

Course 178: Targeted Technical Writing and I.T. Security Best Practices (3 days)

Course Description...

Technical writing is a component of excellent communication skills that are a critical success factor on every project regardless of project size. The Targeted Technical Writing course is combined with the process of creating a white paper on an important information technology topic: I.T. Security. During the course, the students will identify and apply a formal writing process by researching and writing a white paper on an area of I.T. Security. Students will learn organizational techniques, research methods, methods of analytic development, and reader-focused writing techniques.

Learning Objectives...

- Gather and filter information required to write on a technical topic
- Choose an organizational approach appropriate to the audience
- Convey a message using appropriate words, sentences, and sections
- Analytically apply a method of development to logically present a topic
- Design document layouts that support information processing habits
- Test documents with techniques that eliminate issues before document delivery

Who should attend...

Business Analysts, Requirements Analysts, Project Managers, and anyone with an interest in improving written technical communications.

Prerequisites...

There are no formal prerequisites for this course.

See next page for a detailed course outline...



Course Outline...

Introduction and Overview

- Course Objectives
- Course Chapters
- Writing Failures
- Course Requirements
- Course Approach
- Class Introductions
- Traditional Five Step Writing Process
- Enhanced Five Step Writing Process
- Activity: First Writing Project
- Class Case Study: I.T. Security White Papers

Unit 1: Structured and Organized

- Tasks Within The Writing Process Phases
- Purpose
- Documents That Convey How, What, or Why
- Discussion: Your First Writing Project
- Activity: Second Writing Project
- Activity In Retrospect
- Project Stakeholders
- Audience Analysis
- Five Step Audience Analysis Process
- Discussion: Brainstorm Potential Audiences for an I.T. Security White Paper
- Activity: Refining Purpose and Audience
- Activity In Retrospect
- Purpose and Audience Clarify the Writing
- Ready to Research!
- Research is a Part of the Writing Process
- Interviewing
- Researching: Lather, Rinse, Repeat
- Discussion: Research
- Organize Your Research
- Outlines
- Sticky Notes
- Storyboards
- Mind Maps
- Mind Map Concept
- Instructor Demo: Mind Mapping
- Templates as a Framework
- Template Example
- Preliminary Headings as a Framework
- Organization as a Framework
- Activity: Create a Document Framework for an I.T. Security White Paper
- Activity In Retrospect
- Checklist: Structured and Organized
- Chapter Summary



Unit 2: Message Conveyed

- Tasks Within The Writing Process Phases
- Chapter Objectives
- Deciding How to Communicate Your Message
- Analytic Methods of Development
- Narration
- Narration Example
- Cause and Effect
- Chronological
- Chronological Example
- Compare and Contrast
- Contextual
- Divide and Classify
- Order of Importance (Sequential)
- Problem/Methods/Results
- Problem/Methods/Results/Recommendation
- Spatial
- Discussion: Matching a Method of Development
- Activity: Choose a Method of Development for an I.T. Security White Paper
- Activity In Retrospect
- Words Usage: Not A New Challenge
- Choose Words That Work for Your Readers
- Jargon and Acronyms
- Choosing the Right Word Matters
- What Does Choice of Words Convey?
- Position Matters: Modifiers
- Hyphenate Words for Emphasis and Clarity
- An Incomplete List of Common Word Problems:
When In Doubt, Look It Up!
- Does the Dictionary Definition Win?
- Avoid Common Phrase Redundancies
- Activity: Word Challenge
- Activity In Retrospect
- Reader Recycle
- The One Thought Rule
- Sentence Basics
- Sentence Length and Variety
- Punctuate to Add Emphasis in Sentences
- Avoid Run-On Sentences
- Favor Action Verbs
- Favor Subjects That Perform an Action
- Save Your Sentences from Pronoun Hell
- Sentence Structure Creates a Writing Style
- Research on Nominal Style
- Activity: Generate Meaningful Content for an I.T. Security White Paper
- Activity In Retrospect



- Checklist: Message Conveyed
- Chapter Summary

Unit 3: Aesthetically Designed

- Tasks Within The Writing Process Phases
- Chapter Objectives
- Discussion: Which Item In the Pair is Right?
- It Depends!
- Clipping Creativity or Enhancing Productivity?
- Example of a Style Guide “Rule”
- Style Guides
- Activity: Edit for Style
- Activity In Retrospect
- Document Layout
- Density Test: Which Layout Appeals to You?
- Dense Documents are Difficult to Read
- Layout Creates an Invitation to Read
- White Space
- Text Blocks
- Headings in Technical Documents
- Headings Example
- Font Choices
- Font Styles
- Lists
- Tables
- The Writer and the Graphic
- Is This Graphic a Complete Message?
- Images Help Set the Tone
- Technical Reports With Charts
- Know the Different Image Formats
- Essential Writer’s Tool: Screenshot Software
- Acquiring Graphics
- Screenshots: Legal?
- Activity: Layout Techniques for an I.T. Security White Paper
- Activity In Retrospect
- Checklist: Aesthetically Designed
- Chapter Summary

Unit 4: Reader Focused

- Tasks Within The Writing Process Phases
- Chapter Objectives
- Understanding Technical Readers
- Responsible Writing
- Consider The Journalistic Approach
- Inverted Pyramid Example
- Inverted Pyramid Example (continued)



- Inverted Pyramid Approach Is Reader Focused
- Inverted Pyramid Examples
- Activity: Inverted Pyramid In Action for an I.T. Security White Paper
- Activity In Retrospect
- Readers Expect a Clearly Stated Message
- Clear
- Avoid the Four Types of Ambiguity
- Rewrite to Eliminate Ambiguity
- Concise
- Discussion: Rewrite for Conciseness
- Consistent
- Discussion: Graphics Check
- Correct
- Scannable
- Spell-Checked
- Sufficient
- Suitable
- Activity: Clearly Stated for an I.T. Security White Paper
- Activity In Retrospect
- Message Conveyed
- The Trust Relationship
- The Levels of Edit Concept
- Levels of Edit
- Your Own Levels of Edit
- Activity: Peer Review Edit
- Activity In Retrospect
- Checklist: Reader Focused
- Chapter Summary

Unit 5: Tested!

- Tasks Within The Writing Process Phases
- Chapter Objectives
- Activity: Can You Follow Instructions?
- Activity In Retrospect
- Readability Is Relative
- Document Effectiveness
- Still Concerned About Readability?
- Best Practices for Good Writing
- Document Testing
- Document Testing Can Prevent a Nuclear Scare
- Methods of Testing Documents
- Protocol Testing
- Focus Groups
- Usability Testing
- Control Studies
- Checklist: Tested!



- Activity: Testing an I.T. Security White Paper
- Activity: Presenting an I.T. Security White Paper
- Chapter Summary

Unit 6: Course Summary

- Where Have We Been?
- Course Summary