

Soft skills for technical writing

Technical writing course BUT 2024

What we'll discuss today

- What are soft skills?
 - Communication
 - Teamwork
 - Feedback
 - Curiosity - Proactivity
 - Time management - Adaptability
- Conclusion & Useful Resources



What are soft skills?

= interpersonal skills useful in all relationships in life

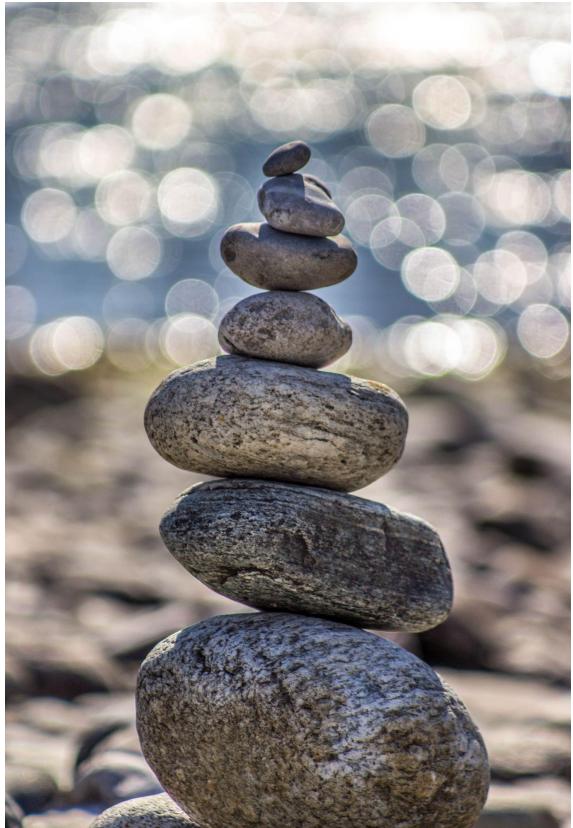
- Not related to specific technical knowledge or training
- Helps us to:
 - Work effectively with others
 - Adapt to changing situations
 - Perform well in variety of roles
- Soft skills in TW:
 - Communication and collaboration
 - Curiosity and proactivity
 - Adaptability and time management



Communication

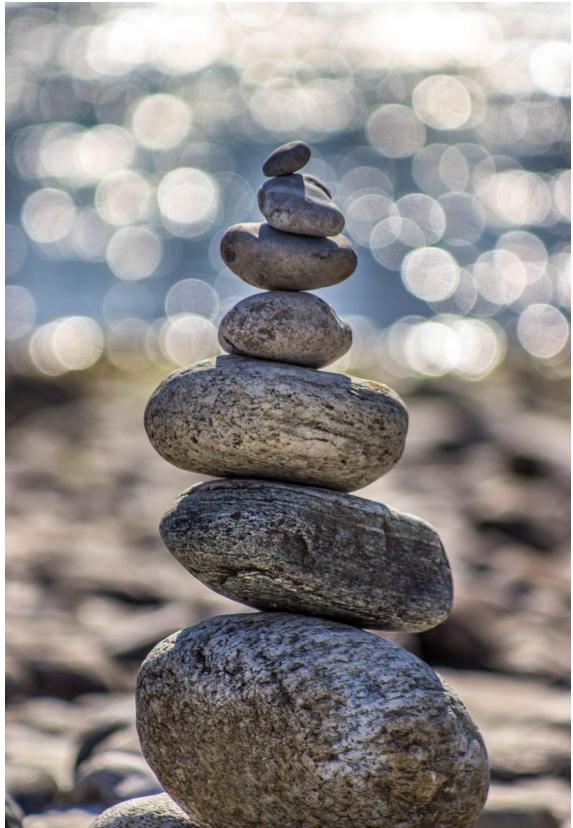
Cross-functional coordination and communication

- Active listening means being fully present in the conversation:
 - Good eye contact.
 - Notice (and use) non-verbal cues.
 - Ask open-ended questions to encourage further discussion.
 - Paraphrase and reflect back what you hear.
 - Listen to understand, not to respond.
 - No judgment and pushy advice.
- Advocate for the docs



TEAMWORK - GENERAL GUIDELINES

- 👉 Be polite and respectful.
- 👉 State your purpose. Be clear and transparent. STICK TO THE FACTS!
- 👉 Ask educated questions.
- 👉 Behave in a way that helps others grow, not put them down.
- 👉 If you like how a coworker does something good at work, tell them - a little boost in confidence can go a long way.
- 👉 Cultivate psychological safety like we do in Red Hat.



TEAMWORK - GIVING PRAISE, ASKING QUESTIONS

STICK TO THE FACTS!

If you are pleased with the results, say it:

- “I like how you made that chapter clearly structured.”
- “Thanks for catching that detail!”
- “Thank you for the helpful feedback.”

