How to build a community of tech writers in your country

User guide

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Explore Poland

"Today the awareness of technical communication as a field of knowledge
 is growing, and here, in Poland, it's growing faster than ever."

- Michał Skowron and Jakub Wisniewski for I'd rather be writing

This section provides an insight into techwriting community in Poland and discusses:

- **Content events**

- **Tech comm training** and education

- **Job market**

(source: unsplash.com)

Techwriter.pl as the cradle of the Polish tech comm scene

In Poland, there has long been a portal for IT software testers, Testerzy.pl. However, there wasn't any source of information for people involved in the broadly defined technical communication industry.

In 2013, a group of tech comm passionates decided to set up a blog for the Polish tech writers, Techwriter.pl. With its ups and downs, it has become the most reliable resource for local industry professionals and enthusiasts. Apart from information about Poland and the world, it provides:

- job offers

- interviews

- lots of training materials

- interesting articles

- salary surveys

For more details about the origins of Techwriter.pl and its contributors read the article by Tom Johnson: The Untold Story of Techwriter.pl.

Content events

(source: unsplash.com)

Poland's range of the industry conferences and meetings have been a mainstay of the local calendar since 2013. The meetings, supported by online outreach and social media, bring together local tech comm enthusiasts, allowing them to gain knowledge and share experiences.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, meetings and conferences have moved online or have been rescheduled.

Soap! conference

(Photo by: soap)

One of the largest content conferences in Poland is Soap!. Coincidentally, the first soap! conference took place the same year as the inauguration of the Techwriter.pl portal. Over time, Techwriter.pl has become a soap! conference partner. Reach out the soap! social media platform on facebook to keep up to date.

Meet Content

(Map of Poland)

Meet Content or meet-up events connect the industry professionals on a local level. Through local meetings, a network of people who've been in the same or similar field expands. They share experiences, learn from each other, improve themselves. These meetings are popular in Cracow, Wroclaw, and Gdansk.

Online activities

With the development of technology, many things happen online. Although you can associate the online environment mostly with written activities, today's reality has revealed the potential of live online events and remote work. High interaction of people on the web encourages the formation of industry sub-groups. The Polish tech comm passionates have also gone viral.

Social media

After the Techwriter.pl portal was created, over time the team decided to set up social media platforms for ongoing communication. The sites are growing in popularity thanks to the interest of more and more followers:

Linkedin

Twitter

Below you can check content-related online groups which show a high level of commitment from their members:

Madcap Flare users group

Documentation practices-related Polish group created by Techwriter.pl team

Tech Writer codes?

A recently created initiative is a podcast, Tech Writer koduje [eng, Tech Writer codes]. It's in the Polish native language and addresses aspects that make the work of tech writers easier. Podcasting is very convenient as you can do various things while listening to it.

The online groups can be your starting point in a community development. It's costs-effective and easy to organize. However, it's more difficult to keep members active. The examples presented above illustrate that many activities are possible when committed enthusiasts team up.
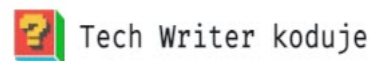
Tech Writer koduje

Tech comm training

(source: unsplash.com)

In this section, you can find out how tech writers acquire skills that let them get a job. As tech writing is constantly evolving, not many people realize what, in fact, this profession is.

Technical Communication postgraduate studies

For those interested in entering the profession, the first thing that draws attention is the lack of full-time courses available for tech writers. Therefore, a group of tech comm experts from Poland teamed up to meet the business demand for content creators.

Attempts to start a postgraduate university course have been made several times in the past few years, but without success. However, in 2020 the team didn't give up even despite the ongoing pandemic. For the first time, tech comm studies have become available online at the Vistula University in Warsaw.

A group of students from all over Poland has formed to acquire skills that help in getting a job as a tech writer. The experts from the tech comm industry in Poland took the role of lecturers. Thanks to the support of partners, students have had the opportunity to use specialized tools used in the design and publication of technical content.

The partners include:

- Techwriter.pl

- Madcap Software

- Atlassian

- ITCQF

- TechSmith

- Syncro Soft

- MemoQ

- Dredar

It is challenging to open a new field of study. Cooperation with the university means :

- fulfilling legal and educational requirements

- preparing the syllabus

- precise objectives

- predetermined schedule

As you can notice, studies or courses offering full-time preparation for the profession are very promising for the future.

Go global with ITCQF

(Photo by ITCQF)

Software testers can get certified with ISTQB, so do tech writers with ITCQF, International Technical Communication Qualifications Foundation. This certificate can increase the employment opportunities on the job market worldwide.

