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Attn: Human Resources

Greetings!

I'm excited to be getting back into tech writing after being out for so long homeschooling my children.

I'm going to use this cover letter to detail some of my experiences to fill out my resume and turn it into more of a story.

I have a degree in education and a lot of writing experience, 6 of it being at National Instruments. After 5 years they considered me to be a "Senior Technical Writer." At National Instruments, I started in a group called GPIB, moved[1] into another group called LabWindows/CVI, taking on supervisory duties, and later worked in the Data Acquisition technical publications group. I edited, formatted, and organized software and hardware manuals for measurement and automation products. The graphical duties were usually relegated to another department, but I did do some art editing at National Instruments.

Overview

At National Instruments, I was not formally titled or paid to be a trainer, but since I enjoy teaching, I was habitually sent interns and new hires to train. Every person I trained remained at the company for years afterward, which helped to reverse the trend of high attrition in our company at that time. I did this by gaining their trust and loyalty and trying to elicit a promise from them of continuing their employment with us[2].

I enjoy training and have edited course manuals at National Instruments, as well as writing curriculum as a public-school teacher, a homeschool co-op teacher, a professional tutor, and a contract editor/fact checker for Holt, Rinehart, & Winston. For the past 19 years, I have been homeschooling my kids (which is why I don't have more work experience). Three out of four of my kids have now graduated from homeschooling and one has graduated from college. The college graduate was Summa Cum Laude in engineering and is now pursuing a master's degree in electrical engineering from A&M. The one now in college has made a 4.0 for her first two years studying computer science. Not to brag, but I think I know a bit about teaching!

I have studied computer science at Trinity and UT Austin, in addition to designing an application that automatically created print-ready PDF manuals from specially-formatted comments using XML and Visual Basic. As a hobby, I've been using AI to create artwork for my publishing and art businesses. I was the nerdiest one in tech pubs and was always begging to take the training classes we offered

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[1] My supervisor was very unhappy I chose to move to a supervisory position, describing me as "irreplacable."
[2] This was during the tech boom, when I was frequently being called by "headhunters" to leave my job—a fading memory to all of us who experienced this fervor in The Before Times. It was fascinating to me that even though I had no power over these coworkers, they all easily promised me "not to leave within two years."

to customers so I could understand our tech better. They finally allowed me to take some of these classes when I had been there a few years. Overall, I think learning about your technologies will be easy and fun for me!

Organizing information is one of my domains of highest expertise. Recently, for a huge real estate deal, the client was literally not able to be in the country for the walkthrough of their newly-built home. Since my husband, as the broker, was going to have to sign the papers, I wanted to ensure that the buyer was completely informed about the state of the house, so I took at least 40 photos of small issues with the house that needed to be corrected and recorded them in a document of more than 50 pages. This came very naturally to me, and though the builder was not thrilled about being held accountable, the clients were absolutely ecstatic and loved everything I did.

I'm also used to being very careful about file management, which was the pet peeve of our technical publications manager at National Instruments.

Problem-solving is another one of my most-honed skills. I enjoy making repairs around the house and tend to think outside the box. I enjoy fixing computers and dealing with tech issues. Additionally, I do sewing and jewelry repairs. I also know when I am stumped and need to ask for help.

Communication

Last I checked, the expected response time for emails was 24 hours, which I try very hard to abide by. One communication skill I learned at National Instruments was to modify my communication style to the recipient. For example, our marketing manager did not enjoy using emails, so it was best to try to catch him at his desk. I also learned to moderate my reactions over time to avoid coming across as angry or aggressive while still being assertive and professional. I also consider the position, personality, gender, and other qualities of my listener, to be sensitive and make sure I give a professional and empathetic impression. Perhaps the fact that I'm writing this letter is at least some evidence of my written communication skills.

I have a great story about communication! I was invited to make a presentation to the engineering department at National Instruments (usually about 100 people). My goal was to let the engineers know how to communicate with us. One of the biggest frustrations tech writers face is that the engineers know their products so well, they can't understand why or how anyone could misunderstand the products. Accordingly, they don't explain the products.

