How To Review Technical Documentation

PNSQC 2013

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Introduction

- Reviewed papers for PNSQC for the past six years

- Goal was to improve the process for reviewing the content

- Paper expanded, changed scope

2007

A Tool to Aid Software Practitioners in Selecting a Best-Fit Project
Methodology

Introduction to Risk Management

Facilitating Effective Retrospectives

2008

Ensuring Software Quality for Large Maintenance Releases

Collaboration between Theorists – Analyze This!

Collaborative Techniques for the Determination of a Best Alternative in a
Software Quality Environment

2009

New Challenges to Quality in the 24x7 Enterprise I.T. Shop

Reconfiguring the Box

Retrospective Analysis and Prioritization Areas for Beta Release Planning
Improvement

Where are You in Usability?

2010

ATDD in Scrum

Software Quality Assurance in the Physical World

User Experience Grading via Kano Categories

2011

Sabotaging Quality

Design For Delight applied to Software Process Improvement

Testing in Production: Enhancing development and test agility in Sandbox
environment

An Introduction to Customer Focused Test Design

2012

Cultural Intelligence: From Buzz Word to Biz Mark

Avoiding Overkill in Manual Regression Testing

Lightweight Software Process Assessment and Improvement

Using Metrics to Drive Customer Satisfaction

The Role of Editing

That's not writing, that's typing.

Truman Capote

The Role of an Editor

- Provides an initial audience

- Verifies communication

- Helps develop ideas

- Acts as a thoughtful critic

The Editing Process

- Content and comprehension

- Style

- Copy

Ground Rules

- Keep it constructive

- Evaluate the writing, not the writer

- Be specific

- Guide the writing process without obstructing the author's voice
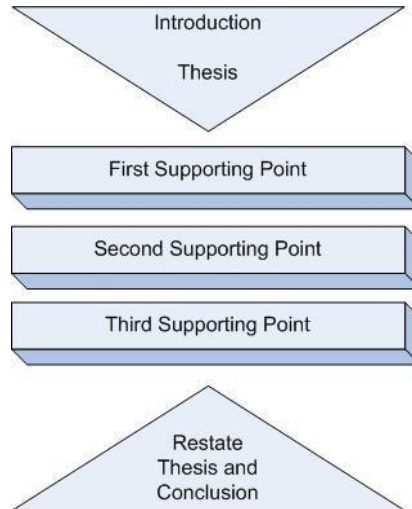
- Establish a dialogue

Editing for Content

Don't get it right, just get it written.

James Thurber

Editing for Content

- Can I understand the paper?

- Will it make sense to the audience?

- Does it flow logically?

- Does it seem complete?

- Do all sections apply to the main topic?

- Is there enough supporting evidence or real-world examples?

General Structure

Outline the Paper

- Write an outline using the rules
  - Parallelism
  - Coordination
  - Subordination
  - Division
- Use your own words
- Focus on the meaning of each paragraph

Check for Scope Creep

1) **Introduction**
2) **Why Write?** ←——————————————————
3) **The editing process**
   a) **Phase One: Content and Comprehension**
      i) Check content
      ii) Check comprehension
   b) **Phase Two: Editing for Style**
      i) What is style? Read Elements of Style by Strunk & White
      ii) Jargon
         (1) Avoid jargon and acronyms
         (2) If you must use it, then define it on the first use.
      iii) Tense - use the same tense
      iv) Use the active voice
      v) Put statements in positive form
      vi) Omit needless words
      vii) Omit junk words: simply, very, others?
      viii) Vary word use and sentence structure
         (1) Keep it interesting
            (a) Experts say technical writers only need 8 types of sentences
            (b) A list of the eight different sentence structures
      ix) The goal is to create sentences that are clear and essential.
      x) Ensure any explicitly required sections are included.
   c) **Phase Three: Final Draft Review**
      i) Check syntax (grammar, spelling, punctuation)
      ii) Give it to a colleague to read as a newbie and see if they find anything.
4) **Conclusion**

Check for Focus

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Check for Missing Sections

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Check for Detail

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      i) What is style? Read Elements of Style by Strunk & White
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Check for Comprehension

- Use the outline to echo back to the author your takeaway

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.

