What others think we do

- Why it matters and how to set them straight

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION UK

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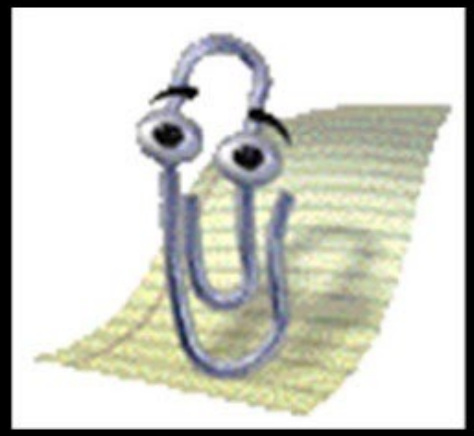
Technical Writer

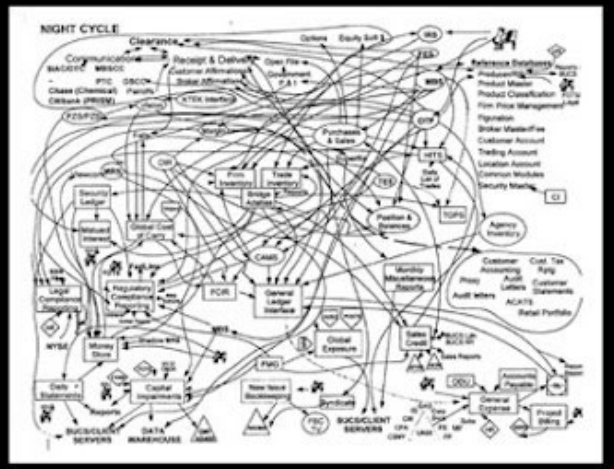
What my family thinks I do.



What society thinks I do.

What recruiters think I do.

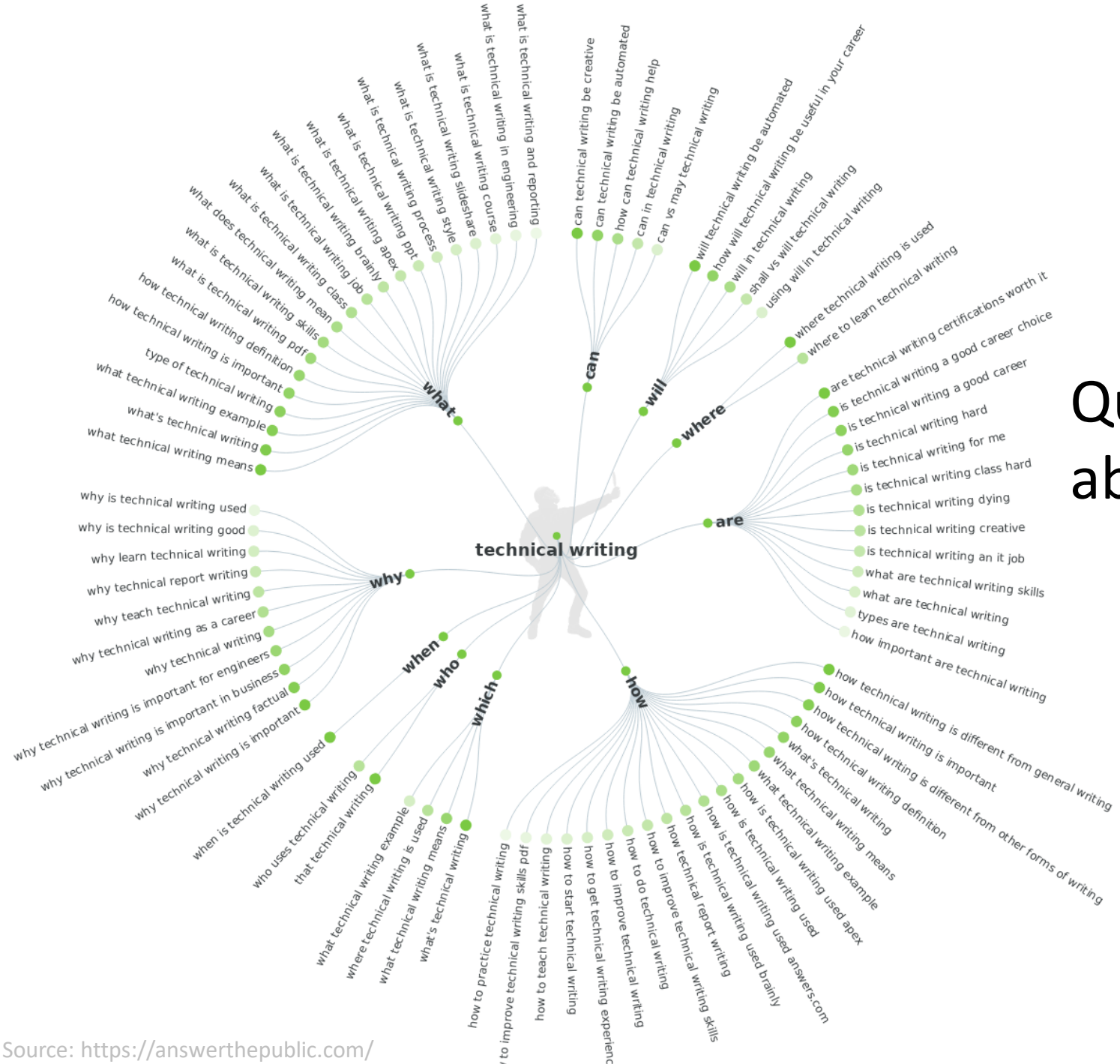
What developers think I do.



