

Lean for efficient communication

– making communication both profitable and sustainable

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On today's agenda

I will

- present a general problem for plain language consultants
- suggest a solution to the problem by introducing the five-step model.

The problem

Problem: plain language work focuses too much on short-term gain

- Plain language work is mostly performed as a selected measure.
- Plain language work often comes in at the end of text production instead of being integrated from the beginning.
- Plain language and communication work is rarely a part of business development.
- Plain language is seldom sustainable in the long term.

The solution

Solution: The five-step model

Step 1

- Think long-term (sustainability)

Step 2

- Map

Step 3

- Eliminate waste

Step 4

- Respect and motivate employees and partners

Step 5

- Work with continuous improvements and learning

Step 1: Think long-term

Integrate sustainability in the organisation.

Prioritize long-term gains before short-term profits.

Without long-term thinking, there is no lean!

Example, step 1

Ensuring sustainable plain language training by involving top management.

– All key positions must take part in the training!

Step 2: Map

Make a thorough analysis of the communication, including the texts themselves and the organisational factors that influence the texts.

Example, step 2

Mapping is all about asking the right questions:

- What kind of communication is involved? What kind of texts?
- Who are the recipients?
- What is the purpose and goal of the communication?
- Are there any specific problems?
- What actors are involved and who has the influence?
- What other factors influence the communication?
- What do the processes look like and where can you find waste of various kinds?
- How does the organisation motivate the employees that work in the process to improve their communication?
- How does the organisation work with continuous improvements and learning?

Step 3: Eliminate waste

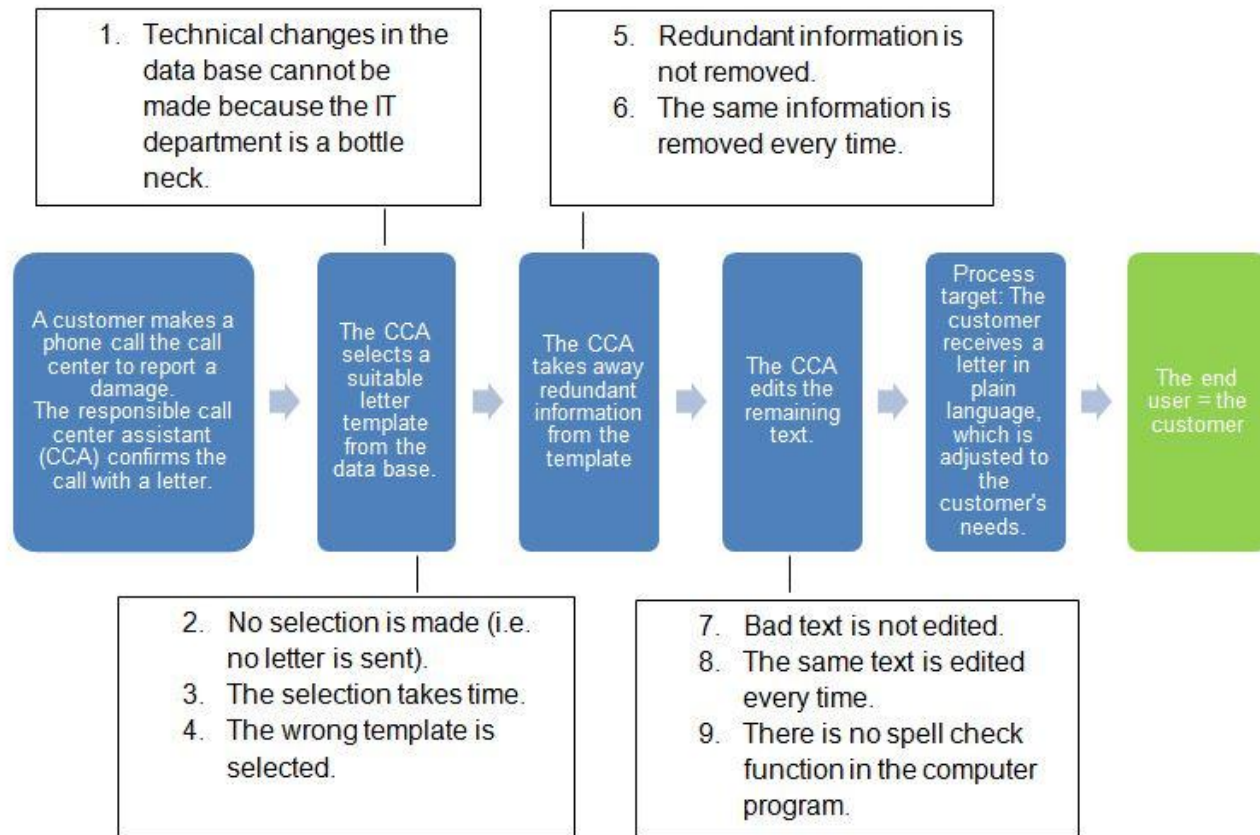
Always focus on the end user!

Remove factors, in the texts and in the handling of the text production, that has no value for **the end user**.

Example, step 3

Eliminating waste by identifying bottlenecks in the process of producing customer letters at a Swedish call centre.

Using the process description as a tool to find bottlenecks



Eliminating waste by using standards

- Letter templates
- Standardised headers and footers
- Style guides
- Guidelines for spoken and written language

Step 4: Respect and challenge employees and partners

Encourage and motivate everyone involved in the communication process – both those directly responsible for text production and those in a position to influence the communication more indirectly.

Example, step 4

Involving the employees at a Swedish government authority in the development of a Written style guide.

Step 5: Work with continuous improvements and learning

Find a model that helps you to work with continuous improvements and to become a learning organisation.

Example, step 5

Working with continuous improvements and learning in an insurance company.

Summary

I have presented

- a common problem for plain language consultants
- my suggestion for a solution – the five-step model.

The five-step model

Step 1

- Think long-term

Step 2

- Map

Step 3

- Eliminate waste

Step 4

- Respect and motivate employees and partners

Step 5

- Work with continuous improvements and learning

Thank you!