Literacy Narrative

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English classes were so boring. I remember skipping them in school as a kid, I would find any possible excuse to miss an English class. The teachers attempted to ensure the classes it was the most important subject in school. I remember on the days I would go to class none of the kids would seem to take it seriously. They would all joke and laugh, with statements like, “we will never need to use this.” I admit I was one of them, I never really understood the point of taking English class after English class. It never crossed my mind, that maybe, my teachers knew more than I did at that point in my life. Looking back, I am able to see exactly how wrong I was. I am going to share my experience of when I decided to become a technical writer.

  I will start out by saying, it took me a long time to learn this valuable lesson in life. At the ripe age of 38 years, I found myself starting a new career. Now, this career was not one that I was completely unfamiliar with, it was in the technical field. I had previously worked in the information technology field, supporting customers with firewalls and various other network devices. Mind you, this was mostly over the phone, or through video calls. At that point in the industry that seemed to be the standard. It made things really simple, hop on a phone call, have a conversation, fix whatever needed fixing, and on to the next. Rarely would we have to type anything aside from commands into a terminal. Beginning this new career path felt similar, even after taking a ten-year break. Yet, at the same time, it began to quickly feel very different. All of a sudden, customers don’t want to talk on the phone, they wanted to be able to communicate on their own terms, not tied to the leash that was known as a phone cord. Customers wanted to quickly be able to fire off an email, use a chat feature, or even sometimes test messages. This was a very different method.

  After working in the new role and getting comfortable with the new methods of communications. I was asked if I wanted to be a “team leader,” this was essentially the same role as before except for one very different aspect, I would be reviewing my peers work. I was being asked to be an English teacher in a sense. My manager was apparently impressed with my writing skills and wanted me to pass on my knowledge to the rest of the team. I can only guess he didn’t know about my school habits. I agreed to the new role and quickly got to work. I would review my peers’ cases, reading email after email. “My eyes,” I thought to myself! They were so poorly constructed. The punctuation, if there were any, was terrible. Mind you, these are adults, not students, they must have had the same mindset in school as I did. After a few weeks of coaching, encouraging my team to send me emails to proofread, helping them re-word, refine, and in some instances re-write emails we had progress. The cases were closing faster, customers seemed to understand our instructions better. Our satisfaction rating was on an upward trend, then it happened, out of nowhere I received a message from one of the Directors by the name of Clint. Clint was an extremely successful and very well-liked Director. He had been with the company for almost six years and reminded me of one of those corporate businessmen in the movies. He wanted me to go upstairs a speak with a new team by the name of the Cloud Command Center.

  On to the next adventure. After speaking with the Cloud Command Center, sometimes referred to as “The C3 team,” I was on my way into the next role. The C3 team was a very fast-paced role, very high profile as well. The entire purpose of the team was to provide communications to the public regarding issues with our services. I didn’t realize what I was getting into now that I have some time to reflect. I was now being trained on things like grammar, and sentence structure, and passive statements. My new role was not only to provide communications to our customers, it was to also write root cause reports. If you aren’t familiar with these reports, they are long worded, boring, documents that outline an incident. These documents would explain how something on our network broke, how we fixed it, and what we were doing to prevent it from happening again. All of a sudden, I felt like I should have been paying better attention to those English classes I loved to skip. My job specifically was to take the technical details from an issue, break them down into non-technical issues, that people who are not familiar with the technical work could understand, all while of course keeping it technically accurate. Seems like an oxymoron to me!

How very exciting this new role was, I have now been working as an Incident Response Analyst for a little over two years. In the process, I have learned how to write a document that will quickly provide executives the information they need and maintain the ability to provide the technical aspect to those that will use my writings to create documentation of their own.