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# Getting your readers involved in the documentation

WritersUA Conference for Software User Assistance  
13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> March 2011, Long Beach CA

Getting readers involved, by Sarah Maddox – tweet @sarahmaddox


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## Introducing the topic

- The social enterprise
  - Engaging customers and readers
  - Documentation as living, interactive hub
- How to get your readers involved
  - Social media
  - Documentation as an emotional experience

Huh?



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### Speaker's notes: Introducing the topic

We know that companies are becoming more social.

- Engaged customers buy more, are more satisfied with the product, and are more likely to help each other.
- Similarly, engaged readers read more, are more satisfied with the documentation, and will use the documentation as a tool to help each other.

Documentation is the face of the company.

People come to the documentation looking for answers.

How can you make your documentation a living, interactive hub where people can come to find answers, talk to you, swap techniques and help each other?

I'm going to:

- tell you about engaging your readers in the documentation
- show you some of the tools you can use to do that.

We're also going to get a bit emotional about documentation...

### Background information - Why engage people at all?

1) Research shows that engaged customers

- buy more
- are more satisfied with the product

- help each other use and understand the product.
- 2) We can get valuable insight into our own product
    - See how people actually use the product.
    - Get actionable feedback directly from customers. This is very valuable.
    - Watch people talk about us and about the product.
  - 3) We can influence what people say and think about our product
    - Solve hard problems for people immediately, so that their talk about us is mostly positive
    - Be real – tell people what’s happening inside the organisation, let them see us as people, and manage their expectations
  - 4) Reduce our own support and maintenance costs
    - People will help each other – that’s social, man.
  - 5) Social is happening anyway
    - People are “going social” anyway.
    - We may as well benefit from it rather than suffer from it.
  - 6) It’s fun
    - The organisation’s employees enjoy chatting to customers. Jokes and appreciation reach all members of the organisation, not just those in the outward-focused roles.
    - Customers enjoy the contact with employees.

### **Why engage people in the documentation?**

- 1) From the technical writers’ point of view:
  - Our product is the documentation.
  - It’s a good way of helping people, and of helping them to help each other
  - It’s fun and rewarding for the technical writer and for the readers
- 2) From the organisation’s point of view:
  - Engaging people in the documentation is one way of engaging them in the products.
  - Documentation is the face of the company. It’s often the first point of entry into the online presence.
- 3) Documentation as a good point of contact:
  - People read the documentation on an ongoing basis – perhaps more so than the web site.
  - They get to the documentation via help links in the products, via Google and other searches and by going straight to the documentation looking for answers.

### **If people are coming to your documentation, wouldn’t it be great to make use of that fact?**

Talk to them while they’re there.  
Let them talk to each other.  
A wiki offers a unique opportunity to do just that.

That’s what we’re going to look at in the rest of this talk.

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"Documentation as an emotional experience"

But wait...

Weird?

This @\$\$#! documentation SUCKS!

OK. Let's go for laughter, pleasure, satisfaction

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**Speaker's notes: Documentation as an emotional experience**

"Documentation as an emotional experience": Isn't that a bit weird?  
OK, perhaps I'm saying it with tongue in cheek.  
But guess what... reading some documentation already is an emotional experience!

Emotions to aim for:

- Laughter
- Pleasure
- Satisfaction
- Fulfilment and even reward – "Yay, I did something right."

**Background information:**

Other technical writers are experimenting with and talking about games and fun in documentation too.

- Lisa Dyer
- Ellis Pratt
- Bill Kerschbaum

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"Documentation as an emotional experience"


But wait...

**Weird?**

**I felt the earth move  
when I read your docs, mate**

**OK. Let's go for laughter,  
pleasure, satisfaction**

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**Tools**

- Comments and feedback
- Linking to readers' blogs
- Open editing of documentation
- Tweeting release notes and tips
- Badges to reward contributors
- Doc sprints
- Games – Dragon Slayer

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**Speaker's notes: Tools**

I'm going to show you some things we've done with social media in and around our documentation.

We're think we're pretty cutting-edge.

We have an awesome team of technical writers who are willing to try anything.

I'll show you some actual examples and give you the tools you can take away and use.

We'll start with low-level engagement:

- Comments on documentation pages.
- Feedback via Wufoo forms.
- "Tips of the Trade" pages that link to blog posts and articles written by readers, customers and community developers.

Then greater involvement:

- Open editing of documentation pages.

Integration of external social tools in and around the documentation:

- Tweeting the release notes
- Tips submitted to Twitter by all and displayed in the documentation.
- Rewarding people with online badges.
- Photographs via Flickr.

