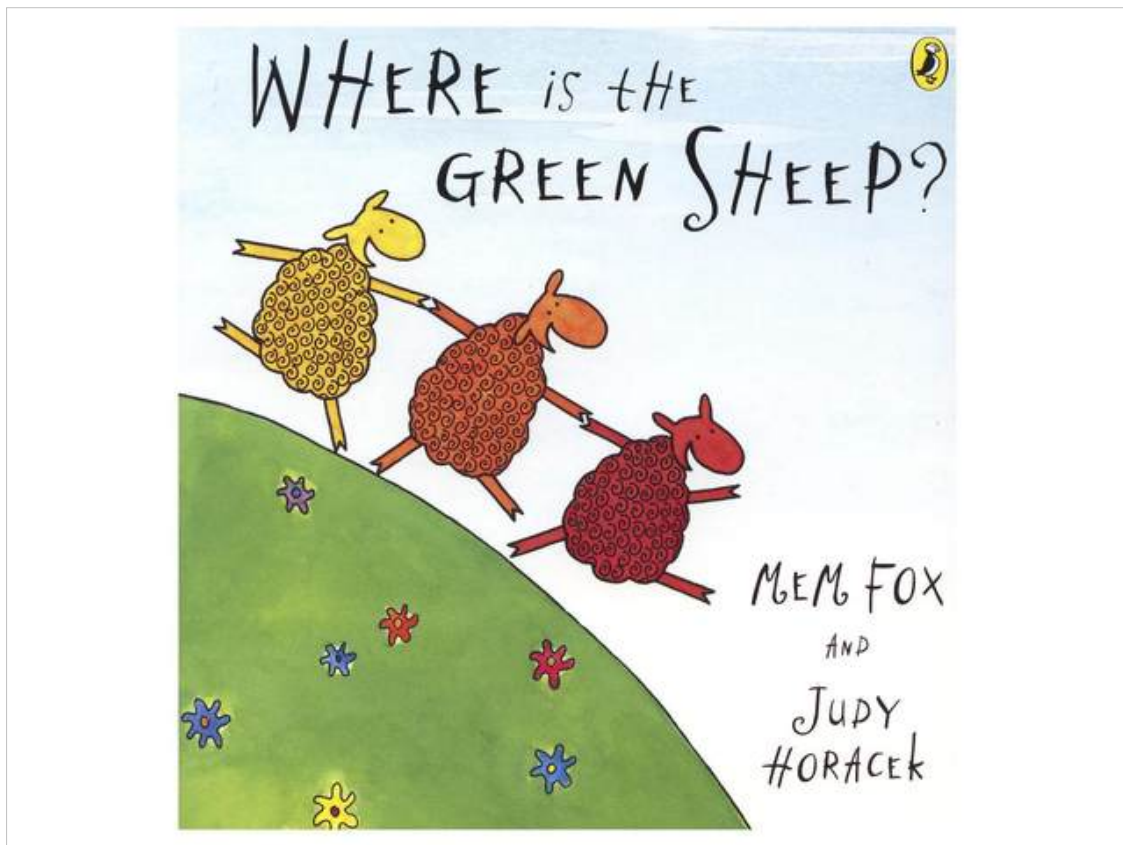
Imposter Syndrome

2) Can't own your own accomplishments

- Take another look back at your history.
- See the parts where NOBODY ELSE could do what you did.
- Do not discount their lack of time. You chose to make time for this and they did not.

You have a lot of skills. Some will be stronger than others. Nobody is level 10 everywhere. For everyone you admire, there is someone who admires you.

Now. Let's talk about sheep.



Where is the green sheep?

We spend a lot of time looking for the green sheep.
We see the slide sheep and the tree sheep and the
kite sheep and the blue sheep and the train sheep.
We can't see the green sheep.

They each have their own thing that they do.

But we keep looking for the green sheep. We know
we are not like those other sheep, with all their
amazing skills.

Here's the green sheep, fast asleep. Oh dear! We are
lazy green sheep!

But no, we forget that the lesson is: WE ARE ALL
SHEEP

Today you are **YOU**,
That is **TRUER** than true.
There is **NO ONE** alive
Who is **YOUER** than **YOU!**

- Dr. Seuss

Summary.

- * Definition of IS
- * Why we are prone
- * Why this is our secret superpower (bruce wayne, bats)
- * What's really important: WORDS

Because of our varied paths into the field, it is easy to feel unqualified.

Comparing ourselves to others leaves us feel wanting.

Turn it on its head:

You are unique. Nobody else has your experience.
Your strengths make you distinctly qualified.

You are the green sheep. Hear you roar baa.

Q&A



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