What I think I do.

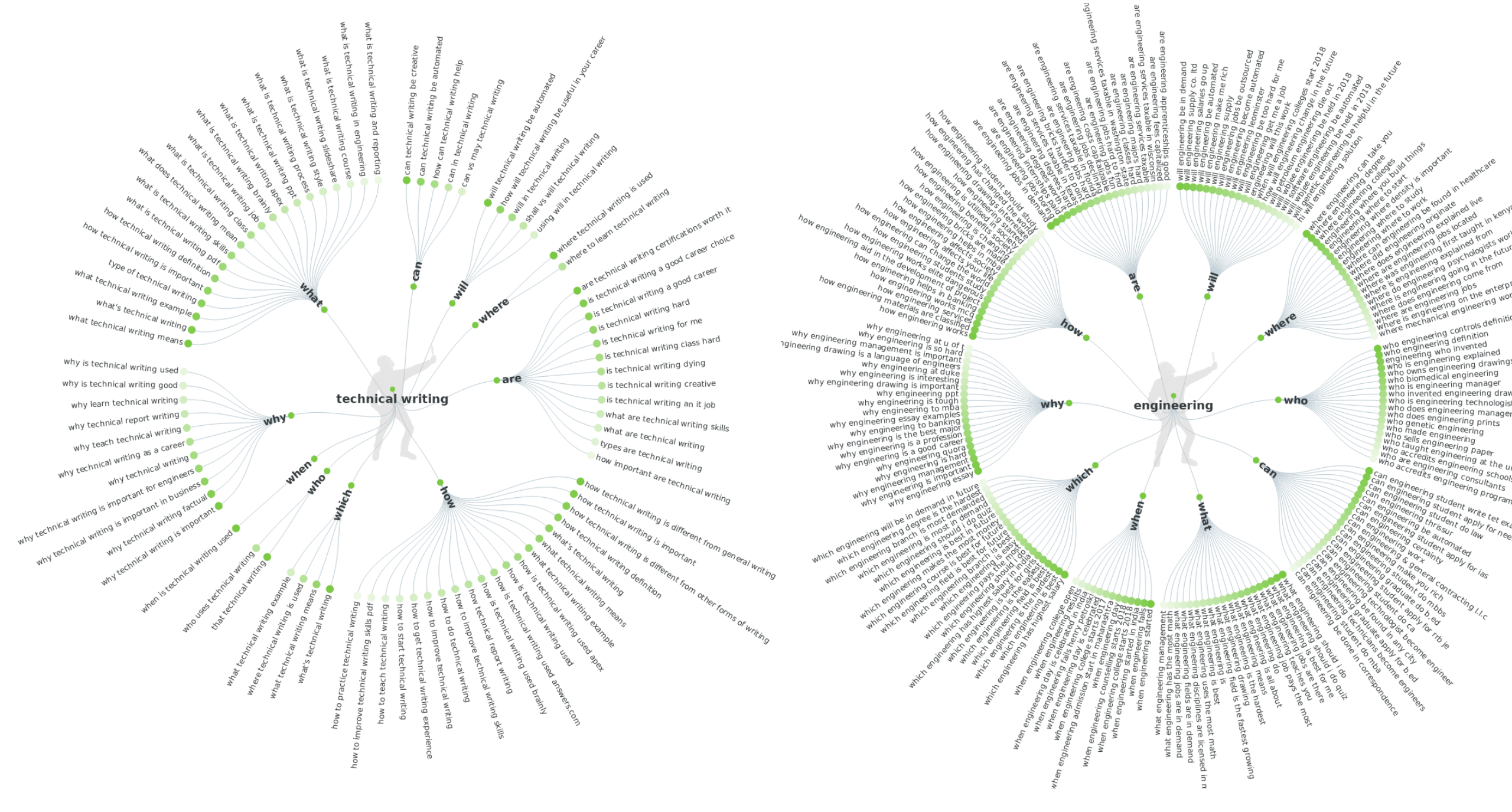
What I actually do.

