Managing Writers: A Real World Guide to Managing Technical Documentation

Managing writers can be difficult at best. Therefore, a guide on how to "successfully manage documentation, people, projects, and technology" is very welcome. *Managing Writers: A Real World Guide to Managing Technical Documentation* is for "…anyone, regardless of title, who manages technical documentation projects or people." Divided into four major parts, including "Getting Started," "Managing People," "Managing Projects, and "Managing Technology," the author explains using a semi-formal tone how to manage technical documentation using based on his experiences as a documentation manager.

Each of the four parts is subdivided into smaller parts, all of which are included in the Table of Contents page for easy navigation. Part One, "Getting Started," discusses what comprises technical writing, including the product, audience, task, deliverables, etc., as well as a section called "Power and Influence." Part Two, "Managing People," discusses working with Human Resources, hiring, motivating employees, managing change, and employee performance evaluations. Part Three, "Managing Projects," delves into development methodologies, project planning, tracking, measurement and metrics, localization, and single sourcing. Part Four, "Managing Technology," discusses using and acquiring technology, building business cases, XML, using the internet, managing content, and avoiding common pitfalls.

Of these chapters, Chapter Eight on "Employee Performance Evaluation" was especially useful. In this chapter, the author describes the process of performance evaluation as well as how to avoid some of the common pitfalls, including employee misunderstanding of his or her review. This information is especially instructive for those who have little to no experience in dealing with performance reviews as well as those with more experience but who want to brush up on their skills. Additionally, he explains the rationale of rankings and reviews, not all of them positive, but all of it very relevant to understanding the workplace and management.

While many of the chapters were accessible to those from varying backgrounds, Chapter 18 on XML Technology was a little dense for those unused to XML, whether DITA or DocBook, not really explaining what a markup language was nor why it would be useful to documentation managers. Also, at the end of the book, the author provides a Documentation Plan Template with explanations for the various parts. However, while the descriptions are indeed helpful to those unfamiliar with creating documentation plans, it leaves one wishing for more of a concrete example.

This book provides a plethora of information to those wishing to learn more about documentation management. It covers a wide range of information on documentation management, great for a quick read-through or a reference source on the topic, especially as the Table of Contents makes it easy to find your sub-topic of interest. While it can get too technical

at times for those not used to the technology side of management, it is a good resource for those interested in learning how to be a documentation manager, regardless of their current position.

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