Fluff Hunt

Removing useless content

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Seven types of fluff
- Conclusion and discussion

The only good fluff is whipped cream!
Intro: What is fluff?

…and why does it matter?
What is *fluff*?

- **Overwriting:**
  - unnecessary words
  - complicated vocabulary
  - overly formal writing
  - saying something in 20 words when you can say it in 5!

- **Unnecessary content:**
  - incorrect repetition
  - multiple methods
  - info that isn’t relevant

“Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah...”
What is the problem with fluff?

- **Internal costs:**
  - € $ to maintain
  - € $ to translate

- **External costs (think Jakob Nielsen):**
  - users can’t find information
  - they don’t understand it
  - they call tech support or give up

- No one wants to read your manuals!
So why are we so fluffy?

- You have been rewarded for being wordy.
- You have been praised for being pompous.
- It is difficult to write short, simple, clear text.

I would have written a shorter letter, but I did not have the time.

~ Mark Twain
Fluff is everywhere!

USE OF THE TOILET FLUSH

This symbol corresponds to a little volume of drained water

This symbol corresponds to a large volume of drained water

Select your volume of water to be drained off by pushing one of the 2 flush controls.

It is quite important to select the correct volume of water to be drained off, to optimize the toilet flush.

Building & Facilities department
TrachScan 1000 Motility Visualization System dramatically expedites and simplifies clinical procedures and yields rapid, accurate reports of a higher caliber and significantly more verifiable data.

The 28 closely-spaced sensors automatically capture all relevant motor function from the pharynx to the stomach, thus eliminating the need for precise sphincter localization, which in turn means that a highly-specialized technician with extensive training is not required for the procedure. An automated protocol function with built-in calibration in the self-contained and supplied probe allows users to move through a procedure in logical intuitive steps. The system collects reliable and consistent data records with improved diagnostic accuracy. These records may be efficiently analyzed on the system or remotely by the medical specialists (for example, the nurse or physician), using the TrachView analytic software.
There is some good news!

● There is a solution for almost every fluff problem!

● You can train yourself to recognize fluff if you are:
  - tired of fluff
  - willing to let go of old habits
  - ready to help your users

● Are you ready?
Seven Types of Fluff

Fluff can hide in plain sight!
Just a few common types…

1. Extra words
2. Pompous or formal writing
3. Repetition
4. Waffling
5. Modifier madness
6. Unnecessary detail
7. Describing, not showing
1. Extra Words

- Bloated phrases:
  - at all times
  - as a consequence of
  - if conditions are such that
  - in order to

- Redundant expressions:
  - armed gunman
  - anonymous stranger
  - alternative choice
  - basic necessities

- Solution: Reduce multiword expressions to single words.
2. Pompous Writing

- Overly formal, stilted, unnatural tone is *not* more professional.
- Often accompanied by passive voice and complex vocabulary:

  As per our previous dialogue, the aforementioned samples have been submitted for analysis to the appropriate departmental group. Once specific causes of said functional failures have been determined, we will endeavor to communicate with you.

  We sent the samples to our lab for testing. We will contact you as soon as they have identified the problem.

- Solution: Write the way you would speak.
3. Repetition

- Repetition is not always bad. You need it when:
  - the content is critical for a workflow
  - serious hazard
  - major convenience

- Look out for wordy repetition.

Estimated annual cost of food for a small dog (under 6 kg) is €130. Estimated annual cost of food for a medium-sized dog (7–15 kg) is about €150. Estimated annual cost of food for a large dog (over 15 kg) is €180–240, and can be even higher for giant breeds (dogs over 50 kg).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Annual Dog Food Cost (in € Euros)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small (&lt; 6 kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Solution 1: Do they need it now?
- Solution 2: Build into visual structure.
4. Waffling

- SMEs love all the different ways to do things.
- Users don’t!
  - increased stress
  - higher risk of failure

Solution: Find the main way and offload others to tips and reference topics.
5. Modifier Madness

- Vague modifiers are fluff:
  - *some*, *more*, *larger*, *smaller*, *gently*, *soon*, etc.

- You may know what you meant, but not the user!

In some cases, very large files may not upload properly.

In network connections with bandwidth less than 3 Mbps, files larger than 20 MB may fail to upload.

- Solution: If you can’t quantify a modifier, delete it.
6. Unnecessary Detail

- SMEs think something is interesting.
- Content may have been intended for a different audience.
- Content may be needed at different time.

- Solution: Create a “junk drawer” reference topic.
7. Describing, Not Showing

- Are you painting word pictures?
- Pictures don’t replace all text, but they can **reduce** text.

3. Massage a small amount (about 1 tsp) of Bag Balm to the pastern (from fetlock to hoof). Wipe off excess with a clean soft cloth.

4. Place the sensor on the right hind leg. To orient the sensor properly, locate the arrow embossed on the blue box. Turn the sensor bracelet around until the arrow points up. With the arrow facing up, place the sensor bracelet above the hoof and below the fetlock.

- Solution: Show physical actions (attaching, removing, etc.).
Review

1. Extra words
2. Pompous or formal writing
3. Repetition
4. Waffling
5. Modifier madness
6. Unnecessary detail
7. Describing, not showing
8. Do you have one to share?
Discussion

We want your feedback! Smartphone or tablet at http://ta18.honestly.de or scan the QR code.

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