

## ArchiText Inc.

spotlight on ABREVE®

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### *No Pain, No Gain: Content Fitness for Everybody*

Everyone over the age of 12 knows how to lose weight and get fit: eat less and exercise. It isn't a secret; it isn't even rocket science. Yet, Americans are heavier than they have ever been, and the problem is reaching - you'll excuse the expression - mammoth proportions.

If it's so clear what we need to do, why is it so hard to succeed, and why do we need so darn much help doing it? Two little words stand in our way: change and pain.

#### **The Pain**

They're more than just words, actually. The change and pain are so great that we're desperate for instant solutions: "miracle" pills, fad diets, lose-weight-while-you-sleep schemes, stomach-stapling, lipo, etc. But they don't work. It turns out that getting fit is about understanding and changing our habits, re-evaluating our priorities, doing without things we want, adding things we're not used to.

Changing our lives like this involves pain, occasionally lots of it: ixnay on the ice cream sundaes, working out when we don't feel like it, not-so-gentle chastisement by fitness professionals, laying out cash for special meals and training. And Americans spend over \$40 billion annually on nutrition, diet, and weight control products and activities. Apparently, one of the obstacles to fitness isn't money.

The content development process runs in eerie, fascinating parallel to the American waistline. Both are fat and getting fatter. Both are set in their ways. Everybody is searching for a quick fix. Content developers know some of what they should be doing; they just aren't doing it. The obstacles to content "fitness" here are the same, too. Until we can make the changes and overcome the pain, we - and our poor user-customers - will continue to suffer.

**"The food in that restaurant is lousy, and such small portions!"**

Woody Allen's famously twisted logic says a lot about why waistlines are bulging. Hungry customers think that if the food isn't good, at least it should fill you up. Providers take this to mean that quantity equals value.

You can't really blame the customers. Their desperate search for fulfillment has deluded them into thinking that there must be some value in abundance. But their delusions pass quickly. When, inevitably, they feel that familiar emptiness, they move on to the next future ex-favorite purveyor.

The same dynamic plays out often in the content world. Developers stuff their product turkeys full of features; technical communicators slop mounds of information all around it; and localizers help dish it out around the world. It's like a giant Thanksgiving content feast - only no one is giving thanks.

Trouble is, the content development process is essentially self-delusional. Authors focus on tools; their companies focus on systems. Localizers focus on technology. Everybody focuses intensely on costs, and even more intensely on whining. The last thing anyone has time to focus on is the customer.

Don't think the customers don't notice it, either. Know why nobody reads the documentation? Their instincts are better than ours. They know they may get full, but not satisfied; the content looks good, but it's gristly and tough to swallow. Content that tastes like your leg fell asleep. Who wants to work that hard? So, customers end up starving to death in the middle of an all-you-can-eat content buffet.

Why do content developers persist in making more of this stuff and finding new ways to serve it up? Not one user-customer out there wants more documentation, more on-line help, more content. Truth be told, they don't want any at all, if such a thing were possible. Which it isn't. But simply telling folks in content development to write less is like telling an overweight person to "just slim down!" It's annoying, and you may end up with a fork in your arm.

# “Stop the Insanity!”

There is a way to end the madness. Content needs to go on a diet under strict supervision and follow a sound fitness regimen. At ArchiText, we call it ABREVE®, a universally applicable plan to create globalized content that satisfies.

- User-customers get fulfilling content (no more empty word-calories).
- Content developers get control over content and process (satisfy those inner cravings for quality and usability).
- Companies get cost savings and higher R.O.I. (and using ABREVE even costs less!).

ABREVE is a structured, global approach to writing at the granular input level that comprises concepts like terminology control, consistency, re-use, streamlined structure, anticipation of localization tools and requirements, and much more. Add specialized training and support, and combine with intense metrics and an almost pathological emphasis on volume reduction, and you've got a recipe for success in content fitness.

What can ABREVE do that you can't do on your own? Nothing - if you know all the facts and understand all the consequences of your choices and have the discipline to follow rules rigorously AND are objective about your progress.

Let's face it: In dieting and fitness training, we are rarely objective about our bodies; we cheat a little here, rationalize a little there, give up in frustration practically everywhere. We need the help of expert knowledge, outside measurements, and supervision (not to mention nagging), even if it confirms some things we already know. Content developers aren't objective about their bodies of work, either. They're way too attached and don't take kindly to criticism from others - product developers, localizers, purchasing, company execs. Like an overweight person surrounded by a meddling family, denial and dysfunctionality run rampant.

ABREVE was created from years of professional, multilingual content development experience at ArchiText. Its knowledge, metrics, training, and supervision know how to keep a globalized content development process on track. The full program, called ABREVE® Connect, positions ABREVE content development in the enterprise context, finding and strengthening benefits for other company stakeholders to ensure lasting, repeatable success. After all, to keep from backsliding, the whole corporate family has to get into the content fitness plan.

