Alan Pringle on the Horror of Modernizing Content.

Tuesday Opener Impacts LavaCon Audience

by Chuck Martin

I have been attending LavaCon off and on for several years, and I have never seen what I witnessed Tuesday morning. Noz Urbina, giving the Tuesday morning opening keynote on "Truth Collapse: The AI Meta-Crisis," received a spontaneous standing ovation from the crowd assembled in the Grand Ballroom upon the completion of his presentation. Such was the impact of his subject on those who heard it.

Urbina's reaction to the audience response was evident, and he said later "It was powerful for me that it resonated so strongly. I'm happy I chose Lavacon to open this dialogue and that people reacted from a place of emotion."

That power and emotion began the busiest day of LavaCon. As busy as it was--two more morning keynotes, five session blocks, and an afternoon keynote, wrapped around extended Exhibit Hall breaks to allow attendees plenty of time with sponsors--it still wasn't too busy for folks to line up to spend time with one of two therapy llamas.

Yes, Tuesday was LlamaCon.

The day ended with the sudden crash of drums in the hotel lobby, keeping time for dancing, acrobatic Chinese dragons, who eventually led dozens of folks winding through the (fortunately dry) streets of Portland to Kelly's Olympian, where dozens gathered to be regaled by the best singers at the annual karaoke night, which was sponsored by RWS..

There's just one more half day (unless you're signed up for the afternoon workshop, and then we're all on our way back to apply what we learned. We also strengthened our community and will be looking forward to gathering once again next year, in Atlanta.

WEDNESDAY AT-A-GLANCE SCHEDULE

8:30-10:15am: Conference sessions
10:30-11:15am: Closing keynote, Grand Ballroom
11:30am-12:15pm: Closing panel discussion, Grand Ballroom

COMPONENT CONTENT ALLIANCE ANNOUNCED

Marianne Calilhanna of DCL, Sarah O'Keefe of Scriptorium, Alvin Reyes of RWS, and Rob Hannah of Precision Content, founding member of the new Component Content Alliance, introduced their new organization at Tuesday's LacaCon lunch-and-learn.

The Component Content Alliance (CCA) is "a new collaborative initiative formed by industry leaders who work in organizations that support content creation and management. The alliance promotes collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the adoption of best practices in component content management, also known as structured content management – across various industries."

Initially created as a LinkedIn community, the presentation was intended to get LavaCon attendees involved. The goal is a place to provide content professionals the information and strategies and tactics they need to succeed.

LavaCon Conference Special

Columbia Sportswear (flagship store behind the hotel at 911 SW Broadway) offers a 20% discount to visitors. Just show your conference badge or hotel reservations. Bonus points: No sales tax!

Tuesday's lunch break featured both a variety of grilled cheese sandwiches on the Pavilion level and therapy llamas outside the Grand Ballroom.

LAVACON IN 2025

- LavaCon is heading to Atlanta, GA, in 2025. The dates are October 5-8.
- You have a postcard in your conference bag. Put your name and address on it, add a note or two about what you got out of this year's conference, and drop it off at the Registration/Information desk. We will mail it to you in a few months as a reminder for 2025.
- Registration for the 2025 conference is currently BOGO (buy one, get one) at https://www.thinkreg.com/reg/register/NF1PB4NB16Q2/

Session Summaries

A few highlights from some of yesterday's talks and sessions.

Noz Urbina asserted that we are not OK. All of us everywhere are being affected by artificial intelligence.

Literacy reshapes how we think. Logic arrived in the world after writing. We live in pre-AI literate societies.

Michelle Irvine followed Noz Urbina's keynote by telling us that teams with quality documentation are 3.8x more likely to implement security practices, 3.5x more likely to implement site reliability practices, 2.5x more likely to leverage the cloud. Teams with quality documentation see increase in productivity and job satisfaction and decrease in burnout.

Then Scott Abel told us that the docs-as-code helpful on small team with small, simple, static doc needs. Not better option if you need dynamic, personalized, scalable content. Lot of writers work to maintain publishing pipeline--instead of writing.

