

Soft skills for technical writing

Technical writing course MUNI 2023

About the authors



Jacob Valdez

3 years in tech writing

Fan of cooking, gardening, dogs, climbing, and mushroom foraging/identification



Šárka Jana Janderková

2 years in tech writing

Cat lover & Linux enthusiast

Former marketing specialist, lecturer, manager



Ioanna Gkioka

Technical Writing Manager

Support technical writers

Former university teacher



Jocelyn Sese

Senior Tech Writer, Red Hat

18 years in tech writing

Love my boys (2), my pets (8), exercise, books, zombies, ghosts, and baked sweets!



Kalyani Desai

I am a Technical Writer, Open source contributor,

Fun fact: I am obsessed with Frootloops(cereal)

I tried some strawberry shampoo.

It doesn't taste as good as it smells :P



Gábi Fialová

Tech writer, former teacher, people person

Personal motto:

"Be brave enough to suck at something new."

What we'll discuss today

- Homework follow-up
- What are soft skills?
 - Communication
 - Teamwork
 - Feedback
 - Curiosity - Proactivity
 - Time management - Adaptability
- Conclusion & homework assignment



What are soft skills?

= **interpersonal skills**

- 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

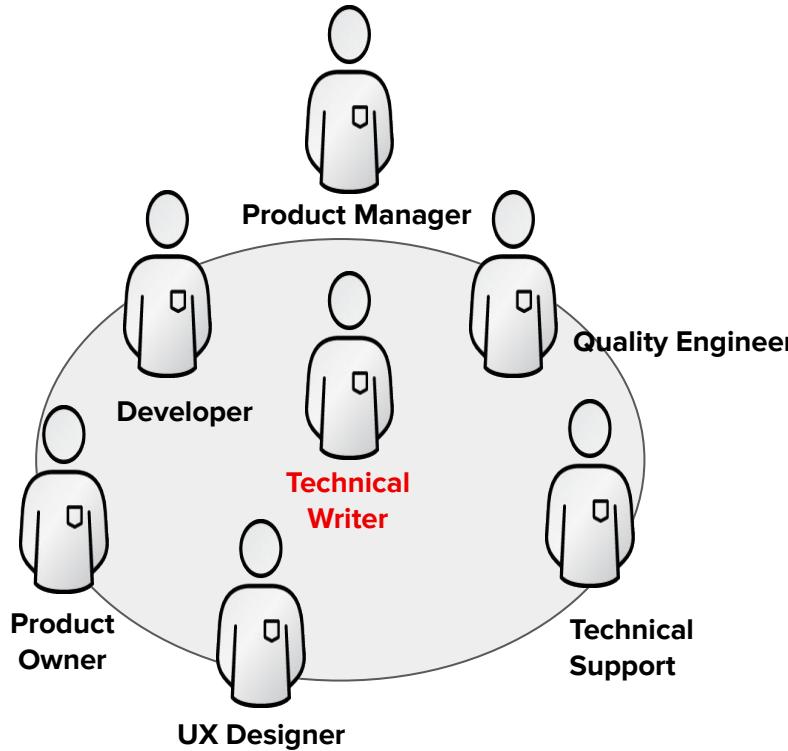


Communication

Cross-functional coordination and communication

- Understand roles, responsibilities of stakeholders
- Never come to interviews empty-handed
- Listen actively
- Advocate for the docs