The Vistula studies curriculum includes practical preparation for the ITCQF Foundation Level certificate. It means that the Tech Comm graduates can take the exam after solid training. Integrating ITCQF preparation into postgraduate studies is a real opportunity to learn a lot in a short period of time.

E-learning platforms

The undeniable benefit of e-learning is access to courses from anywhere and at any time.

From the business point of view, online training is economical and scalable. Accessible to everyone without secondary costs for travel expenses or course materials. In this way, the Polish tech writers practice as well.

Although the courses don't offer an official degree, they avoid workbook theories and provide on-the-job practices. While most are payable, you can take advantage of frequent promotions or free trial periods.

The popular platforms are:

- Udemy

- Coursera

- Skillshare

- Linkedin learning

YouTube channels

YouTube includes features that let brands promote videos to the interested audience. The videos are easy to share via social media and embed in other portals. What's more, the audience can view, comment on, like, and subscribe, which enhances interaction and popularity.

The **Soap! conference** has gone the way of the YouTube channel, making available materials from the previous editions to everyone. The videos are in the form of playlists that play one by one automatically. The varied topics, webinars and presentations are a reliable source of knowledge for tech writing newbies, practitioners, professionals, and enthusiasts.

Similarly, the Write the Docs global community has organized its YouTube channel content in the form of playlists. Each one is a compilation of videos from a particular event. Find a subject that interests you, watch it for free, whenever and wherever you like.

Job market

(source: unsplash.com)

There are more and more job offers for tech writers, content developers, or users assistance. Although the job title varies from company to company, it still refers to a person who converts difficult specialized knowledge into the language of the end-user. Due to an apparent lack of proper training, many tech writers have entered the profession on the job.

This section will give you an insight into the Polish job market aspect.

Degree or not degree

The prestige of a university degree shortens the recruitment path considerably. For busy and time-limited HR departments, this is a valuable factor. Due to the lack of official training in Poland, people have entered the industry through different routes.

With a good command of English, as the primary language of communication, copywriters, teachers, or translators can enter the world of IT and new technologies. In most companies in Poland, this is the case. As non-technicals, they can better understand the needs of the end-user.

On the other hand, IT testers, analysts, or product engineers can also be comfortable writing. But what counts are the soft skills, which sometimes determine who gets a job and who doesn't.

The key to enter a profession is to acquire a set of skills crucial to the company. It doesn't matter where. It's important to know the basics well enough to get the job.

Salary

An issue that is of interest to everyone is salaries. A decisive factor in determining salary is the category in which the employee works. There is a wide variety of sources describing salaries for given positions. The data is collected through survey analysis.

The last report of January 2021: Wynagrodzenia.pl provides the average market salary for a technical communication specialist at different levels: junior specialist, specialist, and senior specialist. The comparison you can find in the table below.

Level	Average gross per month
junior	896.94 EUR
specialist	1125.02 EUR
senior specialist	1342,13 EUR

(Table 1: salaries)

Surveys conducted every year illustrate how the salaries in a given industry change, whether increase or decrease. It may give you an insight into what salary range you can expect.

The Techwriter.pl team has been doing its salary survey since 2017 to investigate what it looks like in practice. You can check the 2021 survey under this link: survey 2021.

The survey is conducted in Polish, anonymously, in the form of a questionnaire. The results will appear on the portal at the end of June.
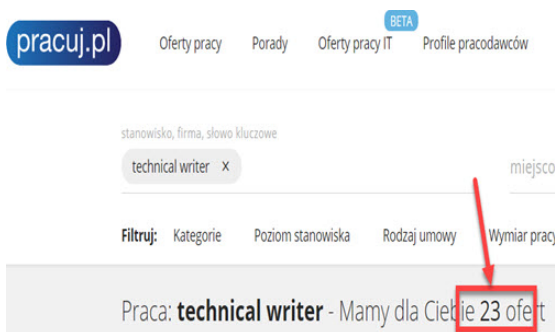
Job offers

The number of job offers for tech writers is increasing. It's difficult to say how many job offers appear in total per month.

