

## 2019 Gold Quill Awards Communication Training and Education Division Work Plan

**ENTRANT'S NAME AND COMPANY:** Damon Gran and UPS  
**ENTRY TITLE:** UPS Content Authors Program (CAP)  
**DIVISION:** Division 3: Communication Training and Education  
**CATEGORY:** Category 20: Communication Training and Education

**Project Description:** UPS's Employee Communications' innovative employee training program, The Content Authors Program (CAP), is a three-part, 12-hour, instructor-led training program designed to teach UPS's Employee Communications (EC) writers and portal content authors how to modernize and adapt their writing and messaging for the digital era. From writing for digital consumption on mobile devices to comprehensive digital content strategy, this program ensures EC content authors prepared and skilled to write for digital natives and the millennial workforce.

### 1. THE BUSINESS NEED OR OPPORTUNITY

**About UPS:** Getting a package from a warehouse in China to a customer's front door in the U.S.—on time and in pristine condition—requires a vast network, fueled by tenacious service providers who succeed on the legacy of 111 years of industry know-how. To make it all tick, UPS has 450,000 employees globally working 24/7 to deliver on the company's promise. When you talk to UPSers (as their employees are known) on the front lines, this business is all about “moving the boxes through the system,” yet for UPS's EC team, the challenge is a human one: “moving the message through the system” to keep our global workforce connected, informed, and engaged.

**Employee Communications Structure:** UPS EC employs a business model that ensures its 100-person staff supports every business unit across the global enterprise. Anchored by an experienced and talented corporate team of more than 50 supervisors, managers, and directors based in Atlanta, a team of another 50 supervisors and managers has resources assigned to the district, region, and business unit operations around the world. These communications professionals are embedded within the local operations. Like beat reporters, these locally based EC supervisors create informative and engaging content relevant to the unique local culture.

**Digital on the Rise:** Communicating daily with 450,000 UPSers around the world is no small task, made more complex by changing media consumption habits among the core audience. Until recently, UPS had tight control over how employees consumed company information—through print publications, stand-up meetings, and the company employee portal, UPSers.com. EC quickly learned it faces a challenge in competing for employee mindshare now that most every UPSer carries a personal device, which leads to exponential outside content channels dividing their attention. Attitudes around what information employees expect from their company also are changing. UPSers accustomed to fast-paced digital communications in their personal lives bring those expectations to work. Seeing this trend unfold, EC evolved its approach to ensure UPSers would choose to consume work-related content alongside the endless stream options, apps, and content.

**A New UPSers.com:** Prior to CAP, EC was in the midst of modernizing its employee portal, technologies, and policies to better reflect modern digital communications. An all-new employee portal was rolled out and more open policies around digital content, imagery, and social media use were drafted. And to make all this work in lock-step fashion, the EC directors, managers and supervisor (content authors) needed updated training and skillsets to effectively usher in this new era of fresh, meaningful, and engaging digital content.

**CAP was the Answer:** EC leadership recognized the need for a dedicated training program, which shifted from a print-based approach to training to embracing and accepting the new frontier in digital content creation techniques. Beyond creation, leadership wanted the EC team to adopt a new mindset around content creation that included modern content strategy techniques to shift the organization's perception of authors from order takers and wordsmiths to storytellers and strategic business partners. Thus, CAP was born.

### UPS EC's Training Challenges:

- *Global Workforce:* CAP had to be structured so it could be conducted anywhere, could be easily translated into other languages, and would be applicable to all content authors regardless of culture and location.
- *Varied Skillsets:* The training had to be relevant and applicable to people with a wide variety of skillsets and experiences, from seasoned directors and managers to new and recently hired supervisors.
- *Multi-lingual:* CAP learnings had to be applicable to non-U.S. content authors. While all EC staff are fluent in English, many also communicate in local languages, important to their region and employees.
- *Service Organization:* Shifting to a more strategic, consultative approach in the local regions, districts, and business units meant changing generations of engrained attitudes to EC support. Often viewed as wordsmiths or order-takers that handled basic writing locally, changing this perception posed a challenge for a local management culture used to getting its way or bullying content authors.

