

PASSION; TRIBALISM; PROFESSIONALISM

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How do these three words impact a specifications writer?

Certainly we all have a "passion" for our work, and our contribution to the work of the office in each project. That passion is what drives us to seek perfection, and to making bold but appropriate statements and stands about various issues as they develop. Simply, there are some things that need to have a passion applied to them, to ensure their propriety and to protect various parties, other than ourselves.

In working that passion, we are professionals, in that we do this repeatedly, consistently, in an unwavering manner, and with high principle [not haughtiness!] on a daily basis. We seek to apply the highest level of service based on the level of our personal values, education, training experience and expertise. Yet professionalism is difficult to pin down and define. Can we live with what R.E. Onstad thought:

*"Professionalism is a personal attribute that one acquires,
It is cannot be bequeathed!
It cannot be inherited!
Only they, having made the acquisition,
who put to use that knowledge, that skill,
and with all of their ability,
and complete dedication of purpose
can be truly be called a Professional!"*

Not to put Onstad down, but what if we simplify the definition to the following:

*The controlled employment
of knowledge and passion is called,
"professionalism"*

But even though we made it simpler, we still leave a gap—is this all to the good, or is there a dark, other side to it. (We know of the "oldest profession" and that is NOT good!)

Now it may be a rather quirky example, but the Middle East, and Iraq in particular, give us insight into tribalism. The tribe, of course, is a remnant from ancient times, but it is obvious that it and the associated collective mentality (the crucial element) remain active today (some may call this a "cult", but makes no real difference). In the political circumstances of the last few years, we have observed the application and abuses of tribalism and the inability to agree, although all involved are of a basic root. Each tribe appears to be a group of people who subscribe to the malevolent thinking of one or just a few, who can some how exert great influence for bad--or if they would try, good! Usually this is an expression of a deeply held second agenda, like "no body else can be as right as we are."

This is a situation--on a much milder level--that we need to avoid!

Of course, one can be a tribe member, who murders on a daily basis (which some say is the mark of a "professional", similar daily performance, good or bad, and with a passion!)

That is much too bizarre for us, but does provide a small inkling about us. Despite the mutuality and high level of support, tribalism tends strongly to zero tolerance rules and methods, and suppression of

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March 2006

individual thinking. Our need is to avoid tribalism, with a passion, and elevate our individual thoughts and professionalism, adjusting and honing them to the exact needs of our work in each and every project.

On-going, we need to understand what the person across the table is about, and why they can't seem to see our point or agree with us. There is nothing in specifications writing that should be so blind and so hide-bound that it cannot be at least flexible, if not malleable. The old saw of "there are many ways to skin a cat" gives us some indication of our situation, and certainly some added hope.

Principle is not axiom, mandate, or dictatorial declaration! Right is not always the same, and not always for every person--right has more shades than the paint department at Sears! We all seek right, however--right for the situation at hand. It may very well change tomorrow—but it still involves "right".

From the top down, we need to "kill" with professionalism--by being SO good that we are admirable! Passion can drive us in our professionalism, but we should never, NEVER, resort to or become part of tribalism.

Our goals as writers of specifications, fundamentally, are identical. Our routes, directions, techniques, methods and efforts vary all over the place. But as professionals, we control and direct our passion, daily, per the simplified definition in many, many ways, but for good, only.

Also, we give up tribalism without "reservation"!