"No semantic metadata means Markdown is nothing more than a new version of WordStar."

In one morning session, Joe Gelb said that as technical writers, we understand that the content we create is useful and impactful. The question is, how many can measure that impact?

Technical content does selling when sellers are not in the room. 90% of B2B customers reference content before purchasing. 70% of B2B we traffic is for technical product content.

Janet Zarecor and Alan Pringle battled technical gremlins to tell us that they are not there to tell you what tool to use. It's about finding the information necessary to pick the right to for your organization.

We don't know what's coming in 3-5 years for content delivery. So you need systems that can adapt. But also a single source of truth that can slice and dice your content however you may need it.

LAVACON POETRY

Students of Carol Hattrup's post conference workshop wrote some LavaCon-related poetry.

Expecting to Present

Hanging circle lights in square frames
Illuminating the decorative chains
Hilton lobby impeccably arrayed.
Am I in the right place?

Conference room populated with stories.
Rocking chairs enclose the podiums
Pads of paper, empty and blank
Pens to scribble and contemplate

Watercoolers filled with soothing white noise
Plastic cups stacked, refreshing their joy
Cardboard filled with decaf in rattling hands
Presentation beginning, I take the stand

The work required was no small pursuit
40 weeks to complete, this important venture
Topic imagined, submitted, accepted, approved
Slide deck established with a theme understood

Hotel rooms booked, flights bought
A copresenter discovered, a jumping bean
A baby bump showing for all to see
Kicking critiques through the entire speech

- Emma Pindera

Amber Swope, Joe Gregory-DeBernardi, and Lief Erickson said that AI needs content pros who know the content set, understand content structure, know the audience, and can work with metadata.

AI projects are more about content that technology. When you define success, you not only define the goal, but your tolerance for failure. AI won't replace your writing team, but they may need to adapt.

Rebecca Schneider, Executive Director of AvenueCX claimed that taxonomies are still relevant. A taxonomy describes and organizes stuff.

Organizations have large repositories that can be used to create LLMs. AI can leverage content to understand relationships between terms. Unstructured content can create confusing output.

Sponsor Corner

LavaCon could not happen without the support of its sponsors. This section highlights their conference-related news and events.

Silver Sponsors

Silver sponsors in 2024 include:

- Congree: The solution provider for consistent, efficient and quality-assured content creation in companies of all industries and sizes.
- STC: The Society for Technical Communication is a professional association dedicated to the advancement of technical communication across all fields.
- We Are Very: We refine, elevate and validate machine translation and AI output until every word sounds right.
- ComTech: Comtech Services helps our clients design, create, and publish information products that meet the needs of their users.
- Bluestream: With Bluestream's XDocs DITA CCMS, you can create, integrate, automate, manage, and intelligently share your technical documentation content.
- Morningside: End-to-end language solutions with translation, localization and interpretation expertise to equip leading global organizations with the tools they need to operate seamlessly in foreign markets, overcome regulatory hurdles and connect with audiences worldwide.

Other Sponsors

Other sponsors in 2024 include:

- TechWhirl: An online resource for anyone interested in the world of Content Management and Technical Communication.
- MultiLingual: Reporting on the people, organizations, and technology driving industry, covering topics such as localization strategy, automated translation, language access and preservation, interpreting, linguistics, and international marketing.

Sponsor Updates

- Because of the early dragon ceremony, Heretto's raffle draw will be at 10:20am tomorrow morning! Meet us at the booth!

What time is it?

Chickens deserve drivers' licenses
Lack of sleep is related to the company you keep

Follow the journey
From one side to the next

Forget the map
Learn what you can

People all day
Relish in the fluff

Smiling through the aching cheeks
Throbbing feet

It will be over soon
Too soon for most

Back to the other side you go
Follow the turns on the bumpy road

Embrace that you're now that wiser
due to the company you keep

- Janet M. Zarecor, M.S.