## 2. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

**Content Author Characteristics:** CAP attendees included more than 80 EC supervisors and managers with business, communications, and journalism backgrounds. All speak and write in English. The group is highly varied in experience, representing ages from the low-20s to the mid-50s, located in 12 countries around the world. Many content authors are geographically dispersed from their counterparts so they are often the only advocate for good communications. Prior to the creation of the CAP curriculum, inquiries and surveys were administered to gather insights from the content authors about professional growth potential and job satisfaction.

- Seasoned staff wanted training on modern digital formats to bolster their traditional media skillsets.
- Early-career digital natives felt they did not have the tools and knowledge, along with an understanding of the guidelines and policies to effectively communicate in the UPS business environment.
- All experience levels indicated their audiences request more modern digital communications.
- Local content authors felt disconnected from corporate people and from their peers.
- Local content authors felt more like wordsmiths and order takers instead of strategic, consultative partners.

Based on these results, EC leadership committed to a “for authors, by authors” curriculum design approach and interviewed three primary stakeholder groups to gather project requirements:

- *Content Authors (25 from around the world):* Content authors were interviewed to identify what the training needed, how it should be structured, and delivered. Content authors were interviewed face-to-face (sometimes via video) and were included in requirements review sessions throughout CAP development.
- *EC Leadership:* Provided strategic direction that CAP must help EC meet the digital demands of its audience, improve writing skills, and increase content author job satisfaction, retention, and engagement.
- *EC Technology Team:* Insights into how the new portal features, content management system framework, and social media policies and integration would complement content creation.

## 3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### Goals

- Develop a flexible, yet holistic, training program to prepare writers of all skill levels to competently create digital content based on company priorities, employee needs, and industry best practices.
- Transition to a digital-savvy, mobile device content creation organization that meets employee content demands.
- Create an ongoing community of content authors who share, support, and enrich each other.
- Maximize the use of UPS’s digital platforms for employee communications.
- Change the perception of EC from wordsmiths and order takers to storytellers, strategists, and thought leaders.
- Create a modern set of standard guidelines—UPS Content Style Guide—for producing content for EC.

### Objectives

- All EC content authors will successfully complete the three CAP training courses.
- 60 percent of content authors will participate on monthly CAP roundtable conference calls, an opportunity between CAP training sessions to stay connected, share best practices, and keep CAP learnings alive.
- Transition 75 percent of existing employee portal content to the new style and design guidelines within one year or sunset old content.

### Learning Outcomes

- Content authors will state they have the tools and training to adequately create digital content.
- Content authors will state they have a good understanding of digital content strategy.
- Content authors will perform a full content audit of their posted work within one year.
- Content authors will state they feel empowered to be more strategic and consultative with internal clients.

## 4. THE SOLUTION OVERVIEW

UPS engaged a team of UPS and industry experts in corporate communications, instructional design, writing, and digital media to create the CAP curriculum. Based on EC leadership objectives, qualitative interviews with key employee stakeholders, and cultural considerations, the team drafted guiding design principles:

1. *Instructor-led Format:* Web-based or self-help style training is too impersonal for a relationship-based company like UPS. Training is conducted classroom-style by having regional content authors meet at central location for training, removing them from local distractions and allowing them to connect and collaborate with peers.
2. *Backed by Resources:* Class time is actively facilitated and complemented by print/digital materials that content authors can reference anytime to refresh their knowledge and reinforce the training.
3. *Community-Supported:* To foster community, facilitate growth and enhance learning, CAP training included an online social space for collaboration and monthly roundtable conference calls to keep content authors engaged.
4. *Multi-tiered Approach:* To minimize impact on operations, CAP will be modular and conducted over a year’s time.

5. *Living Program*: Content Authors will be routinely surveyed to help inform future training needs.
6. *Repeatable*: CAP includes robust train-the-trainer materials so select EC managers can facilitate training sessions.

