The Write Plan, LLC Newsletter

- A Technical Writing Solutions Company

The Five Percent Rule and Do You Believe Your Client?

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What's New …

Inside This Issue

Tax Time!!!

How much does the federal government collect in taxes?

In 2011 the federal government collected $2.3 trillion in taxes.

Of that $1.1 trillion was in individual income taxes, $200.8 billion in corporate taxes, $741.2 billion in payroll taxes, $268.7 in other taxes, and $9.6 billion in estate and gift taxes.

Happy Networking!

Chad

"The NetworKING of Pittsburgh"

About Us

To encourage and promote the growth and success of other business owners. We offer the benefits of years of experience creating the solutions to the problems that are often roadblocks on the path to success.

Instead of enjoying their professions, many business owners are feeling overworked and understaffed. **The Write Plan, LLC** can help you reclaim your original vision by offering friendly, collaborative assistance on large and small projects.

NEED HELP PROMOTING A NETWORKING EVENT?
If your event would be of interest to entrepreneurs and small business owners please submit your event information for inclusion on the monthly networking events calendar by clicking here.

HAVING TROUBLE TELLING OTHERS YOUR BUSINESS EXISTS?
If you would like **over 3,465** other businesses to find your business monthly, why not advertise within this newsletter.

HOW DO I SIGN-UP TO RECEIVE MY OWN COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER?
If you are looking to receive your very own copy of this newsletter each and every month please submit the form on our webpage http://www.thewriteplanllc.com/Monthly_Newsletter.html

FEEDBACK, QUESTIONS, OR COMMENTS?
Please submit feedback, questions, or comments on the Request Form webpage http://www.thewriteplanllc.com/Request__Form.html

GUESTBOOK
Tell us what you think of our services, newsletter and networking calendar by clicking here.

I sometimes have a hard time getting started with my engagements. Even with a project plan, in my kind of custom jobs there is a lot of prep work to assemble people, diagnose the situation, create and vet solutions, all before getting to deliver the final work product. It sometimes seems like I am doing all the work at the end, redoing early tasks in new ways. Is this common?

I suspect many consultants, early in their careers, had issues with time and project management. However, even the best trained consultants can get caught on complex projects and face the circumstances you describe. What seemed like a good approach didn't work out so well. The survey plan didn't return acceptable data. The recommended design didn't fly with the client staff as well you expected, nor as well as with every other of your clients.

Here's something you can do to reduce the likelihood of "getting behind the power curve" on your custom projects. Take a period of time equal to no more than five percent of the project life. While you are assembling your team, doing preliminary diagnostics and developing a relationship with your client, finish the project. If you are staring a ten week project, set aside two days to go from kickoff meeting to final deliverable.

By "finish the project," I mean proceed through all the steps of the project: diagnostics, data gathering, analysis, training, design, facilitation, focus groups, and client briefings. The whole thing, generating draft deliverables for every task. Of course, you will be missing a lot of information, but you are sharp enough to come up with a good guess of the scope, sequence and content of each task as it feeds into the next. Lay out the agenda for a facilitated session, design the training program, "evaluate" the results of a survey, and prepare the final client briefing. You bet there will be holes but you will be amazed by the insights you get. Better now than nine weeks from now.

Tip: This exercise is more than project or contingency planning or a "thought experiment." It forces you through each step and to be accountable for the outcomes of individual tasks. It works really well with a team project, where all can critique each work task, and make the theoretical real. Once you are done, you might even run this by the client, showing him or her the probable work products along the way, albeit highly incomplete. You may get feedback you'd rather hear now than in ten weeks.

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I am just finishing up an engagement where the scope grew significantly beyond what was initially specified. I think I managed this well but attribute the scope creep to my client sponsor not giving me a true picture of the company's circumstances. How can I reduce the likelihood this will happen again?

We initially take on faith a prospect's assessment of their need and their expectation of the scope of our services and project outcomes. If this is additional work for an existing client, then your due diligence is relatively easy. If this is a potential new client, then before you sign an engagement letter, it is your responsibility to conduct your due diligence. IMC's Code of Ethics says that "Before accepting any engagement, I will ensure that I have worked with my clients to establish a mutual understanding of the objectives, scope, work plan, and fee arrangements." We are obliged to fully understand, from our own knowledge, not just the assertions of the client, of what the engagement is about.

Clients, even the most perceptive and experienced, present the issues as they see them. Experienced consultants know that the presenting issue is rarely the core issue and that there is often more than "just one issue." Our job is to size up the true issues before we agree on a work plan.

Tip: We always learn as the engagement proceeds, but we need to take the time to investigate the client's company, market and current issues before we sign the engagement letter. Pay for a research report, talk to your colleagues, and ask to talk to client staff.

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