An organised event to get people together in the real world:

- Doc sprint

An example of a game wrapped around the documentation, plus interactivity via Twitter and forums:

- Dragon Slayer documentation



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## Comments

Some comments are full of hard-won and relevant information

*This is BRILLIANT... Thank you.*

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**Speaker's notes: Comments**

Awesome, because it engages the person who made the comment, and also gives our readers extra information.

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**Comments**

People like to let us know they're keen on a new feature

*\* Waits **intently** for Apache Connector 2.0 to be built on windows \**



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**Speaker's notes: Comments**

People like to let us know they're keen on a new feature.  
In return, we can tell them we're working on it, and point them to the issue in the bug tracker, so that they can stay informed of progress.

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The image shows a screenshot of a comment thread titled "Comments". The thread contains four comments. A green callout box points to the first comment, stating: "Yep, I see where you're going with the 'emotional experience' thing." A second green callout box points to the second comment, stating: "We're very disappointed... We thought the love was mutual!". A third green callout box points to the fourth comment, stating: "We're starting to feel the LOVE guys!". The bottom of the screenshot features a green bar with the text "Getting readers involved, by Sarah Maddox – tweet @sarahmaddox" and the number "9".

**Comments**

**Nathan Gault says:**  
Hi Sarah,  
Why didn't you integrate one of your client called Dalymotion in the video widgets? We're very disappointed here at DM, we thought the love was mutual! 😞  
Edit | Remove | Reply

**Bill Arceest [Allexan] says:** Nathan, looks like a great opportunity. We've logged the request in JIRA. You're... Jan 05, 2009

**Jens Schenckler says:** Hi Nathan, Dalymotion was actually on my list of services to... Jan 05, 2009  
yepoo, but due...

**Sarah Maddox [Allexan Technical Writer] says:** Jan 05, 2009  
Hello Nathan,  
As you can see from the quick responses from other Allexans above, the love is mutual 😊 I'm just adding my thanks to you for making this comment.  
Cheers — Sarah  
Edit | Remove | Reply

**Nathan Gault says:**  
We're starting to feel the LOVE guys! 😊  
If you need any help on the integration side, don't hesitate to contact me.  
Edit | Remove | Reply

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**Speaker's notes: Comments**

Converting disappointment to love, in your documentation.

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The screenshot shows a 'Comments' section with three comments. The first comment is from Sarah Maddox [Atlassian Technical Writer] on Aug 07, 2008, stating that T-shirts are not for sale. The second comment is from Darren Bell, saying they look kinda cool. The third comment is from an anonymous user on Aug 13, 2008, saying 'me too!' and mentioning they have a 'because you've got issues' t-shirt. Annotations include a green arrow pointing to Darren Bell's comment with the text 'That's a pity, they look kinda cool.' and another green arrow pointing to the anonymous comment with the text 'me too! BTW – I have the "because you've got issues" one, the fabric is superb, years since I had such a quality t-shirt. I'd buy even blank ones 😄 hahaha'. A green footer bar contains the text 'Getting readers involved, by Sarah Maddox – tweet @sarahmaddox' and the number '10'.

**Comments**

Sarah Maddox [Atlassian Technical Writer] says: Aug 07, 2008  
Off topic but totally engaged

Alas, the T-shirts are not for sale 😞  
Aren't the T-shirts cool, in the screenshots above? A lot of people have already asked, "Where can I get one?" But these were designed for Atlassian's internal use and are not for sale.

Edit | Remove | Reply

Darren Bell says: ← That's a pity, they look kinda cool.  
That's a pity, they look kinda cool 😞

Edit | Remove | Reply

? Anonymous says: Aug 13, 2008  
me too! ← me too!  
BTW – I have the "because you've got issues" one, the fabric is superb, years since I had such a quality t-shirt. I'd buy even blank ones 😄 hahaha  
BTW – I have the "because you've got issues" one, the fabric is superb, years since I had such a quality t-shirt, the fabric is superb...hahaha

Edit | Remove | Reply

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**Speaker's notes: Comments**

Off topic but totally engaged.

Laughter is a good emotion to have in the documentation.

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The image shows a screenshot of a Wufoo form titled "Asking for feedback via Wufoo". The form content includes a header with a blue banner, a main title "Let us know what you think of the new SDK", a sub-header "How long did it take you to get your plugin up and running with the Atlassian SDK?", a radio button selection for time duration, a radio button selection for documentation quality, and a text input field for additional feedback. A green callout bubble says "Don't forget to ask: 'How was it for you?'". A yellow starburst contains the text "wufoo.com". A code block in the center shows the widget URL: `{widget:url=http://atlassian.wufoo.com/forms/let-us-know-what-you-think-of-the-new-sdk/|height=800px}`. The footer of the form reads "Powered by Atlassian Confluence 3.11 out of the Box! Get the full story - Please? News - Contact administrators". Below the screenshot, a green bar contains the text "Getting readers involved, by Sarah Maddox – tweet @sarahmaddox" and the number "11".

