

Soft skills for technical writing

Technical writing course MUNI 2024

About the authors



Jacob Valdez

4+ years as a Technical Writer at Red Hat.
Fan of cooking, gardening, dogs, climbing, and
mushroom foraging/identification



Himadri Bisht

A seasoned technical writer, movie lover and travel enthusiast. I love spending quality time with my daughter!



Servesha Dudhaonkar

I am an engineer, a Technical Writer who loves Linux and command-line interface. I occasionally sing.



Arati Ajit Belgaonkar

I am a Technical Writer by profession and personally, I am an athlete. My hobbies are gardening and swimming.



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, people person

Personal motto:

“Be brave enough to suck at something new.”

What we'll discuss today

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



What are soft skills?

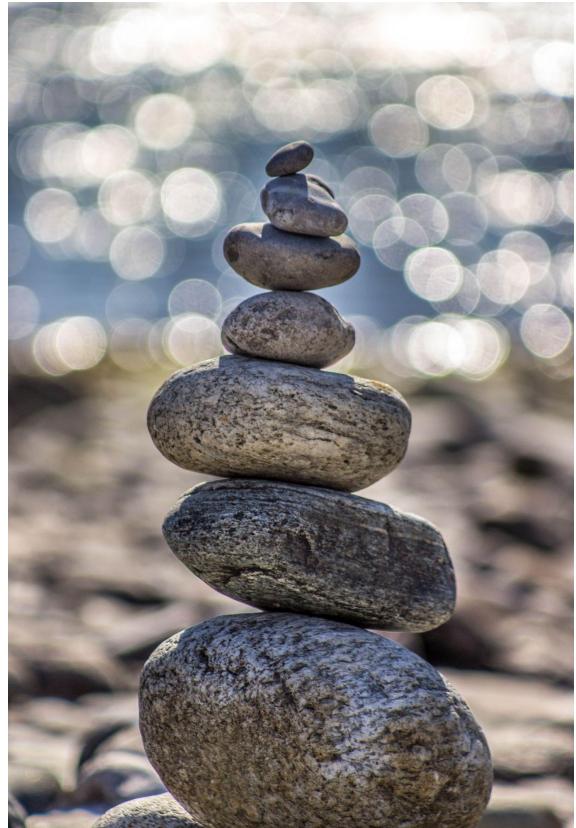
- = interpersonal skills useful in all relationships in life
- Not related to specific technical knowledge or training
- Helps us to:
 - Work effectively with others
 - Adapt to changing situations
 - Perform well in variety of roles
- Soft skills in TW:
 - Communication and collaboration
 - Curiosity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



Communication

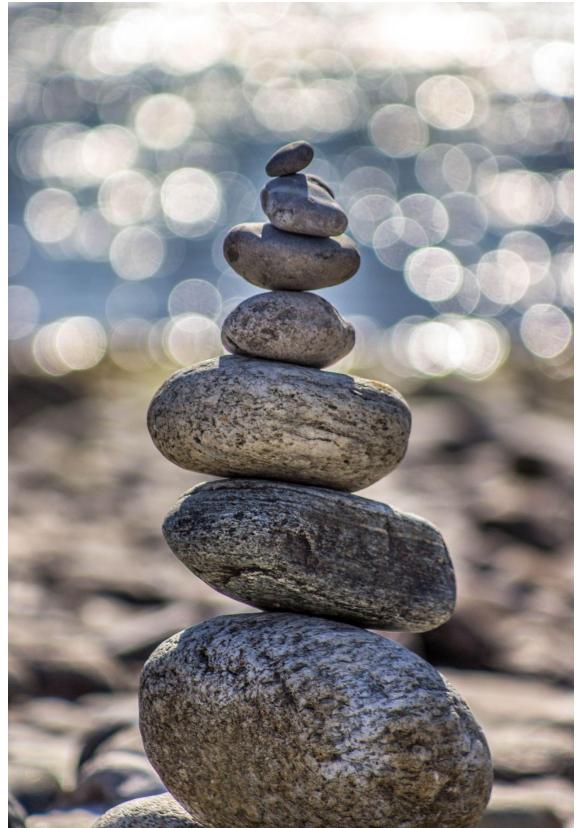
Cross-functional coordination and communication

