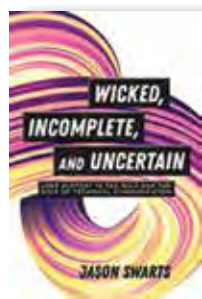


Wicked, Incomplete, and Uncertain: User Support in the Wild and the Role of Technical Communication

Jason Swartz. 2018. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press. [ISBN 978-1-60732-761-5. 164 pages, including index. US\$24.95 (softcover).]



If you're a technical communicator engaged in user support, you'll want to grab a copy of Jason Swartz's *Wicked, Incomplete, and Uncertain: User Support in the Wild and the Role of Technical Communication*. This seminal book addresses perhaps the most important point for us today: "changes in technologies and our

relationships to them are creating new demands for knowledge that are challenging our practices of knowledge creation achieved through traditional technical communication genres....these demands are also opening up opportunities to redistribute the work of technical communication and reveal opportunities for new kinds of knowledge creation that technical communicators are perfectly able to deliver" (p. 5).

Wicked, Incomplete, and Uncertain hits on precisely the change that many of us face: the evolution away from set pieces of knowledge (often manuals) honed by technical communicators to up-to-the-minute information shared by communities of users seeking answers to problems unanticipated by product developers, with, seemingly, a lack of input by professional documenters.

Swartz labels problems stemming from a community-based approach "wicked" in their making it difficult to plan. In practice, the process of discovering helpful answers to the problems must be recursive and involve non-experts. Not surprisingly, the middle chapters focus on the workings of user forums to generate knowledge.

The concluding chapter, "The Role of Technical Communication," is uplifting in its turn away from the darkness of uncertainty to the many ways that we can thrive. Swartz's prose becomes more vigorous as he shows how we can use our familiarity with common users' tasks to engage individual users, guide communities in creating useful knowledge, and coordinate the work of diverse groups. We are the people who can bring to bear skills in rhetoric, negotiation, workflow management, problem solving,

facilitation of interpersonal communication, and the structuring and interpretation of information.

Swartz has written extensively in the past on our relationships with technology. One of his several awards for best article or book, for example, is the STC Frank R. Smith Distinguished Article Award for his 2012 *Technical Communication* article on using video in help systems. *Wicked, Incomplete, and Uncertain* is his deepest and most satisfying probe into the shift that we technical communicators are facing, the many devils in its details, and the immense opportunities that we can enjoy.

Avon J. Murphy

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What Are Your Blind Spots? Conquering the 5 Misconceptions that Hold Leaders Back

Jim Haudan and Rich Berens. 2018. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education. [ISBN 978-1-260-12923-6. 162 pages, including index. US\$24.00.]



I love how *What Are Your Blind Spots? Conquering the 5 Misconceptions that Hold Leaders Back* dives straight into Simon Sinek's "Start with the Why" to kick off the first biggest misconception, Purpose. An exercise takes you through creating a purpose statement for your company,

suggesting you invite a few people to collaborate. After discovering your organization's purpose, the exercise leads you into creating your own personal purpose. The process of discovering your purpose is a powerful leadership tool that we use in many of our classes when training our high potentials to get to the next level. Establishing that meaningful connection is an effective way to drive confidence and empower associates and leaders to become more motivated.

The next blind-spot, Story, opens your eyes to the misconception that your company has a compelling story to tell. I've often found in creating an eLearning