If you need to ask for more information:

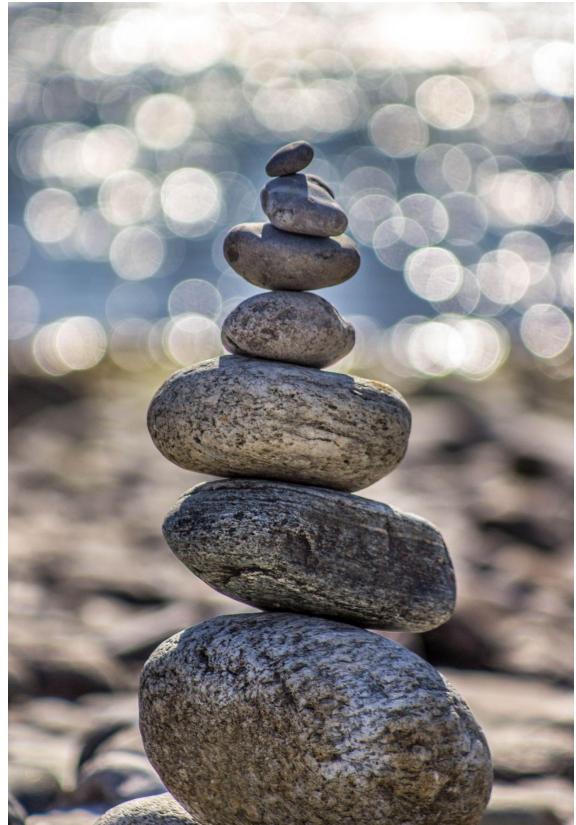
- “Hi, I’m reaching out to you about [context]. From what I understand, [results of the research I made] point to the fact that [the dilemma I’m having or the clarification I need]. Could you please:
 - *elaborate on [a specific thing I request]?
 - *clarify the audience of this text?
 - *point me in the right direction with this [step I am writing about]?

Thank you

TEAMWORK - EXPRESSING NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

If you are displeased with the results, always **STICK TO THE FACTS**:

- “The project was set up with these [expectations/criteria], and I see two of them have not been met.”
- “The customer complained they received the project incomplete and a week after the set deadline. The ticket shows the final draft was in the [Review] status for a long time. Can you help me understand what happened?”
- “Thank you for the feedback; however, I made [*the decisions*] based on [*verifiable guidance document/discussion with the developer*], which makes me more inclined to keep them [*i.e. disregard your feedback*].”
- “Where do we go from here?”
“How can we prevent this from happening again?”
“What would be the win-win resolution to this situation?”





EXERCISE:

Someone dumping too much work on me

There is no single “right” answer. The key is to be clear, concise and professional in communication, while showing the willingness to find a solution that works for everyone.



Feedback: How to give it

- **Prepare.**
- Mind your **tone**.
- Remain **sensitive**.
- Focus on **improvements**.
- Emphasize the **future**.
- **Listen!**



Feedback: How to receive it

- Don't be a caveman!
- Ask for it.
- Ask for it again.
- "What can I do better?"
- Be grateful.
- Be objective.

== How to customize the cpu-partitioning TuneD profile

Extending TuneD profiles can help to make aditional tuning changes.

The `cpu-partitioning` profile sets the CPUs to use `cstate=1`. In order to use the `cpu-partitioning` profile but to additionally change the CPU cstate from cstate1 to cstate0, the following procedure describes a new TuneD profile named _my_profile_, which inherits the `cpu-partitioning` profile and then sets C state-0.

EXERCISE

J Jacob Valdez
3:12 PM Today

I would use a gerund in this instance since it is procedural content. "Customizing", perhaps :)

Sarka Jana Janderkova
3:35 PM Today

typo!!!

J Jacob Valdez
3:03 PM Today

Passive voice. Maybe this sentence could be reworded to something like "You can extend the TuneD profile to make additional tuning changes"?

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J Jacob Valdez
3:04 PM Today

Consider prefacing this with "For example" to clarify its not the only use case, but the specific one being discussed.

J Jacob Valdez
3:05 PM Today

This sentence is long and uses a lot of commas to break up the information - consider breaking into smaller complete sentences?



Peer review

- Work with **style guides**
- **Support** your comments
- Differentiate between **required** and **optional** changes.
- Provide **positive** feedback as well as negative.
- Focus on:
 - **language**
 - **style**
 - **minimalism**