- Understand roles, responsibilities of stakeholders
- Never come to interviews empty-handed
- Listen actively
- 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:

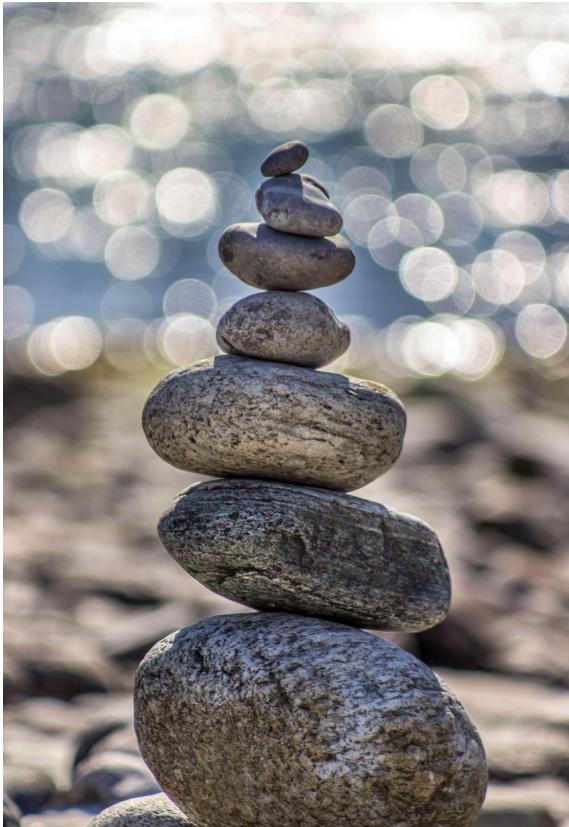
- “Hi, I’m reaching out to you about [context]. From what I understand, [results of the research I made] point to the fact that [the dilemma I’m having or the clarification I need]. Could you please:
 - *elaborate on [a specific thing I request]?
 - *clarify the audience of this text?
 - *point me in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

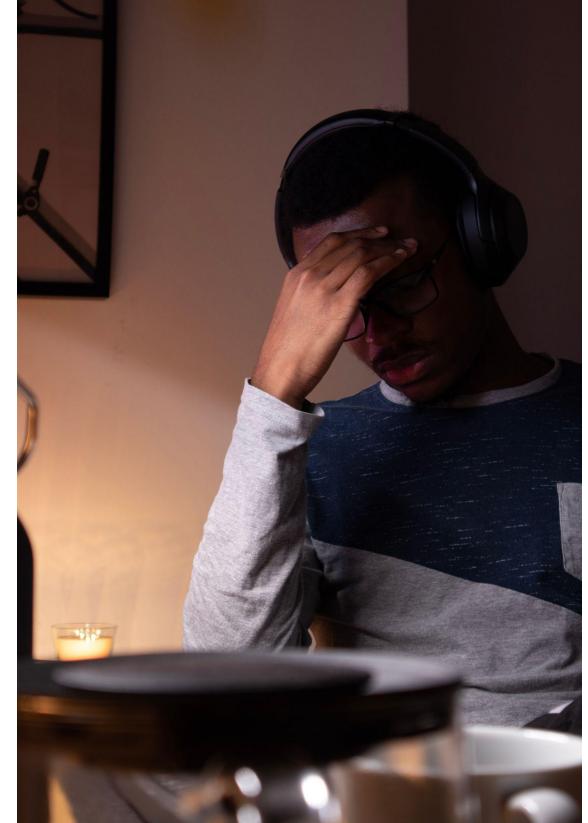
Thank you

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. 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"?

