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Collaborative Writing on Technical Teams: Establishing an Effective Peer Review Process

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Speaker

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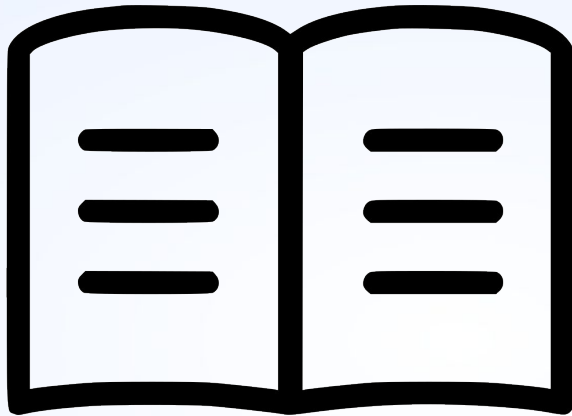Vantage

About Me

Danielle Vansia

- Technical writer at Vantage

- Experience in edtech, healthtech, FinOps, and open source

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Overview

- What Is Collaborative Writing?

- Types of Peer Reviews

- Establish a Peer Review Process

- How to Conduct Peer Reviews

- Giving and Receiving Feedback

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What Is Collaborative Writing?

- Use team members' expertise and diverse experiences to improve as a group

- Ensure consistency across a product and docs

- Challenges:
  - Writing styles
  - Time constraints

- Communicate and coordinate!

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Establish a Peer Review Process

Peer review is a critical step in the writing process. Writers can assess and provide feedback on each other's work. Reviews help identify errors, inconsistencies, and areas for improvement.

Consistency + Quality

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Types of Peer Reviews: Formal Review

- Structured and predefined set of guidelines
- Conducted by preassigned reviewers
- Advantage: Rigorous evaluation process, consistent feedback, detailed analysis
- Suitable for complex tech documents or research papers

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Types of Peer Reviews: Informal Review

- Peer-to-peer exchanges without formal feedback
- Ad-hoc team discussions
- Advantage: Flexible open discussion with team
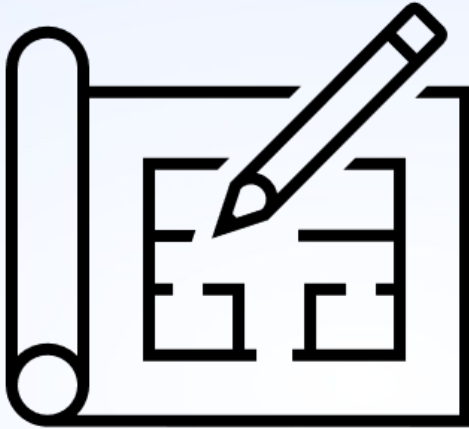- Suitable for quick draft review, brainstorming

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Types of Peer Reviews: Anonymous Review