The way I chose to communicate our perspective was through humor. Here is an example of what I said:

Writer: (Making a comment on a manual page) "Is this wrong?"

Engineer response: "Yes." (refuses to elaborate.)

At some point, I realized that some in the audience couldn't stop laughing, so perhaps I took it a bit far? A great time was had by all regardless—not just another yawn-worthy presentation, and perhaps it kept my message in the memory longer than a bland request or list of facts and statistics would have.

Style

Rule follower, harmonizer, diligent, enjoy working, empathetic, supportive, polite, amenable, loyal, faithful, perseverant, patient, humble when not writing cover letters or trying to attain work, low-maintenance, independent, good influence on others, fast & accurate from long experience. I'm not a competitive person because I prefer to trust that things will work out well for me as long as I'm trying to align with The Good[3].

I've been in countless meetings with all kinds of staff, working together to make sure products were well-made and shipping on time. It's interesting to see company machinations from a different perspective, and it's always fun to see something huge taking shape that I know I could never have created by myself. Again, having good communication skills really makes this much easier and more enjoyable.

Since deadlines at National Instruments were controlled by engineering, we had little control over them, but I don't remember any technical writer or desktop publisher ever holding up shipping. I don't think I've ever missed a writing deadline ever since I had a commentary column in my college newspaper. Writing comes easily and quickly for me.

Education

One time, I asked my friend who has two PhDs how many hours of college she has. She had fewer than I did (well over 330). So, why do I have only a bachelor's? I'm interested in everything! When Wikipedia was invented, I was worried I might not eat or sleep enough, but fortunately I got used to it existing.

Appearance

Many people have remarked positively on my professional attire. When I was working a tent at a farmer's market for my art business, I was asked whether I "owned a store."

I have only applied to one other job on Indeed, and it was for a tech writing job. (I was thrilled that I got called in for an interview at a state agency merely by filling out a form.) My husband remarked on my appearance that day that I "Kim Wexler'ed[4] them." So yes, I love the office environment and anything business-related, including business attire. In fact, I actually have a subscription to a service from which I rent clothes for work so I won't have to invest in them or dry clean them. I'm in sales (real estate and art), so I must look distinguished and respectable in front of customers.

Service

I think the most important attribute that makes one good at customer service is empathy. Good customer service is a combination of etiquette, empathy, kindness, and knowledge. If you hire me, I'll be loyal, and I'll want your customers to keep choosing your business. I will treat them the way I would want to be treated. Research (which I'm sure you've already heard of) shows that if a customer comes to the company with a problem, the result becomes a scissor issue: If they feel cared for by the company, they become extremely brand loyal, but if not, they then consider the

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[3] Plato.
[4] From "Better Call Saul."

company their enemy, probably forever afterward. Tech support and customer interactions are extremely important.

National Instruments had electrical engineers who designed ASICs in house. One of these engineers was my supervisor for a chip manual update. To this engineer, the most important thing was to avoid time talking to customers. He had written the manual and memorized all the page numbers. Therefore, I was not allowed to change the page breaks!

Why were the page numbers so important? Well, when customers were trying to program these ASICs, they would call National Instruments' tech support if they had a problem. So if the applications engineers couldn't solve the problem, the customer was referred to the product manager. If the product manager couldn't solve the problem, the customer was referred to the department head. If the department head couldn't solve the problem, the customer could finally talk to the actual engineer who designed the chip (my supervisor.)

What answer would he give the customer, after they had spent all that time and effort to gain an audience with him? "Look at page 27," and promptly hang up!

I've always thought this was a heinous[5] way to treat customers. You can count on me to care about customers more than my convenience (or page breaks!)

How I Do What I Do

The most important things to remember when creating procedural content are:

- Let each step contain only one action item—frequently, inexperienced writers will allow a casual, recipe-style set of instructions that cause users to skip important steps simply because not every step has its own numbered paragraph.
- Write from the user's perspective, not your own—don't try to tick off all the features and exhaustively list everything the product does. Think about what the user wants to do and make those the names of the chapters, then explain how to achieve those goals.
- "Eschew surplusage"[6]—This is not an advertisement for the product! They already bought it, so be kind and leave out anything unneeded.
- Adequate illustrations—A picture is worth a thousand dollars' worth of tech support. Well, it's probably worth even more than that.

