



“Mind the Gap”

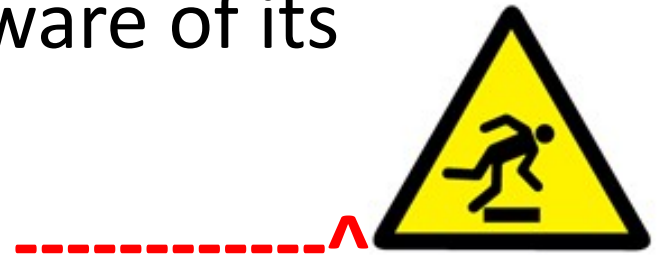
The Client Need vs. The Client Request

Marilyn Woelk

Greetings!

Today I am here to challenge what you know, and also to reinforce it!

You may navigate well in the tech com world, but there is something that can “trip you up,” and you might not be fully aware of its existence.



Be mindful of where you step! There's a gap!

And So It Begins...

As technical communicators you are frequently asked to develop communications that provide information, train for specific skills, provide a streamlined customer experience, and/or generate a high percentage of satisfied customers.

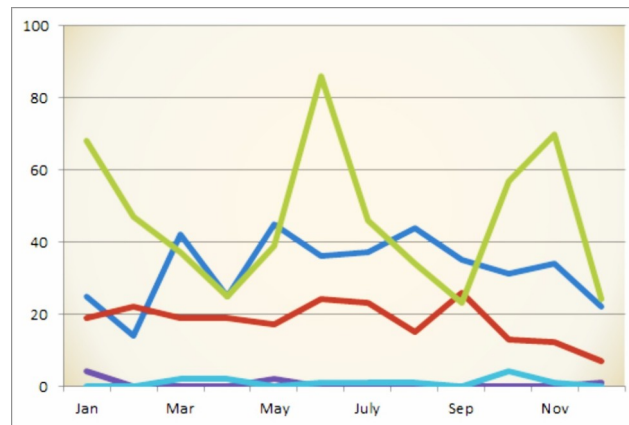
This is good, and this is bad.

Why?



The Business “Platform”

- Businesses are in business to make money.
- Your salary is possible because of this.
- Imparting knowledge or skills to an audience may or may not affect the “bottom line” of a company.



R.O.I. or just I?

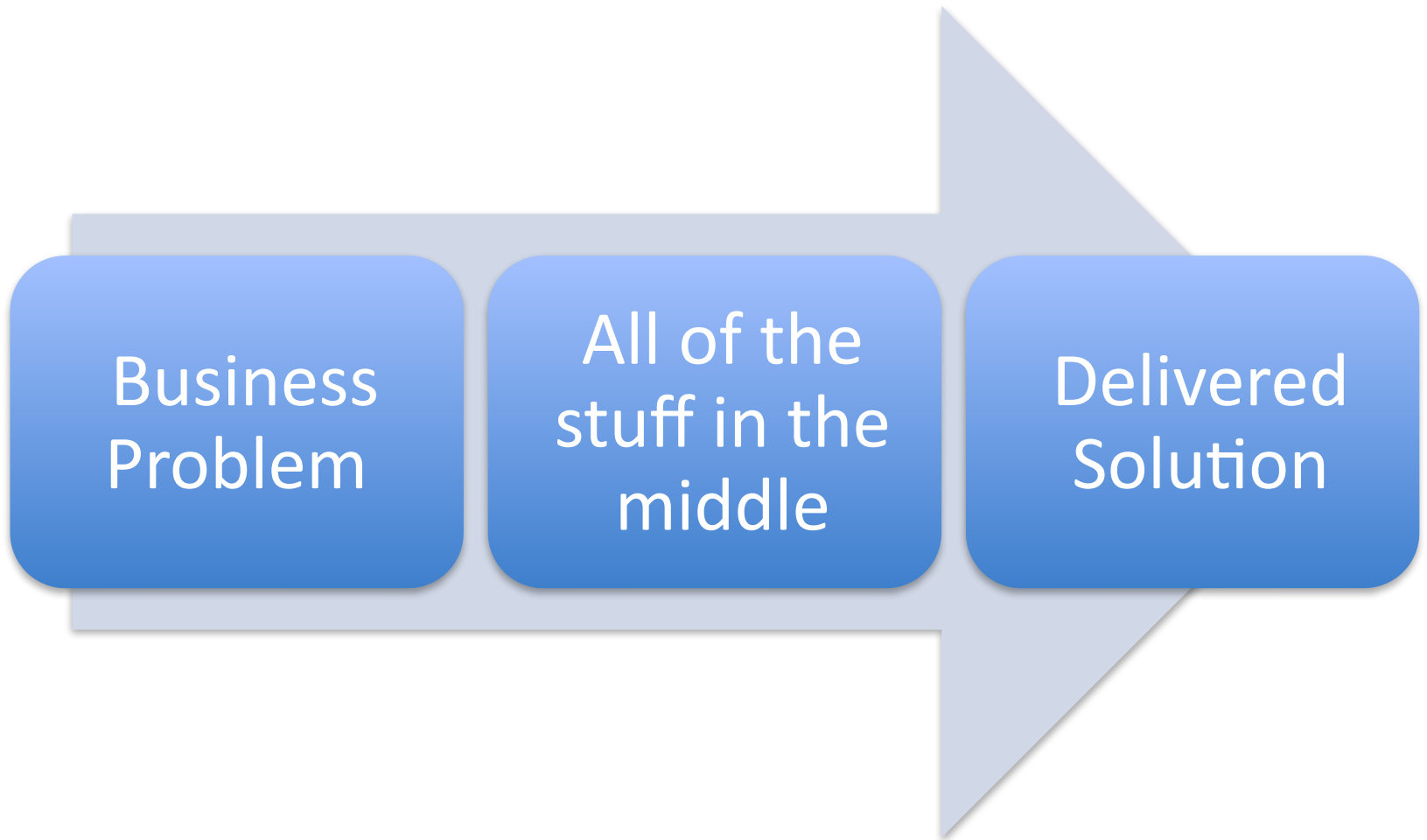
If you satisfy your intended audience, but fail to accomplish the business goals for your communication, you might have created a revenue loss.