Illustration credit: Mike Laundry, https://idratherbewriting.com/2012/03/02/technical-communication-metrics-what-should-you-track/



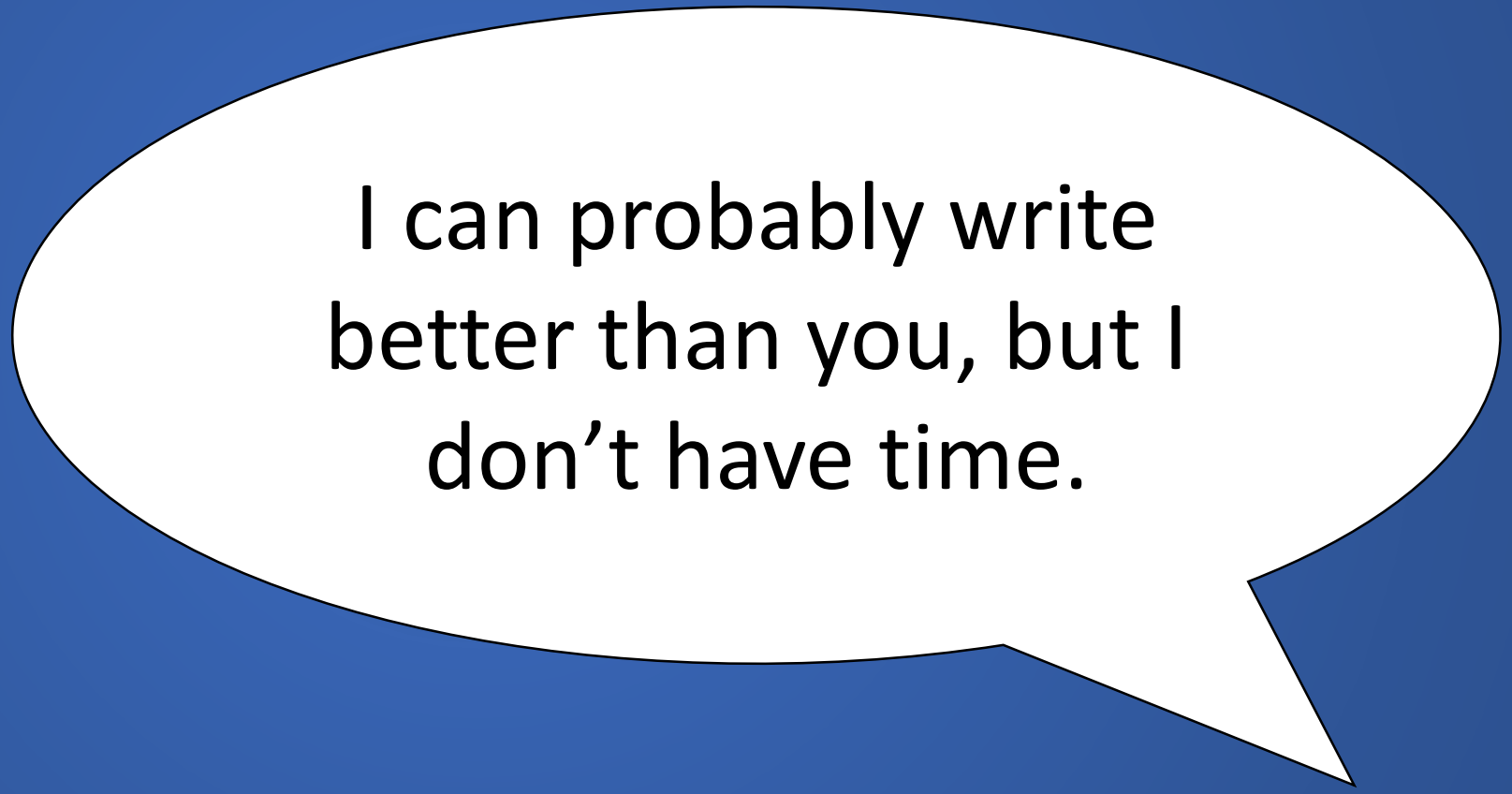
Questions to Bing and Google about technical writing