### Solution Plan

<p><b>Development</b> Total Development times was six months, broken up into five phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovery: two weeks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review prior data/research</li> <li>○ Interviews</li> <li>○ Content review</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 3 Development phases: eight weeks per course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Create course design doc</li> <li>○ Write draft of course materials</li> <li>○ Iterate with stakeholders</li> <li>○ Finalize</li> </ul> </li> <li>• UPS Content Style Guide Development: six weeks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Developed concurrently with CAP courses</li> <li>○ Transition guides between old guidelines and new</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Materials</b> CAP materials included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Facilitators Guide</i>: Printed document with everything needed for a facilitator to run the course.</li> <li>• <i>Presentation</i>: PowerPoint of the course presentation.</li> <li>• <i>Participants Guide</i>: Printed document that matches the presentation and includes notes pages.</li> <li>• <i>Exercise Guide</i>: Printed document containing the exercises in each section.</li> <li>• Content Style Guide: Printed and/or digital</li> </ul> <p>Note: All materials were available as digital files for participant use upon course completion.</p>
<p><b>Course Design</b> CAP was divided into three courses, with increasing complexity:</p> <p><b><i>CAP 1: The Art and Science of Compelling Digital Content</i></b></p> <p><b><i>CAP 2: Content Strategy: The Framework</i></b></p> <p><b><i>CAP 3: Content Strategy in Practice</i></b></p> <p>Each course is designed as a four-hour instructor-led session. Courses are broken down into chapters. Between chapters are group and/or individual writing exercises to drive home the chapter’s salient points.</p>	<p><b>Mediums</b> Courses were conducted in a live classroom setting at office locations across UPSs global network, including the U.S., Europe, Americas, and Asia Pacific regions. The courses with Asia Pacific were conducted via the company’s live video telepresence system.</p> <p>CAP roundtable discussions are held monthly via telephone conference calls.</p> <p>Unless otherwise noted, all photos, art, and graphics were custom-created for the program. All photos feature actual UPSers taking selfies. This served as a reminder to the content authors that their job is all about communicating with fellow UPSers.</p>
<p><b>Facilitation</b> Each course was facilitated by an EC manager and an instructional design leader from Slalom Consulting. The two distinct facilitators created fun and excitement as the Slalom lead provided a holistic look at industry best practices and the UPS lead emphasized UPS practical application through illustrative examples and company tie-ins.</p>	<p><b>Scheduling &amp; Travel</b> Training was conducted regionally in the U.S. to maximize content author engagement while keeping a close eye on managing costs. Each international region—Americas, Asia Pacific, and Europe—was scheduled separately to ensure continuity and engagement among each team.</p>

### 5. IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES

**Budget:** With full commitment of EC leadership to develop this important CAP training, the program was granted a budget of \$436,000 for CAP 1 Facilitators Guide, Presentation, Participants Guide, and Exercise Guide (\$110,000); CAP 2 and 3 Facilitators Guide, Presentation, Participants Guide, and Exercise Guide (\$224,000); UPS Content Style Guide, (\$65,000); and travel (\$37,000).

**Project Management and Staffing:** The CAP team oversaw all aspects of budgeting, discovery, instructional design, visual design, writing, and production of the course. The team, led by one UPS manager, was small and agile: one full-time project lead/principal instructional designer/project manager/facilitator, one part-time visual designer/print layout/production coordinator, and one part-time copywriter focused solely on the UPS Content Style Guide.

**Leadership Buy-in:** The project's genesis came directly from the EC leadership team. As such, and due to the extensive budget awarded, it required little selling or justification and stakeholders were available and engaged.

