



# *Advanced technical authoring techniques training course*

## **Introduction**

Our *Advanced technical authoring techniques* training course teaches the key issues that define high quality technical authoring. You write, copy-edit, and proofread technical documents, developing critical skills that will add real value to your authoring. You will increase your ability to create more effective technical documents, and present a consistent and homogenous document set to the users.

The set of 'levels of edit' in this course are based on industry-standard best practice. They form an 'off-the-shelf' complete editorial process for your business.

## **Duration**

Three days.

## **You learn how to ...**

- ▶ Produce clear, effective documents including user manuals, technical reports, tutorials and standard operating procedures, that are easy to read, understand and act upon.
- ▶ Improve the understanding of your documents by structuring information in ways that are helpful to your readers.
- ▶ Use an editing process structured around industry-standard criteria to improve the quality of your technical documents.
- ▶ Decide whether to apply the process in full or in part on: user manuals, online help, technical reports, tutorials and standard operating procedures.
- ▶ Build successful documents from sentences up to the section level.
- ▶ Develop a clear authoring style.
- ▶ Give editorial feedback that helps your team improve their performance.

In addition, as part of the course, delegates are invited to bring a sample of their work to receive editorial feedback on their writing.

## **Who should attend?**

The course is appropriate for technical writers who want to:

- ▶ Improve their skill set.
- ▶ Improve the quality of the user and technical documentation they produce.
- ▶ Understand a structured editing process.

## **Activity-based training**

The course is practical and activity-based. Throughout the course you complete a wide range of exercises designed to illustrate the techniques taught.

## **Courseware and certification**

Delegates receive:

- ▶ Comprehensive courseware and exercise materials to refer to and use throughout the course, and to use as a refresher following the course.
- ▶ Report and user manual templates that incorporate best practice design and structure as taught in the course.
- ▶ A CD containing course exercise materials, checklists and job aids for use back in the workplace.
- ▶ A certificate confirming they have attended and successfully completed the course.

## **After course support**

Delegates are entitled to 30 days email support from Armada to help with any post-training issues.

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## Course outline

### ► Introduction and Overview

### ► Module 1: Basics of Technical Writing

Positioning technical authoring

- Where technical authoring sits on the writing continuum: informative, evaluative, persuasive, expressive
- 3 + 1 ways of analysing your readers
- The reader's situation
- Investigating processes and software
- Reader preferences in technical documents

Quality standards for technical authoring

- Content and structure
- Correctness
- Business standards
- Document integrity
- Readability

The technical authoring process

- Managing, planning, drafting and revision

### ► Module 2: The Prewriting Step

Audience Analysis

- Audience types
- Communication styles

What is scope

### ► Module 3: Creating Effective Content and Structure

Effective content

- Getting and checking the right information
- Technical quality assurance and peer reviews

Structuring your document

- Creating reader-focused headings
- Accurately representing the content in your Executive Summary
- Structuring your material in a logical and consistent manner
- Giving equal weight to parallel concepts
- Making subordinate ideas logically subordinate
- Reflecting topic importance in heading levels

Creating cohesion

- Handling repetition and redundancy
- Transitions that work
- Sentence structure
- Sections that work
- Providing relevant background information
- Creating a Glossary

Explaining clearly

- Using style to connect with your reader
- Types of explanation
- Signalling with your writing

Varieties of technical documents

- Types of tutorial
- Standard operating procedures
- Requirements
- Report
- User manuals
- Introductions and conclusions

### ► Module 4: Clarity in Technical Writing

How to improve clarity

Recognising the three key grammar issues that affect technical writing

Avoiding false elegance and ambiguity

Meeting your readers' needs: using English to communicate clearly

Writing styles: how to choose a style

### ► Module 5: Consistency and Correctness

Typographical errors

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Spelling forms
- Hyphenation
- Homonyms and homophones
- Numbering Capitalisation
- Grammatical errors
- Concise language
- Incorrect terminology

Understanding proof reading and copy editing

Copy editing

- How to mark corrections
- Using proof correction symbols
- How to read corrections

### ► **Module 6: Applying Business Standards to Technical Documentation**

Company style guides

- Required document elements: cover and title page, spine information, credit statements, contents, abstract, half title page, page numbers, consistent headings in your contents, front and back matter
- References to other documents
- Document metrics (ISO9000, etc.)
- Page layout and content follow corporate standards
- Correct project or organisation naming conventions
- Marking document tracking information on documents
- Specifying publication information (copyright, access, etc.)
- Disclaimers

Style sheets and templates

In-house corporate standards and document control

Using editorial reference guides

### ► **Module 7: Checking Document Integrity**

Table of contents and page numbering

Numbering pages

Sequences correctly numbered or lettered

Checking headings, keeping heading unique, reference between headings

Maintaining consistency across your document set

Checking for missing or mislabelled graphics

References, notes, and appendices

Formatting

Checking the typographic specification: body, heading, specialised notes, emphasis, design, non-text elements type specifications, leading and column width

Position of type for cover, major breaks, typical page grid

Indentation and justification practices

Layout: page orientation, lists, widows and orphans, positioning for page elements

### ► **Module 8: Building Readability**

Comprehension: can the reader understand what is stated?

Clarity

- Making your writing clear and readable
- Avoiding ambiguity
- Mapping information to the needs of the reader
- Focusing sentences to communicate to the reader: putting the reader first, using different types of sentence
- Making your writing more concrete: using verb and noun filters, four key grammar problems in technical authoring

Grammar

- Subject-verb agreement
- Complete sentences
- Missing information
- Unreadable text
- Grammar and syntax
- Usage
- Creating cohesion terms: redundancy and transitions
- Using parallel construction: sentences, tables and lists, headings

Word use

### ► **Module 9: Editing and Writing With Others**

Planning and estimating

Attending planning meetings

Maintaining contact with SMEs and authors

Editing excellence

- How to structure your editing time
- Editing at different stages in the writing process
- Using the levels of edit

Providing positive editorial feedback

- Working productively with your documentation team
- The myth of 'constructive criticism'
- Targeting the right area
- Taking yourself out of the equation
- Communication styles: dealing with people as they are, looking for positive motivation in a potentially negative situation
- Communicating effective criticism in a supportive manner