(You got paid, right?)



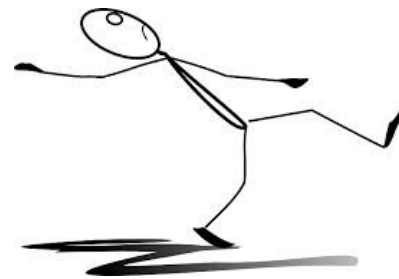
Did the “R.O.” get swallowed by “the gap?”

Project Continuum



The Gap Where You Can “Lose Your Footing”

- Communications deliverables solve a business problem.
- Managers and consultants usually analyze a business problem and determine what type of solution is needed...but they don't implement the solution.



Solutions

- Communicators implement the solution (such as training or documentation), but are often not given access to the original problem definition.



Satisfaction or Solution?

- Communicators are given a project plan and told to implement it based on an initial definition of customer needs.
- This may or may not solve the originally-defined business problem. (Result = A beautiful, informative money pit?)

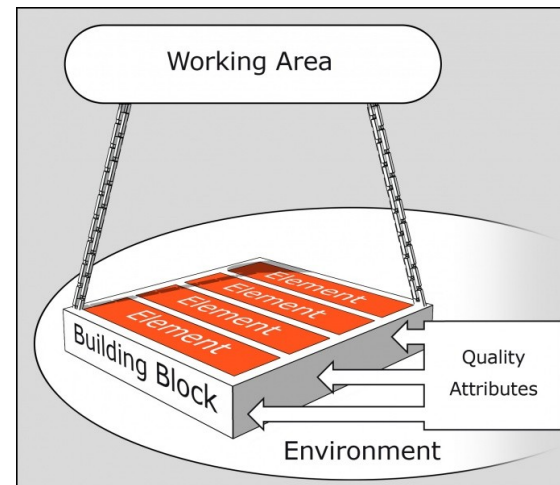
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- Be a profit center by being a solutions builder!

Analyze, Build, Inform!

- Is the original assessment adequate?
- Is the assessment right, and the delivery solution wrong?
- Is the delivery solution right, but the information wrong?



Gap Avoidance

- For each project/assignment, determine the business problem that the communication in question is trying to solve.
- Assess whether there are other more cost effective, better ways to reach the intended audience.
- Determine whether the information being delivered is the right information.

Gap Avoidance (cont.)

- Suggest design or deliverable modifications if necessary, or suggest additional research and analysis.
- Define the audience(s) need(s). If there is more than one audience, determine whether the deliverable will meet the needs of all audiences, or if variations are needed.

Information as Solution-Building Material



We can revise or create multiple deliverables using the same chunks of information, but... aside from creating the potential for perpetuating inaccurate (wrong) information, this can also create the potential for “not defining right information.” Is it a science experiment gone right, or gone wrong?

Exceptions to the Gap

- Product Launch



- Business Start-up



- Innovations
(New Service Offerings)



Be Brave!

- The right level of “push back” can create measurable success to help your “stock” rise.
- *You might save the company some revenue so that they can afford to give you a raise!*
- If you are a consultant/contractor, you may prove your worth to your clients, and gain more contracts!

Travel the Continuum

*“Mind the Gap” and
you’ll go places!*

Contact



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