Source: https://answerthepublic.com/



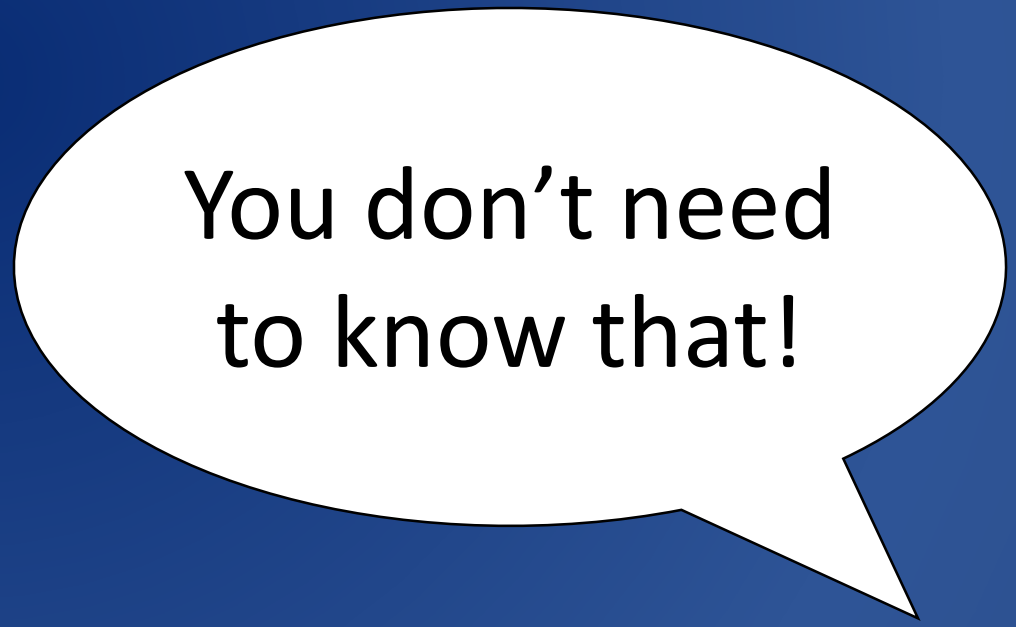
Source: https://answerthepublic.com/

Don’t worry about accuracy.
Just clean it up and make it
look pretty!


I can probably write better than you, but I don’t have time.

Why do you need
a use case?

What you’re doing
is techie writing.
That’s something
with PDFs


You don’t need
to know that!

The problem with you is that you want to understand what you're writing about.

Don’t care what others think!