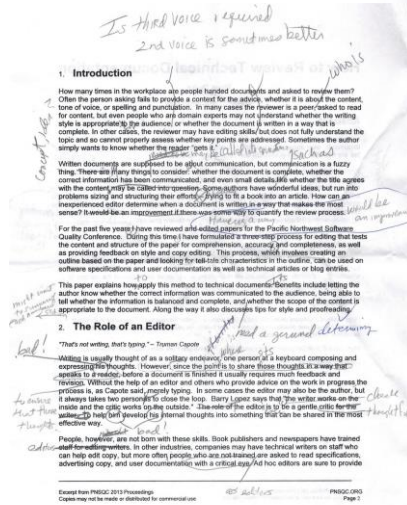George Bernard Shaw

Editing for Style

The difficulty is not to write, but to write what you mean, not to affect your reader, but to affect him precisely as you wish.
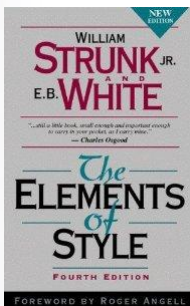
- Robert Louis Stevenson

Editing for Style

Style is...

- Voice
- Audience
- Language
- Consistency
- Flow
- Engagement

Editing for Style

Voice and Audience

- If this sentence were in Chinese, it would say something else.

via Douglas Hofstadter

Voice and Audience

First person:

"Often I copy and paste the article into a different word processor to get a second opinion."

Third person:

"Copying the the article into a different word processor is a way to get a second opinion."

Voice and Audience

- Gauge the level of understanding that the reader brings to the table

- Define acronyms

- Trim jargon

Voice and Audience

- "Test Driven Development (TDD) is a software development process that relies on the repetition of a very short development cycle."

- "Pokémon exception handling" is "when you just gotta catch 'em all, i.e.: all exceptions must be caught."

Clean and Consistent

- Maintain a consistent verb tense

- Use the active voice to make writing more dynamic

- Put statements in positive form.

- Omit needless words

Clean and Consistent

"It is always good to explain the editing process so the author knows there are further steps."

"Prepare the author for further steps."

Clean and Consistent

Substitute 'damn' every time you're inclined to write 'very'; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be.

Mark Twain

Clean and Consistent

- Easier to understand

- More engaging
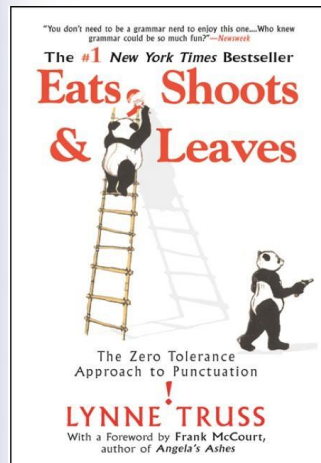
- Gives authority to the writing

Copy Editing

Punctuation Saves Lives:

Let's eat Grandma.

Let's eat, Grandma.

Copy Editing

Copy Editing

Paris in the
the spring

Once in a
a lifeime

Bird in the
the hand

A9 B8 C7 D6 E5 F4 G3 H2 I1

As many as 83% of people will miss the
the error. SHARE THIS when you spot it!

FACEBOOK.COM/SUPERCOPYEDITORS

Copy Editing

- Print the article to see it differently

- Read it aloud

- Try reading the text back to front to remove context and see only grammar

- Give the article to a new audience

- Allow time for multiple passes

Copy Editing

Master Checklist

Document Name_____

Done	Branding
	Check that screen shots that contain version numbers have the current version number 4.1.

Done	Pagination
	Check for correct pagination at the beginning and end of each chapter.
	Spot-check three cross-references per chapter, especially to locations in other chapters. If this is a Word document, then check ALL cross-references.
	Check the first and last page number references for each chapter in the main table of contents.
	Verify that chapters begin on right (odd-numbered) pages.
	Scan placement of page breaks throughout the book. Look for page breaks that leave widows or orphans, and for lists or tables that are separated from their lead-in sentences.
	Other widows and orphans to watch for:
	• Notes separated from the previous paragraph
	• Tables that flow to the next page with less than two rows (not counting the header row)
	• Procedure starting statements separated from procedure steps
	• A single procedure step (a minimum of 2 procedure steps should be together)
	• A single line of a paragraph (want a minimum of two lines)
	Verify that no pages or sections are missing.

Done	Chapter titles, headers, and footers
	Check that the wording of chapter titles matches these locations:
	• In table of contents
	• In right headers
	• In left headers
	• On the first page of the chapter
	Verify footer text is correct in all sections.
	Verify that header and footer lines (if present) line up.
	Check that dot leaders are used consistently in the table of contents.

Lessons Learned

- I hate writing, I love having written.
  Dorothy Parker

Lessons Learned

- Editing is an integral part of the writing process

- Editing is a dialog

- Takes time

- Details matter

- The result is rewarding

References

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