A simple search on Linkedin for March, 2021 showed 129 results across Poland.
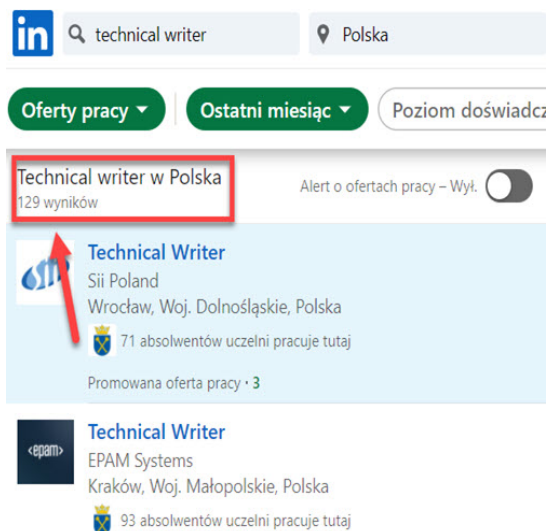
(Source: Linkedin)

While a portal for job seekers, pracuj.pl showed 23 offers in April 2021.

(Source: Pracuj.pl)

Business demand is high. Perhaps the group of Technical Communication graduates soon finds a new workplace.

Techwriting community building

Ground floor (source: unsplash.com)

Your journey through this guide leads you now into the section of community development from scratch. If you followed the story of Poland carefully, you would learn that it is not money that leads to success, but rather effort and commitment.

Start

I floor (source: unsplash.com)

Communities of practitioners operate dynamically. They require feeding to grow and thrive.

Make a move

All starts with an idea and a vision of a person who wants to turn this idea into reality. You can certainly call him a leader or a moderator. As the leader, you can:

- identify the purpose
- identify the target audience and its needs
- plan further activity and grow

Team up

You will quickly realize that one person is not enough, but two is a team. The next step is to identify and engage practice volunteers that share the same interests. People need to feel that

the time and effort they invest in the process is for a specific purpose. Then, teamwork brings benefits, joy, and self-development. Let your purpose become the team's mission.

Select tools

With the right people nearby, you can think of tools. If you lack a space specifically for industry professionals, you can create it. It's not difficult to start blogging. With the help of free tools on the internet, you are sure to find suitable support.

Get a name, write up simple content

Think who your community is for, what can bring value to your target audience. It can help you to create a name or a logo for your blog. Then comes the time to write. For a good start, choose something simple. You can state who you are and what you are doing. Think of industry-related things, good practices, interesting reference materials, local jargon. Support your ideas visually.

Manage and moderate
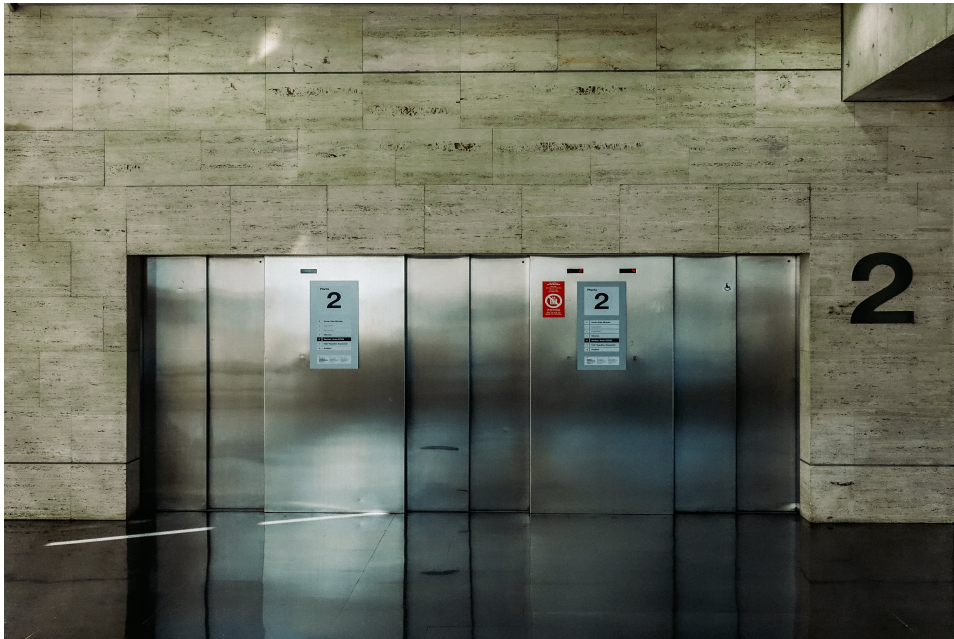
II floor (source: unsplash.com)

Plan

From the moment of the official release, plan your further sustainable development. Don't stop at the blog only. Make use of existing social media. Facebook or Twitter are channels that reach a lot of people.