## Challenges

- **Technology:** UPS does not have an internal Learning Management System and as such, materials had to be custom developed using traditional methods (Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, etc.). Web-based courses, apps, digital experiences, video and other mediums were ruled out due to lack of budget and time. Thus, a tried-and-true instructor-led, hands-on approach was the best choice.
- **Conditions:** During the American Holidays, UPS enters peak season, where package volume dramatically increases. As such, all training had to take place from February to the end of October.
- **Geographical:** UPS's global workforce meant that facilitators and students had to travel to conduct training. To keep costs in check, three in-person sessions were held in: two in Atlanta, GA, and one in Louisville, KY, for the U.S., one in Brussels, Belgium, for Europe, and one in Miami, FL, for the Americas. For Asia Pacific, training was held using the company's live video telepresence system. Sensitive to the 12-hour time difference, class time was set for Asia local time and facilitators in Atlanta taught throughout the night. This gesture of respect and courtesy was very much appreciated by the Asia Pacific team.

## • MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

EC had never attempted to design and implement training at the scale and depth of CAP. After creation and launch, the program was identified as a huge success with recognition coming from several parties:

- **Learners:** Content authors felt their voices had been heard. They explicitly pointed out that it felt like they had a true say in the development of the training and therefore it resonated with them. As the data shows below, almost all indicated that CAP was beneficial and worth their time.
- **EC Leadership:** The team was commended by leadership for its responsible budget use, on-time delivery, high learner satisfaction, and acumen in delivering a truly global, scalable training effort
- **Senior Leadership:** As part of UPS's larger HR organization, the EC-led CAP program was hailed as a standout effort for employee-led, UPS-sourced training efforts. They were pleased the training not only met its goals, but did so by utilizing custom-built materials so it looked and felt like UPS instead of a generic off-the-shelf program.

Creation of a modern set of standard guidelines—**UPS Content Style Guide**—was completed and it now serves as a foundational tool for all content authors. CAPs success was largely measured on qualitative surveys given to all participants after going through the three courses (included in work sample). The **CAP Post Course Survey** gauged key course objectives. Responses to the questions range from 'absolutely no' (1) to 'absolutely yes' (10):

- Would you recommend CAP 2 and 3 to another Communications coworker? 8.31 average
- Did CAP 2 and 3 give you a good understanding of content strategy? 8.25 average
- Did CAP 2 and 3 provide you with the tools to create better content? 8.06 average
- Do you plan to perform a content audit within the next month? 64.95 percent reported 'Yes'

**CAP Post Course Feedback:** These were open-ended questionnaires given after CAP 1 and 2. This was an opportunity to share ideas of how to make future CAP courses better, what they should include, and improvements to the format (duration, content, design, etc.) Feedback was incorporated into the design documents for future course.

**Roundtable Conference Call Surveys:** Gauged metrics from the monthly CAP calls. Responses to the questions were 'Yes', 'Sometimes' or 'No'. Yearly aggregated metric highlights include:

- Do you attend the CAP roundtable calls? 93.97 responded 'Yes' or "Sometimes"
- Do you find the calls helpful? 82.98 responded 'Yes' or "Sometimes"
- Are the CAP roundtable calls an effective use of time? 74.47 responded 'Yes' or "Sometimes"
- Are CAP roundtable calls an opportunity to share experiences and best practices? 76.6 responded 'Yes' or "Sometimes"
- Do the calls help keep your content game strong all year long? 74.47 responded 'Yes' or "Sometimes"

**Employee Social Media Shares/Mentions/Use:** With the introduction of Twitter onto the home page of the new UPSers.com, followers jumped significantly. That along with introducing our new social media governance and guidelines and homepage and banner marketing, Twitter followers and engagement increased dramatically, from the beginning of 2018 at 19,430 followers to ending the year at 23,415 followers.

**Readability** at the 9.0 or lower grade level was the goal before CAP. Most months, readability would soar above 10.0. For the 50 content authors assigned to the corporate office, company headlines content in the six months after introducing CAP fell from a 9.0 to 8.59, or five percent.

**Employee Portal Content Length:** 400 words was the goal for the absolute length of a company headline story. Within six months of CAP training, stories published at 400 words or fewer improved 25 percent.