

For a high-tech aviation manufacturer, clearly written proposals, white papers, and technical documents are imperative for business success. A customized onsite writing course from Hurley Write gave engineers and designers the necessary skills to improve communications.

Background

As an international leader in the design, manufacture, and service of aircraft, this high-tech aviation organization employs a host of experts. Engineers, designers, technicians, and a variety of other positions rely on clear communication among departments and all levels of management to achieve business objectives in a timely, secure, and accurate manner.

Challenge

For this aviation manufacturer, writing challenges were present in both internal and external communications. Robin Casper is a lead designer and draftsman for a flight controls engineering team. Casper's position requires him to gather feedback about problems with the company's systems, interact with the shops to help mechanics resolve issues, and respond to supervisors' concerns. But with an audience that comprises mechanics, engineers, and management, Casper often ran into a challenge that had nothing to do with aircraft design: Creating communications that speak clearly to all readers.

Outward-facing documents are important for the aviation manufacturer, too. Cherry Cwalina, an engineer, writes responses to proposals for the company's programs. "Clear writing is essential to my position because our proposal is the first impression our customer receives. Writing in a succinct, precise, and straightforward fashion is not only valuable, but also a key ingredient in making those proposals successful." Like most people in her field, though, Cwalina's expertise lay in mathematical and engineering concepts, not writing. "Writing in a clear and concise matter, without the fluff, was my challenge," she says.

Solution

An onsite technical writing course by Hurley Write, Inc., a certified women-owned business, gave these professionals the skills to address multiple audiences and undertake challenging revisions. Pam Hurley, Ph.D., founder of Hurley Write, developed a custom workshop for the aviation manufacturer using employee-submitted samples to guide the course. Cwalina was eager to improve her technical writing skills. "I was open-minded about learning anything that would help," she says. Still, she adds, "I wasn't sure what to expect in the two-day class. But it's empowering to be equipped with the right tools to do the job — and that's what Hurley Write offers." Cwalina was pleased to discover that the course used actual documents from her company to demonstrate the concepts taught in the class. This approach gave her a concrete way to understand how she could apply the skills she was learning to her specific writing projects.

The course exceeded Casper's expectations as well. "The writing workshop was actually fun!" he says. "The atmosphere promoted learning and encouraged participation. And the writing instructor was outstanding: She kept everyone involved and made the workshop enjoyable."

Result

Hurley Write's course left participants with a broader understanding of how to produce successful technical documents. The customized features, like revising internal documents, also helped participants fine-tune their own writing processes. Casper learned the importance of personal review and revision. Now, rather than submitting an early draft, Casper lets his documents sit for a night before rereading and revising them. "After taking the workshop, I'm more confident in my abilities. Now, I am not submitting the first draft of anything I write," he says. "My writing is to the point and geared for the appropriate audience. I believe my writing is clearer and more thought-out."

The course was an eye-opening experience for Cwalina, too. "The Hurley Write course equipped me with techniques, strategies, and different styles of writing," she says. Cwalina learned how to create clearer content, create audience and purpose rubrics, and modify length and complexity for maximum benefit. She points out that the most important thing she learned from the course is that writing stellar technical content is 80% planning and only 20% writing. Now, Cwalina says, "I am writing with my audience in mind at all times. And reading and writing more have become a standard practice to overcome some of my hurdles."

"After taking the workshop, I'm more confident in my abilities. Now, I am not submitting the first draft of anything I write. My writing is to the point and geared for the appropriate audience. I believe my writing is clearer and more thought out."

Robin Casper
Lead designer and draftsman

"The Hurley Write course equipped me with techniques, strategies, and different styles of writing."

Cherry Cwalina
Engineer

Key Benefits

Enhanced ability to write technical content that appeals to a variety of audiences

Personal attention and constructive feedback

Customized course materials

Improved clarity of technical documents

Development of a dependable and repeatable writing process