

A live custom webinar series from Hurley Write helped engineers at consultant firm AESC sharpen their writing skills.

Background

Alternative Energy Systems Consulting, Inc. (AESC) is an energy engineering and management consulting firm. As a premier provider of high quality technical and management services for the energy industry, its staff of mechanical, electrical, environmental, and software engineers maintains a broad-based technical proficiency in state-of-the-art energy systems. AESC has four California-based offices in Concord, Pasadena, Carlsbad, and San Diego.

Challenge

AESC must communicate its results, designs, and recommendations clearly. The company's customers include utilities, government agencies, large energy users, and other organizations that deploy demand-side management and renewable energy technologies. AESC's analysis, results, and recommendations can influence decisions affecting multi-million dollar investments. Furthermore, some of AESC's documents may be subject to regulatory auditing depending on the customer and project.

The challenge of meeting these technical writing demands was compounded by the diversity of AESC's audience. Many documents must include complete data for a technical audience and be understandable for nontechnical readers such as those in management or accounting. Although the engineers' technical expertise is without question, some lacked the tools to develop concise, clear, and easily understood documents for a broad audience. Engineering managers are responsible for quality control of outgoing documents. Under this system, editing and fact checking were time-consuming, and the results were not always optimal.

Solution

Hurley Write specializes in providing customized writing courses to large corporations and small businesses that empower their employees to write with skill and confidence. AESC's management decided it was time to partner with Hurley Write to improve and sharpen the company's technical writing skills. Because repeating a course at each of AESC's four locations would be expensive and impractical, Pam Hurley, Ph.D., president of Hurley Write, designed a custom live webinar. "The live webinar seemed a lot more personal and feedback-friendly than the prerecorded modules, and Hurley Write agreed to custom-tailor the modules to examples that I provided," says Mike Casey, an engineering manager for AESC.

Hurley Write analyzed the work samples Casey provided and developed a custom webinar with six modules. Each module used AESC examples to cover a specific aspect of writing. AESC staff members were able to ask questions and participate in discussions. Hurley Write also reviewed participants' writing both before and after the webinar series to assess improvement and provide specific feedback.

Result

Since using Hurley Write to improve its engineers' technical writing abilities, AESC has seen company-wide improvements in the clarity and success of external written communications. For Casey, Hurley Write's webinar was an eye-opener. "I learned that there are a lot of aspects of good writing and editing that I already knew or should have known but had fallen out of practice in using," he says. "It's a good idea always to keep these basic fundamentals in mind when writing." Now, he's applying the skills that he learned in the class not only to his own writing, but also to his quality-control and editing work on the writing of the engineers he manages. "My writing has become clearer and more polished," Casey says, "and I think it will continue to improve as I use the things that I have learned in the webinar. I have also noticed significant improvement in our other engineers' writing."

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Engineering Manager for AESC

Key Benefits

Customized online program to train staff in multiple locations

Individualized attention and constructive feedback given to each participating member

Clearer and more concise written communications that appeal to a broad audience

Improved technical writing and editing abilities company-wide