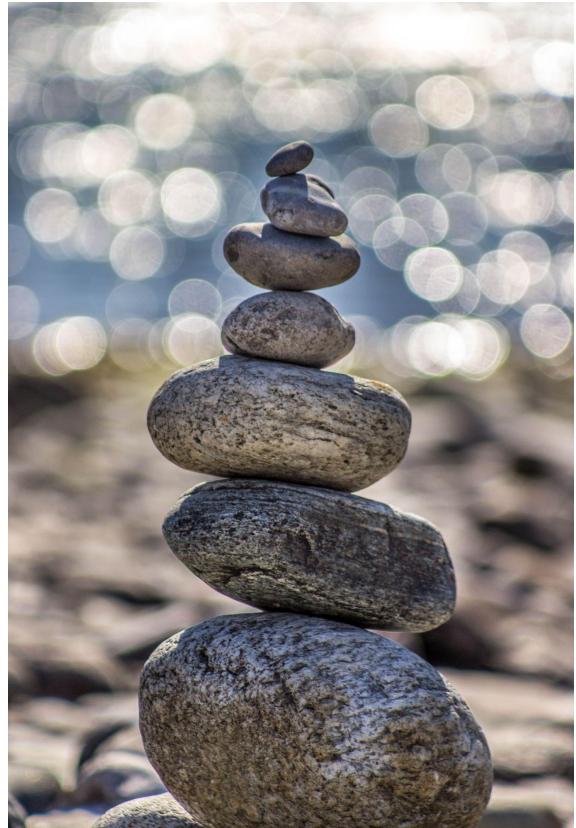
Cross-team collaboration



Communication Is Everything

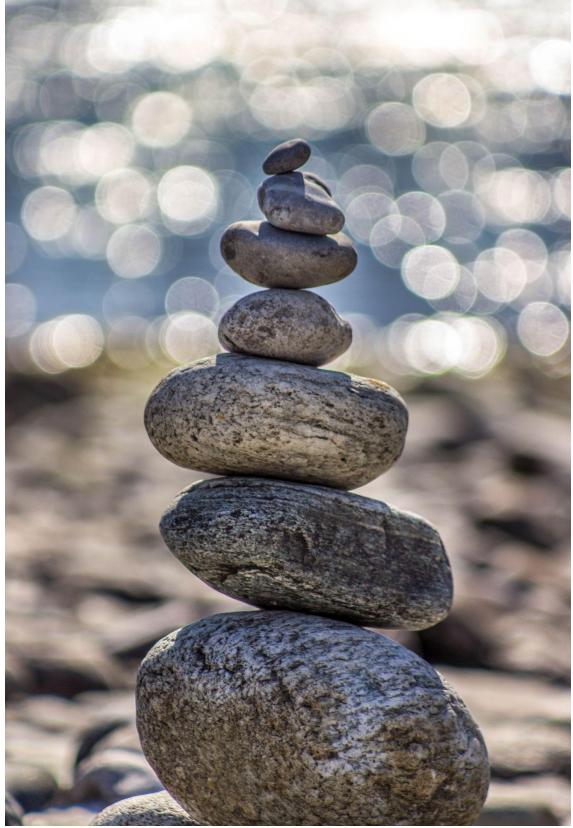
Documentation is part of the product

- ▶ Collaboration with Product Managers – Product Owners
- ▶ Work with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
- ▶ Collaboration with Quality Engineers (QEs)
- ▶ Collaboration with Technical Support
- ▶ Work with UX designers



TEAMWORK - GENERAL GUIDELINES

- 👉 Be polite and respectful.
- 👉 State your purpose. Be clear and transparent.
- 👉 Ask educated questions.
- 👉 Behave in a way that helps others grow, not put them down.
- 👉 If you like how a coworker does something 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

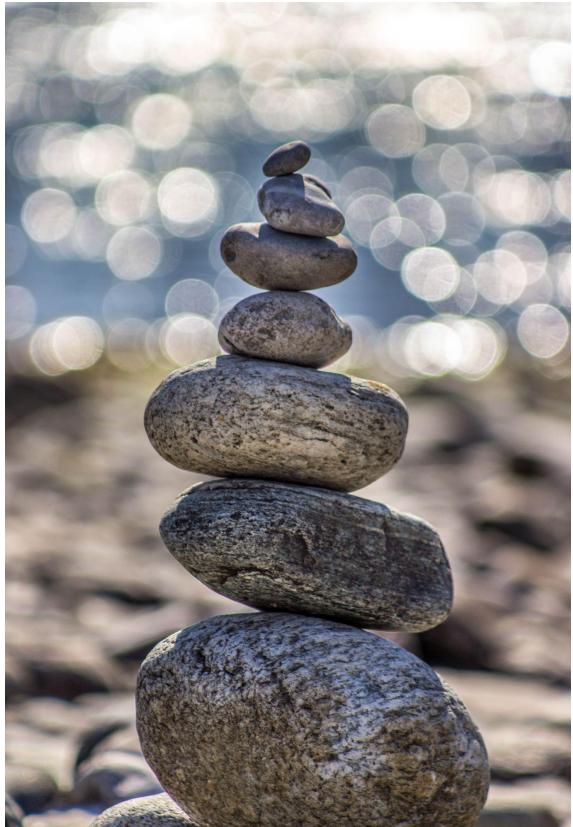
If you are pleased with the results, say it:

- "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 [POST/QA] status. 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?”



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.