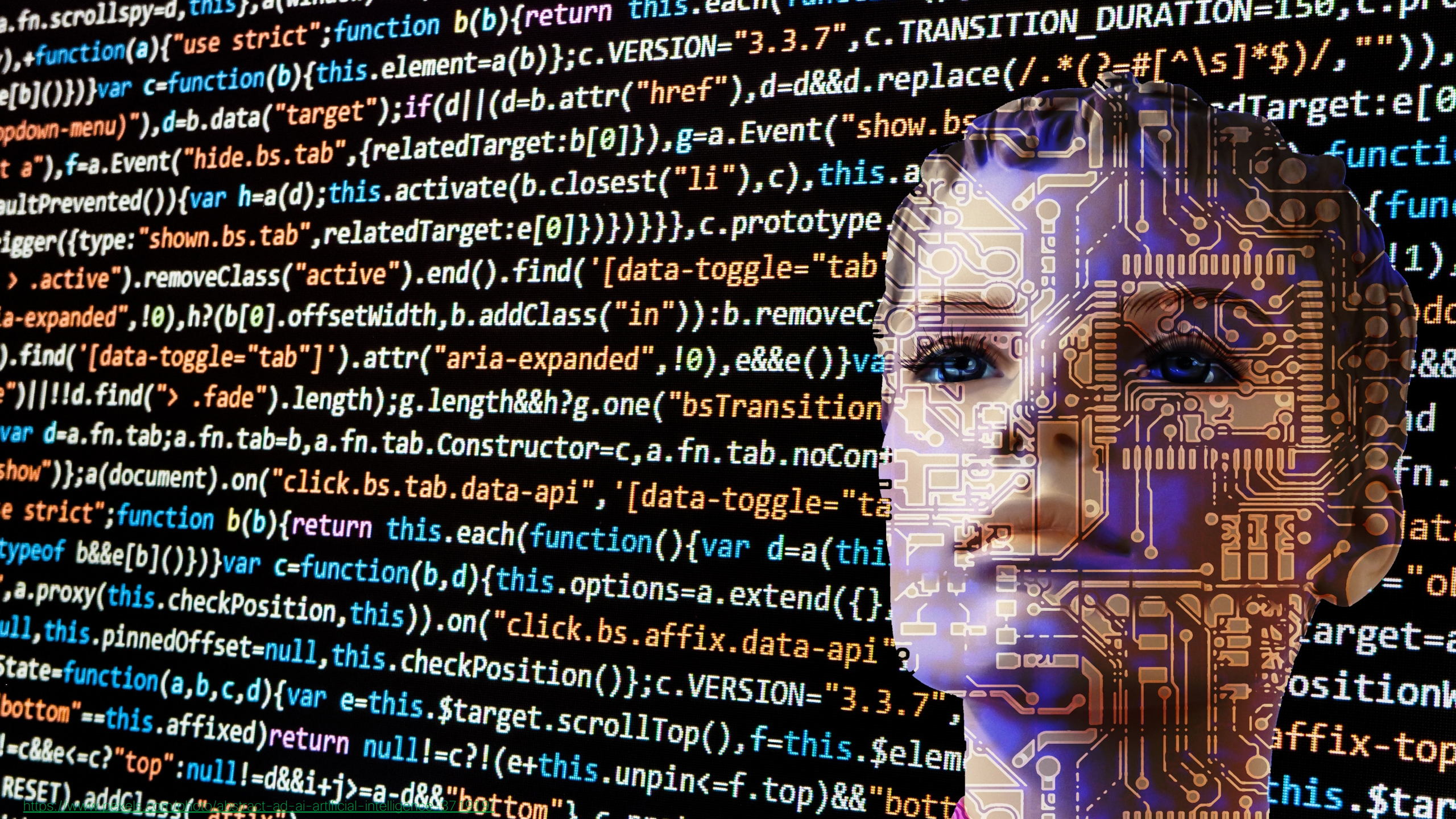
Illustration credit: Matt Brown, https://www.flickr.com/photos/londonmatt/15850166839/

Don’t care what others think!

Illustration credit: Matt Brown, https://www.flickr.com/photos/londonmatt/15850166839/

Why should you care?

https://pixabay.com/photos/typewriter-secretary-write-machine-3641865/



https://www.pexels.com/photo/abstract-ad-ai-artificial-intelligence-3719191

https://pixabay.com/photos/beach-feet-summer-sand-sea-2400382/

What developers
think I do.

https://pixabay.com/photos/document-agreement-documents-sign-428331/

If people misunderstand your role,
you will not get optimal work conditions

You are only as good as your team!

Do you want to cope?

https://dilbert.com/strip/2007-11-27

Some mistakes I have made

https://www.flickr.com/photos/radarxlove/2099803730

⊗ I thought that it didn’t matter what others think

⊗ I expected too much from others

⊗ I was not aware of the cultural codes

⊗ I did not assert myself as a specialist

⊗ I thought we’re all working towards the same goal

⊗ I forgot that understanding and prioritizing aren’t the same thing

⊗ I followed advice that didn’t suit me

What you think you (should) do

- What is the main purpose of your work?
- What are the required tasks?
- What are your deliverables?
- What resources do you need?
- What do you need from others?

What you really do

- Do you perform tasks that are not supporting your main purpose?
- Are you doing other people's work?
- Are you you affected by lack of resources?

What others think you do

- What do others think your purpose is?
- What tasks do others think you should do?
- How important do they think your work is?
- How do they feel that your work relates to theirs?

Communicating to your managers and colleagues is *not* the same as communicating to users!

The key is audience analysis – the intention is different

Users

- Want or need to use your product
- Want to be successful using the product
- Don’t need to know about your role

Others at work

- Want or need to work with you
- Want to be successful
- Have success criteria that may not align with yours
- May need to know what you need and why
- May misunderstand your role

How to know what they think

- Ask
- Give them a questionnaire
- Ask about something else and note the replies
- Note what they say in concrete situations
- Note who they listen to

Create your game plan

- Which changes would improve your work the most?
- Which changes are more easy to make?

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Think about how you go about it

- Show, don’t tell
- Align your goals with theirs
- Be persistent

Takeaways

- *Do* care what others think. It affects your own work.
- Use different methods to find out what they think.
- Be authentic and build on your strengths.
- Know your weaknesses. Improve on relevant areas.
- Think about what you can gain by changing others' perception.
- Be realistic when you create your game plan.
- Be kind

Please keep in touch

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