Past Work

- Writing awards in school
- Published in the Austin Chronicle In Person: David Foster Wallace - Books - The Austin Chronicle
- Electrical engineering textbook which is the content[7] of the first course all electrical engineers must take at UT Austin. The author was Charles H. Roth and the textbook was Fundamentals of Logic Design, 5th Edition[8]. Professor Roth had lost the source for his book (file management!) and the publisher was not happy. Can you imagine what a mess it was to scan in an entire

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[5] He's not reading this so I can finally admit it.

[6] Mark Twain.

[7] The course was self-taught. There were no lectures. Therefore, the book is the course itself and must be perfect, with no errors, to avoid hundreds of students becoming confused.

[8] Fundamentals of Logic Design (with CD-ROM): Roth, Jr. Charles H.: 9780534378042: Amazon.com: Books
https://www.amazon.com/Fundamentals-Logic-Design-CD-ROM-Charles/dp/0534378048

engineering textbook with hundreds of mathematical symbols, superscript/subscripts, technical diagrams, and more, all within the publisher's deadline? It was every bit as nightmarish as it sounds, and at the end, we ran out of time and I ended up creating the index myself. I think the index was very good, because I had just taken the course and edited the book, so I was extremely familiar with the content and its organization.

- Article in the Journal of the Society for Technical Communications—This was an article about contract work, which was a hot topic at that time since the IRS was concerned about it.
- Science textbook for Holt, Rinehart, and Winston—A short job done in the 90s when I had to call the library's reference desk to check facts.
- User manuals, getting started manuals, quick start guides, reference manuals, and more.
- Designed a set of manuals for the brand-new FieldBus product line
- Course manuals for National Instruments.
- Style Guide for National Instruments—I was the style guide editor for most of my time there. I opposed frequent changes, which cause writers and the entire company to have to remember too many rapidly-changing rules.
- Online Help—This seems to have been replaced by short tutorials over the years, but I suppose I still look at online help for some applications I use. I became very familiar with the software used to create these online help files.
- Websites—Various jobs over time, some marketing or SEO related.
- Nonfiction books—I'm a freelance editor and have helped several people edit and publish their books.
- vibebook: a joint venture in documenting a unique experience: Crouch, Pamela D, Bowman, Brooke: 9781735530727: Amazon.com: Books
- Amazon.com: BrokerVision: Practical Wisdom for Real Estate Agents eBook : Crouch, Jason, Crouch, Pamela, Crouch, Aleah: Kindle Store
- Amazon.com: How to Get Started in Homeschooling eBook : Crouch, Pam, Crouch, Jason: Kindle Store

Software Skills

I've really enjoyed improving my illustrator skills! Illustrator has a new AI feature that generates different colorways of your vector graphic based on a prompt. You should try it! My business partner loved the "gnomes in the forest" colorway of our logo. You can see some of these on our website: www.themellowmakeryatx.com.

I also know Photoshop, Indesign, and too much other software to list here, but regardless I'm very tech-savvy and learn new software easily especially if it's well-designed. I've used Word, WordPerfect, FrameMaker, Indesign, XML, and probably more I'm not thinking of.

Current Work

After years of creating things and considering myself a "maker," I'm now calling myself an artist, since I do have an art studio and made more than $10,000 selling my work in 2022. In my studio, I tend to make about $60-$100 per hour of business time. I'm also studying jewelry at ACC. We had to design a pendant within the parameters set by the teacher, and she liked my resulting creation.

You can check out the website and graphics I've created for our art studio at:
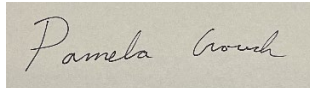
The Mellow Makery ATX

I am a citizen—I was born in Key West.

I have no criminal record and my last traffic ticket was in 2009, the year my mother (a disabled army veteran) died.

I hope you call me for an interview, but even if you don't think I'm right for the job, perhaps you enjoyed reading some of my stories and I managed to brighten your day?

With respect and hope,

Pamela Crouch

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