EXERCISE: Excessively harsh feedback

Curiosity - Proactivity

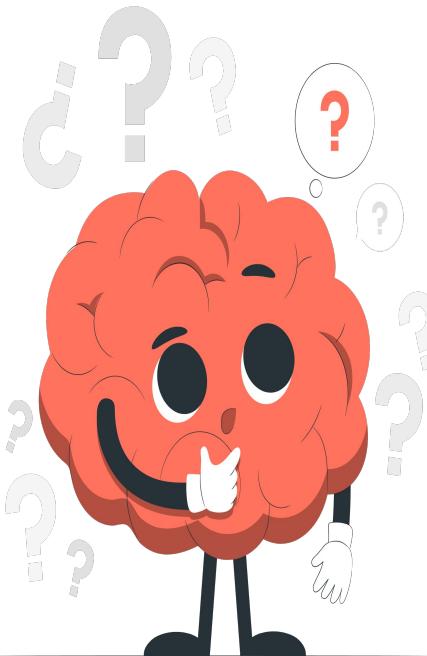


- Product knowledge
 - Writers need to know how the thing works to properly document it
 - TAMs need to know how the thing works to help customers use or troubleshoot it
- Customer focus
 - Writers make it easier for people in general to interact with and understand the thing on their own
 - TAMs address customer needs directly and provide ongoing support
- Continuous learning
 - Writers need to stay up to date with the thing to ensure accuracy of existing documentation and prepare new documentation
 - TAM's need to stay up to date with the thing to provide the best solutions to customers by leveraging the latest technology

Curiosity - Proactivity

Being proactive and staying motivated as a Technical writer

- What are the documentation requirements?
 - What do you as a writer need to understand to use this product/tool?
- Who is the audience?
 - Is this document for sales people to pitch or is this for developers?
 - What are some common user issues?
- How do we communicate changes?
 - A release note document? Changelogs in the existing guides?
- How does the versioning for this product work?
 - Are there compatibility issues we should communicate?
- What is the format of the documentation?
 - Are we updating a documentation site?
 - Are we delivering PDFs?
- Are there legal or compliance related considerations to make?
 - Are all referenced partner hardwares public knowledge?
 - Do we need to add copyright notices?





Time management & Adaptability

"The bad news is time flies.
The good news is you are the pilot."
~ Michael Altshuler

WORKING IN LAYERS

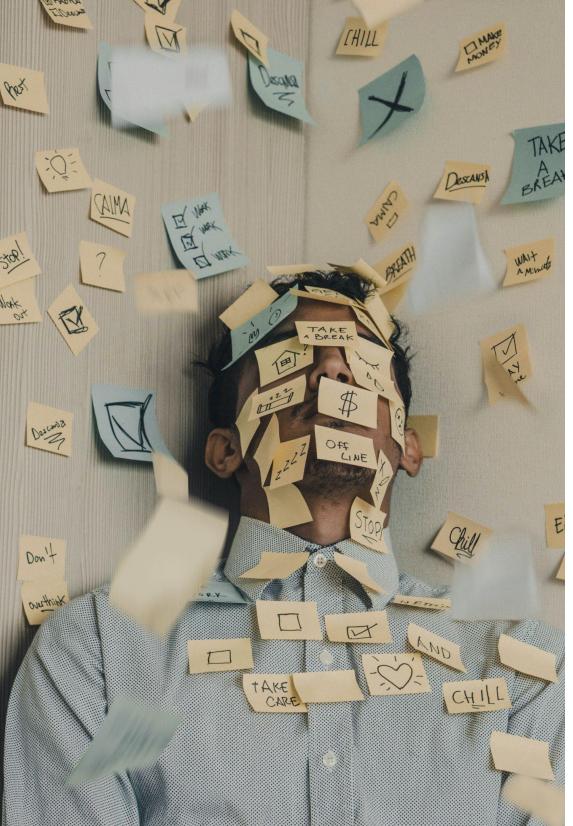




What are the main reasons why someone might have trouble finishing tasks?

- **No motivation:** low importance, low interest, low reward
- **Distractions:** noise, notifications, movement
- **Overwhelmed:** too many tasks to complete, task is too difficult
- **Not sure what to do:** no clear plan, not knowing where to start
- **No time management:** no regard for deadlines, not blocking out the work in the calendar.
- **Not sure how to do it:** no sufficient skills or knowledge to complete a task
- **Unfavorable conditions:** environment not conducive to work

All these may lead to **procrastination**.



Your key to success

- Eliminate distractions
 - START
 - Little by little (5 minutes)
 - Focus on what you can control
 - Just figure out the NEXT step
 - Ask for help if needed - no shame
 - INSERT A BREAK
 - REPEAT
 - Check & adapt

Your biggest enemies

- Striving for perfection
 - Parkinson's law: Task expansion



A team project

You and your best friend are working on a team project and you are responsible for preparing a presentation. The deadline is tomorrow. Everybody else has already sent you their part except your friend. When you try to reach him, he replies he didn't have enough time to work on the project. But you saw several photos on IG with him on a party. What would you do?

I screwed up

I was working hard on a project, using my time efficiently... but I still realised 2 weeks before the deadline that there is no way I'm gonna be able to finish on time. What do I do? Do I tell my boss? I'm scared...



Conclusion

Soft skills = “people” skills

- Non-technical abilities
- Can be improved through learning and practice
- Professionals with strong soft skills:
 - Can integrate into teams
 - Collaborate successfully
 - Make work environment more positive and motivational



USEFUL RESOURCES

- *Feel Good Productivity* by Ali Abdaal
- *4000 Weeks* by Oliver Burkeman
- *Respektovat a být respektován* by Kopřiva, Nováčková, et al.
- *Difficult Conversations* or *Crucial Conversations*

Thank you