Push and pull

Use the Git operating model, push and pull dynamics:

1. push your message through channels and get people interested

2. pull - engage as many practitioners that sustain the mission and spread the message, people appreciate your commitment

Persist and **rely on your team**

People, groups, communities have also weaker moments. Techwriter.pl team experienced this first-hand. The path below illustrates what they went through from the very beginning:
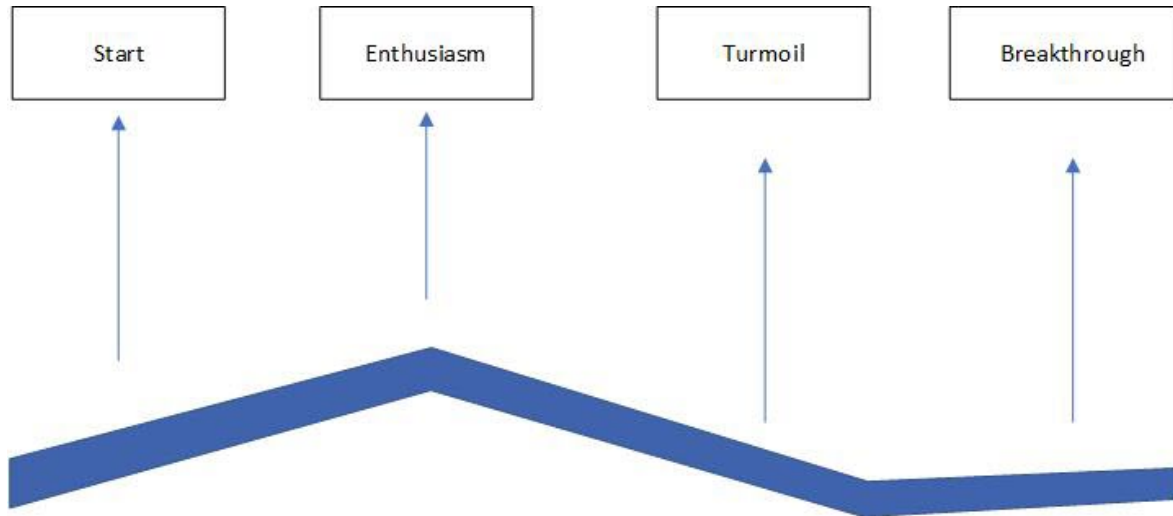
(Chart: stages)

Having reached a moment of **Turmoil**, the leader was about to resign. However, the team members didn't. They shared the duties and continued the stated mission. It worked. 7 years on the market, around 500 various articles released in Polish, being active in the tech comm scene had a direct impact on sustainability, and personal career development.

Progress

Having overcome difficulties, go on. Think of content that people find interesting. This may include:

- publishing job offers at no costs
- knowledge resources
- interviews with other experts
- information about doc events

The biggest reward is being noticed. This allows to partner with conferences or large companies. With a rich CV, it's easier to get a job not only in the country but also abroad.

Engage and scale-up

III floor (source: unsplash.com)

Reach stability

Over time regular contribution leads to the point of stability. There is still a lot to do, but you need to maintain the servers and the domain. Money is needed. You may find it rewarding to collaborate with companies. Charging the small fee for job offers publication will let you cover your maintenance costs.

Define KPI's

Website management allows you to define metrics such as:

- number of site, article views per week, month, and year

- number of comments

- active followers

On this basis, you can collect feedback, prepare reports, statistics, surveys, and publish them.

Keep moving

The branches of the IT world are wide enough to easily reach people of similar professions in the country and abroad, programmers, testers, analysts. Shared issues can contribute to the search for new solutions, tools, and automation.

Visit the **Frequently Asked Questions** section to find solutions to your doubts.

Frequently Asked Questions

(source: shutterstock.com)

I still don't know how to get started

Start with identifying your purpose and target audience, just as in the case of starting a documentation project. Find your team that gives you support.

I need a collaborative space

Do the research what's missing in your country. Create a website. There're plenty of free tools for creating websites.

I don't have any experience with web pages and social media

With an unlimited access to documentation of the tools on the Internet you will acquire new skills and improve your knowledge.

What am I supposed write on?

Do the research. You can create persona of your target audience. You can create content depending on the needs of your target audience. Write about tools, good practices, resources. You push the message through.

I started, but I don't see any progress

Go further. Make use of social media - linkedin, twitter, facebook. You can spot a new channel in your country that is developing very fast and brings together a lot of people. Go viral. Publish job offers for free. Inform about the doc events.

I am developing, but there is more and more work and questions. How to manage?

Rely on your team. You're not alone. Exchange ideas, share responsibilities, appreciate team-work. Don't force to do anything, do it with a passion.

I have no profit from it

You gain valuable experience which helps you establish important contacts with professionals, companies, conferences. It adds value to your CV.