The real answer is: ABREVE succeeds where other efforts falter. The ingredients for global content success - like the “secret” to weight loss - may be basically known, but knowledge alone isn't enough, any more than just knowing the ingredients for cake makes you a baker. You have to have a plan, a model, some training, and continual monitoring.

# “Knock Out the Fat”

Like six-pack abs, the benefits of ABREVE content fitness are plain to see:

- Globalized, structured content means less content volume.
- Less content volume means less work for everyone downstream, including future releases.
- Less work means lower costs, especially in localization (where the cost savings are nothing short of spectacular!).
- Lower costs mean better company R.O.I.
- Better company R.O.I. means a better content development strategy (instead of knee-jerk reaches for content management systems or offshoring).
- All of this means happier user-customers.

Why doesn't everyone just do it then? Remember change and pain? Most corporate cultures can't stand change. The changes ABREVE requires inside the content development process can be tough, but if we can tackle similar kinds of pain in our fitness quest, which is so intensely personal, we can certainly do it in our content. Yet, the search for quick fixes rages on: CMS, authoring tools, automation, smart technology. The desire for while-u-sleep content slenderizing is strong. But don't hold your breath. Know why? Because technology isn't smart; it's dumb. It can't tell when a sentence is unnecessary, redundant, or just plain wrong. It can't predict what a user-customer will think. It also can't help if it doesn't get used (remember those treadmills that end up as clothes racks?).

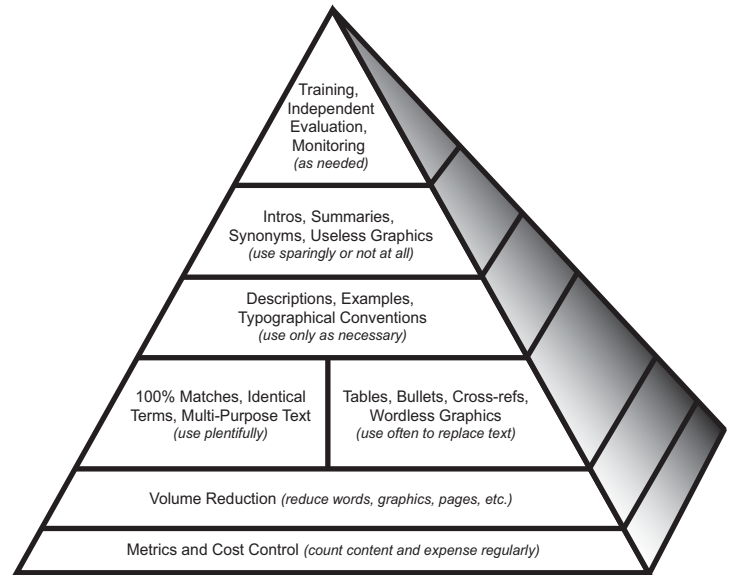
## The Gain

Nope, it's going to take some painful work for content to shape up. But it can be done. One of ArchiText's clients, a large manufacturer of mobile phone handsets, trained content developers in ABREVE and worked with us to implement a new content globalization approach. The results speak for themselves:

- They're saving a lot of money. Localization costs are down about 30%; printing costs are also down about 30%.
- The cycle time for localization is a lot faster with ABREVE. It used to take 6 weeks per project; now it only takes four. That's 33% faster.
- Company management loves the results. They are impressed with the reduction in text volume and cost.

# ABREVE® Content Fitness Pyramid

A Guide to Better Content Choices



*It's all about putting the right things into content in the right proportions. Here are some pointers for a globalized content fitness plan.*

- The writers love ABREVE. It took them a little time to get used to a different way of thinking, but now they're much more attuned to how they create globalized content.
- The company's main customer is now also using ABREVE and they are getting huge localization and print savings, too.

This client understood that getting the fat out of content takes work. Myths need to be debunked, old habits ditched. There are rules to be learned, and stern admonitions to be heeded. But the payoff is enormous, and the change is worth the pain.

Like an overweight person suddenly finding out how much mayo is in that tuna sandwich, content developers had better start realizing that everything they put in counts. Every costly, caloric word has profound effects on whether user-customers get fit or fat. There is no quick solution. There is no pain-free path to success. And the problem isn't going away.

So, get over it. The sooner you start, the happier your customers (and you!) will be.

*Hans Fenstermacher is president and founder of ArchiText Inc., a provider of localization and globalization services, and the creator of the ABREVE® methodology. To find out how to get content-fit, visit [www.architext-usa.com](http://www.architext-usa.com), or meet Hans at the gym anytime for a workout.*