EXERCISE

```
== 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.

.Procedure

```
. Create the `/etc/tuned/my_profile` directory:  
+  
[subs=quotes]  
----  
# mkdir /etc/tuned/_my_profile_  
----|  
. Create a `tuned.conf` file in this directry, and add the content below:  
+  
[subs=quotes]  
----  
# vi /etc/tuned/_my_profile_/tuned.conf  
[main]  
summary=Customized tuning on top of cpu-partitioning  
include=cpu-partitioning  
[cpu]  
force_latency=cstate.id:0|1  
----  
  
. Use the new profile:  
+  
[subs=quotes]  
----  
# tuned-adm profile _my_profile_  
----
```

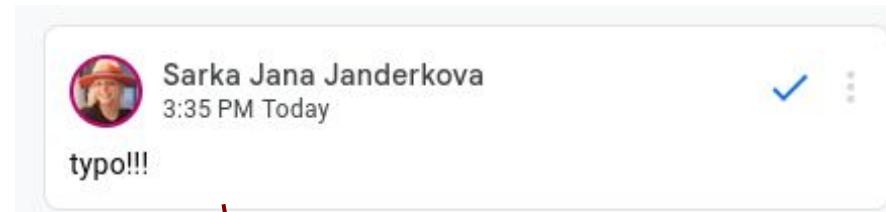
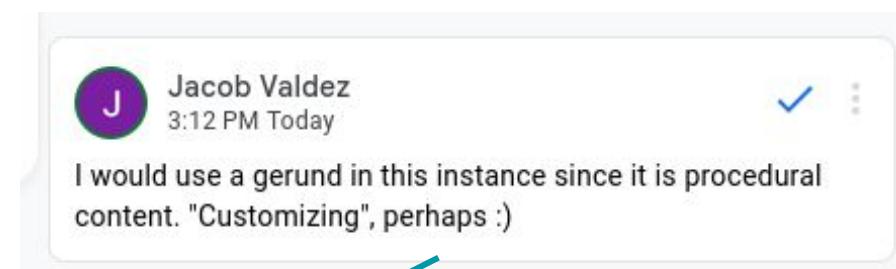
CAUTION: In the shared example, a reboot is not required. However, if the changes in the _my_profile_ profile require a reboot to take effect, than you can reboot your machine.

== How to customize the cpu-partitioning TuneD profile

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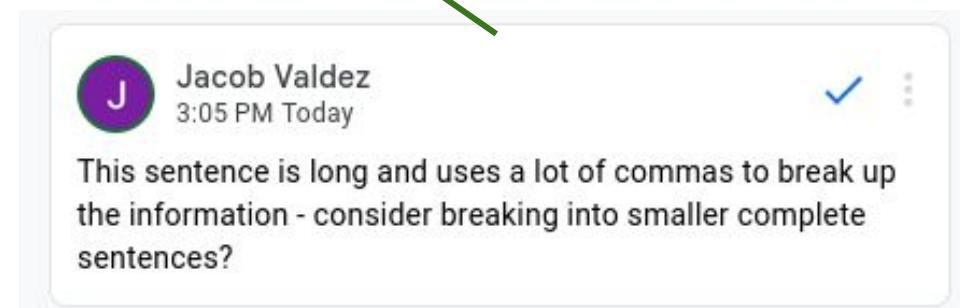
EXERCISE



== How to customize the cpu-partitioning TuneD profile

Extending TuneD profiles can help to make additional 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

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EXERCISE

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. Use the new profile:

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tuned-adm profile _my_profile_



Jacob Valdez

3:33 PM Today

Typo - I believe it should be "directory"



Jacob Valdez

3:09 PM Today

This can be hard to interpret for people using screen readers that aren't consuming this with some sense of where things are at visually. Maybe consider using "... the following content:"?



CAUTION: In the shared example, a reboot is not required. However, if the changes in the `_my_profile_` profile require a reboot to take effect, then you can reboot your machine.

```
[role="_additional-resources"]  
.Additional resources  
* `tuned-profiles-cpu-partitioning(7)` man page
```

EXERCISE



Jacob Valdez
3:06 PM Today

This seems like more of a note than a caution to me :)



Jacob Valdez
3:32 PM Today



This should be "then". "Then" indicates time and "than" is used for comparisons.

CAUTION: In the shared example, a reboot is not required. However, if the changes in the `_my_profile_` profile require a reboot to take effect, `then` you can reboot your machine.