== How to customize the cpu-partitioning TuneD profile

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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

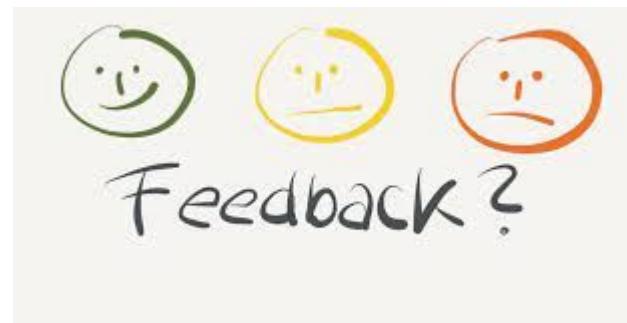
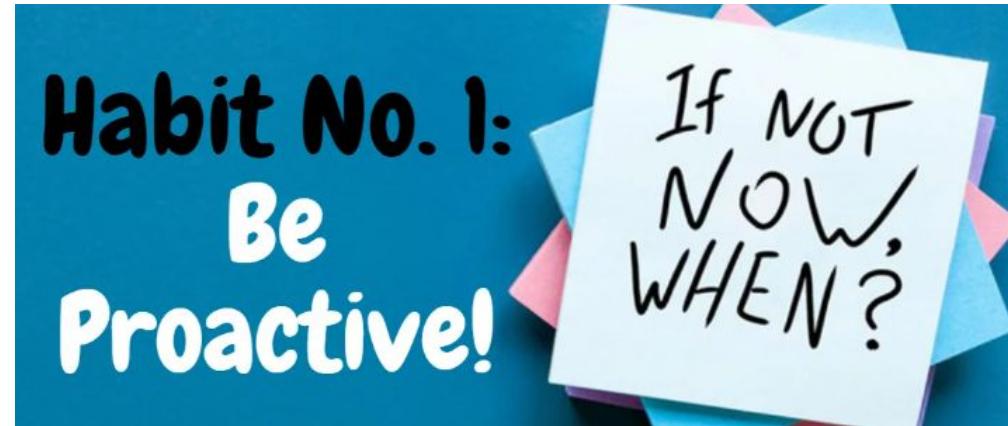


Gather reports and analyze the data from documentation statistics



Curiosity - Proactivity

Being proactive and staying motivated as a Technical writer





Time management & Adaptability

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

WORKING IN LAYERS

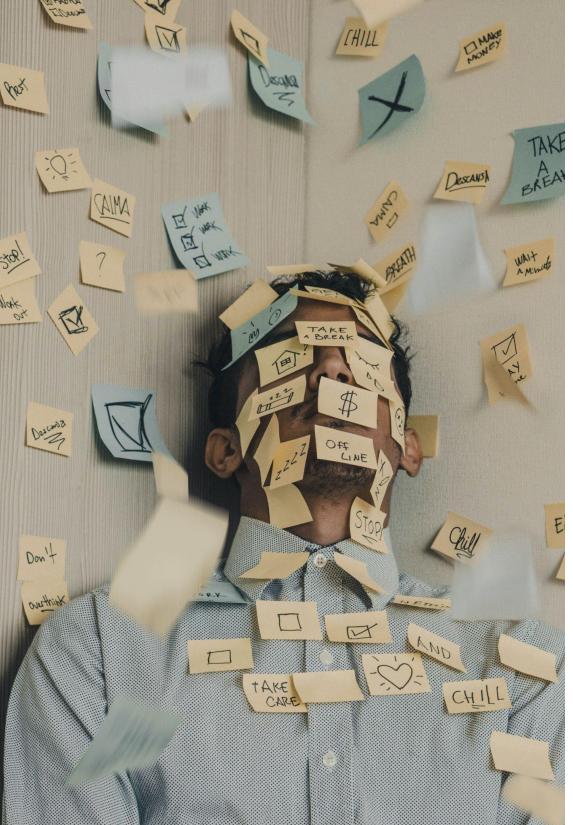




What are the main reasons why someone might have trouble finishing tasks?

- **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