- Both author and reviewer unaware of each other
- No bias of author
- Advantage: Fair and objective
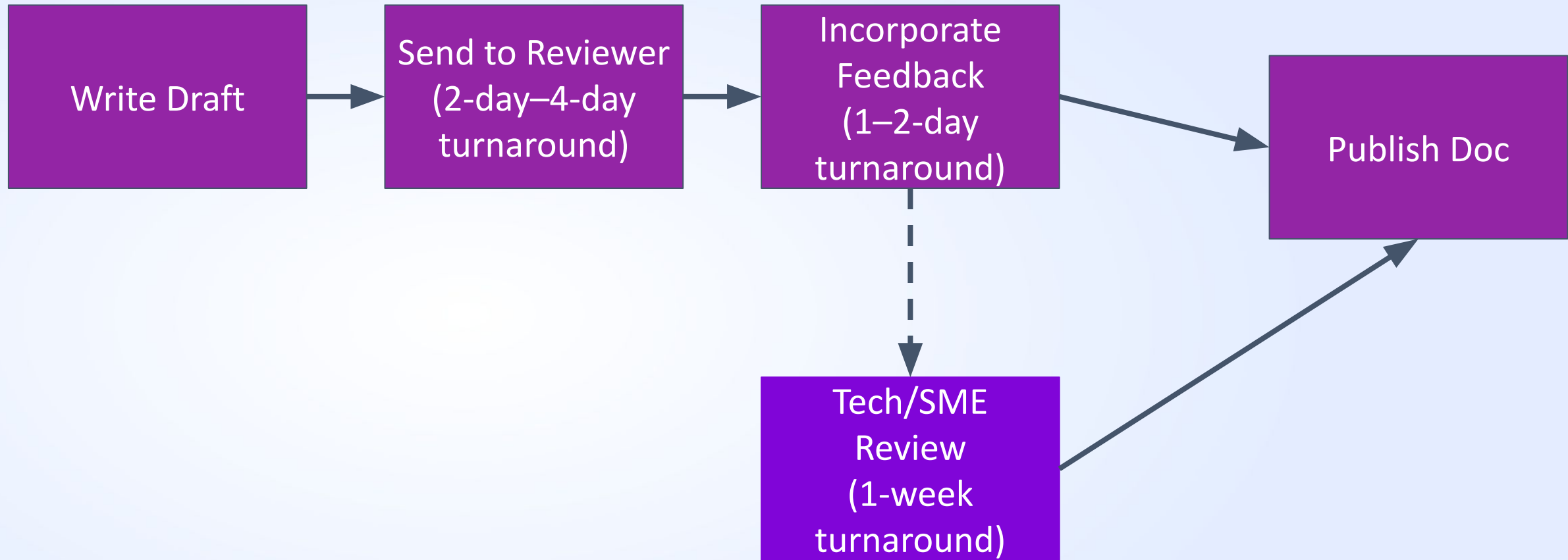- Suitable for academic or scholarly contexts

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Establish a Peer Review Process

- Build into current workflow

  - Docs-as-code
  - Separate from tech review

- Use existing tool set
- Who reviews who, and is there a rotation?

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Establish a Peer Review Process: Workflow

Write Draft → Send to Reviewer (2-day–4-day turnaround) → Incorporate Feedback (1–2-day turnaround) → Publish Doc

Incorporate Feedback (1–2-day turnaround) → Tech/SME Review (1-week turnaround) → Publish Doc

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Establish a Peer Review Process: Team Size

Very Small Team (~ 2 Writers)	Medium Team (~ 10 Writers)	Large Team (> 10 Writers, Multi-Level)
Informally review each other's work as you are able. Peer review should be optional and reserved for the most high-touch pieces.	Create a rotational process where a certain number of pieces are reviewed throughout the month. Consider having a team meeting or review session to discuss results.	A more formalized rotational process may be required where writers in higher-level roles formally review junior writers' work. Official dates and turnaround times should be established across the entire team.

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Establish a Peer Review Process: What to Measure

Spelling
Punctuation
Grammar
✍️

Format
Design
Template
🎨

Terminology
Level
Code QA
🧑‍💻

Create a Reminder

1. Clicking on "Add reminder" allows you to input reminder details like title, due date and prioritization.

2. For **Title**, enter a name for the reminder

3. In the **Reminders** field, users can add the dat of the reminder.

4. Click save.

- Punctuation

- Grammar & Syntax

- Spelling

- Consistency

- Style

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Giving Feedback

- Both what *is* and what *is not* working

- https://conventionalcomments.org/
  - "By simply prefixing the comment with a label, the intention is clear and the tone dramatically changes."

```
<label> [decorations]: <subject>

[discussion]
```

```
suggestion (style):  can change
"click on" to "click" for
brevity.
```

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Receiving Feedback

- Use feedback to improve writing

- What if you don't agree?

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Establish a Peer Review on Your Team

❏ Obtain stakeholder buy-in
❏ Build the process around team size and bandwidth
❏ Determine rotation schedule
❏ Establish turnaround times/SLAs
❏ Use existing tool set
❏ Discuss review criteria
❏ Iterate as you go

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Questions?

Thank You!

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