```
[role="_additional-resources"]  
.Additional resources  
* `tuned-profiles-cpu-partitioning(7)` man page
```



Jacob Valdez
3:07 PM Today



I think this is a little redundant and can be removed. "then reboot your machine" is more direct and functions more instructively IMO



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**



Curiosity - Proactivity

Being curious about your product

- Be synced with the product team
- Revisit the docs requirements
- Focus not only on “what” and “how” parts but also on “why”
- Gather reports and analyze data from documentation statistics
- Act upon feedback immediately



Curiosity - Proactivity

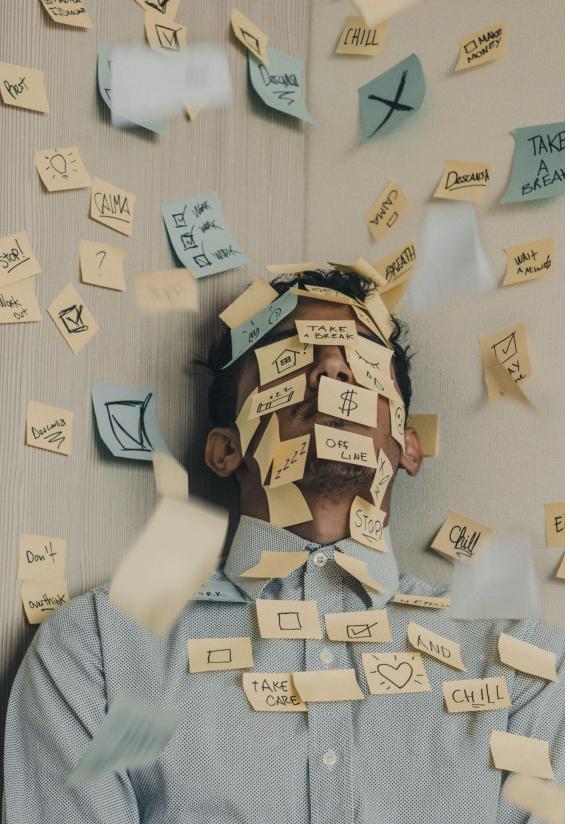
Being proactive and staying motivated as a Technical writer

- Identify the documentation gaps and improve the quality of documentation
- Improve the documentation workflows
- Be involved in team initiatives
- Avoid burnout - Focus on immediate results



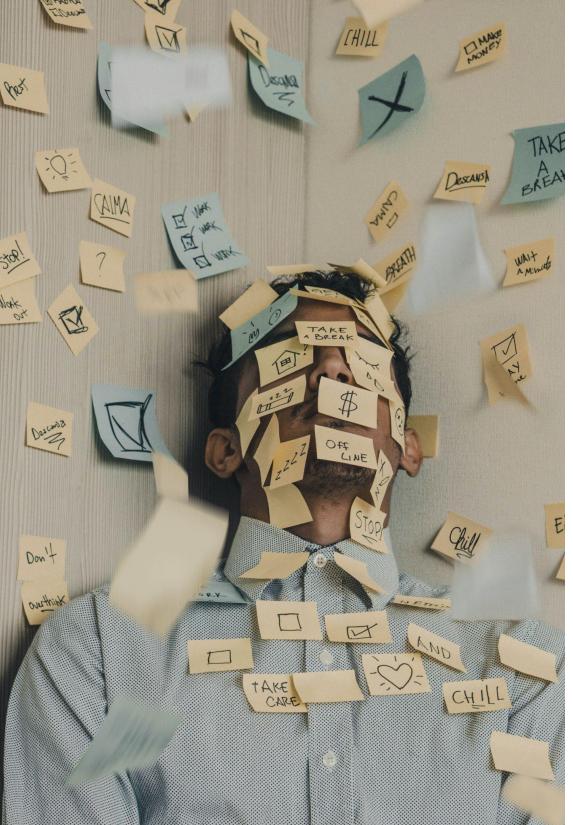
Time management & Adaptability

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



Serious advice from management books

- Identify your goals
 - Break them down into smaller manageable tasks
 - Each goal should be SMART
- Evaluate the importance of each task - prioritize
- Create a plan on how to accomplish these tasks - schedule
- Be flexible - as we work in a fast-paced environment
- Review and revise your plan regularly to stay on track



Your key to success

- END PROCRASTINATION
- >>> START
 - Little by little
 - Focus on what you can control
- (i) INSERT A BREAK
- REPEAT
 - Check & adapt

Your biggest enemies

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



What I wish I knew 10 years earlier

- Block off your schedule
- Automate repeatable tasks
- Turn off your phone
- We own our time
- The daily highlight
- Use a to-do list
- Protected time
- Manage your 3 tasks and go outside for a walk



**“The only constant in life is change,
and those who can adapt to change will thrive.”**

Adaptability means being open to new ideas and perspectives and being able to:

- change course when a plan isn't working,
- learn from mistakes and make adjustments,
- handle unexpected challenges,
- think creatively and come up with new solutions.



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

Thank you