ATD Virtual Series
Unconference Guidelines & Template

PLEASE MAKE A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT, THANK YOU!

Unconference discussions go in parallel for **30 minutes**.

The organizers of the Virtual Series expect each group to **go back to Slack with a short memo** on their findings because they'd like to include these in their event recaps. You can post a copy of this template as a memo.

Recommendations:

- Before starting the discussion, **agree on a facilitator** who makes sure that everyone is heard, people get value out of the conversation, and the topic is not hijacked.
- **Select a note taker** as well, so you can have the memo ready by the end of the discussion.

Roles:

Facilitator:
Note taker: Michele Marques
Topic: Technical writers and Devlopers collaborating on API doc

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Notes:

- A team manages a developer portal, with only a couple of technical writers. Would it work to require developers to create their own content and apply certain standards?
  - You can do that in a tactful way
  - Leah: I found that you have to come to a happy medium. For example, come up with templates, with brackets for what you want developers to fill in. Without the templates, lots of interventions were needed for creating good documentation. They might not have the time or the knowledge to provide good documentation.
  - Tom: I like that idea, as engineers often have the knowledge, but don't know how to approach it.
  - Leah: I haven't seen any documentation templates
  - Tom: Reference docs are easy, but the tutorials are hard, because people don't know where to start. Perhaps there are some templates in https://thegooddocsproject.dev/
  - Kristof: Part of it depends on the power you have. The two approaches are the template approach and the forms approach. In the forms approach, you must submit for it to be validated.
  - Tom: There's also a cultural shift. I become an editor instead of an individual contributor. But to scale, you can't do it all on your own. This path seems inevitable.

- Leah: With a data steward, you have a team responsible for the quality of the data. With templates, it shifts the writer into a content management role. There's not as much needed for the technical to understand all the details of the API.
- Joan: I sometimes think of myself as a teacher. When I started as a developer, the developers did a lot of their own writing. Now I'm a technical writer, and feel that I'm helping the developers document the things that only they understand. I gave them a list of goals, such as getting tool tips into the UX, create documentation readme files from a template (they can even create their own templates). The attitude is what you have to work with. Not everything should go to tech pubs.
- Tom: If your title is "Technical Writer," then anything that should be written tends to go to you.
- Kristoff: It's more like a QA role than purely a writer role.
- Leah: I call myself a Software Integration Engineer. What does the end user expect and need? Writing the questions for developers to fill in. What do the application developers need? That's why I'm an advocate of common data libraries, because it has all that description that you can pull in. I went from Web Developer to API technical writer, API architect, … various other roles. I say that I "anticipate the human experience"
- Tom: With templates, and editing, that implies a collaborative doc space. What are people using?

- Leah: paper.dropbox.com - It's very similar to Google Docs with role-based access, templates
- Joan: We use Confluence and SharePoint. We use Drupal and Smart Docs, but that is challenging.
  - Michele: We use Confluence for our customer-facing documentation and have Python scripts to convert JSON.
  - Kristoff: Visual Studio, but more for writing and less collaborative

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- Kristoff - Smart Docs is not very good. [Didn't catch his suggestions]
- Writing in the dev portal vs out of the dev portal
- Rostisl… : Use whatever makes the developer happy. At least when you start, to encourage developers to collaborate and to provide content. Anything from ASCII doc, Confluence, PDFs.
- What about working in engineering's CMS, like Github?
  - Joan: The problem is that everyone does things differently, so it's possible to mess up their development branch inadvertently.
- If we're playing an editor role, and it's very hard to understand, what's your process for reviewing it? How do you make sure it's accurate?
  - Joan: You have to test the API. Documentation has to be tested to be accurate.
  - Tom: If you have a C++ API, it can be hard to test.
  - Leah: A process I find good is to interview customers on their implementation, and use your notes to come up with the documentation. Come up with some way for your team to approve what you come up with.
  - Joan: Ask a tester to test the doc.
  - Leah: Give them a timeline to get back to you on feedbaack
  - Michele: You can also have a meeting with people who aren't otherwise finding time for review

- - - ■ Joan: Have focused meetings on specific aspects with only the appropriate people to review that part
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  - ○ Switch to talking about Corona and how it affects business, what is the impact of Corona on API devportal visits?