**Speaker's notes: Another way of getting feedback - Wufoo**

Wufoo is an online web service that allows you to create an HTML form and collect information from people over the Internet.

You can also embed a Wufoo form into your own web page.

Confluence has the Widget macro, which you can use to embed a Wufoo form into a wiki page.

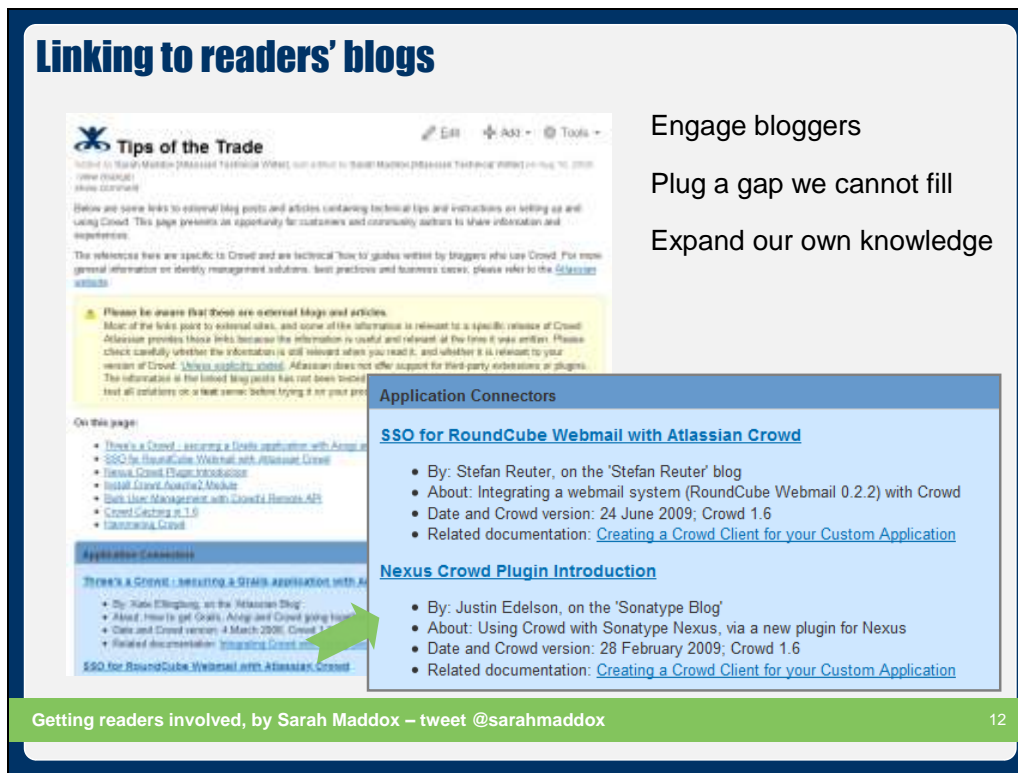
The screenshot shows such a form, which we use to collect feedback about the new Atlassian Plugin SDK.

Format of the macro:

```
{widget:url=http://atlassian.wufoo.com/forms/let-us-know-what-you-think-of-the-new-sdk/|height=800px}
```

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## Linking to readers' blogs



The screenshot shows a 'Tips of the Trade' page with a callout box titled 'Application Connectors'. The callout box lists two external blog posts:

- SSO for RoundCube Webmail with Atlassian Crowd**
  - By: Stefan Reuter, on the 'Stefan Reuter' blog
  - About: Integrating a webmail system (RoundCube Webmail 0.2.2) with Crowd
  - Date and Crowd version: 24 June 2009; Crowd 1.6
  - Related documentation: [Creating a Crowd Client for your Custom Application](#)
- Nexus Crowd Plugin Introduction**
  - By: Justin Edelson, on the 'Sonatype Blog'
  - About: Using Crowd with Sonatype Nexus, via a new plugin for Nexus
  - Date and Crowd version: 28 February 2009; Crowd 1.6
  - Related documentation: [Creating a Crowd Client for your Custom Application](#)

Engage bloggers  
Plug a gap we cannot fill  
Expand our own knowledge

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### Speaker's notes: Links to readers' blogs

Our "Tips of the Trade" pages contain links to bloggers' "how to" articles.

Research before adding the link:

- Must be a "how to" article containing good information well presented.
- Must be correct.
- Must be useful – an edge case but not too much of an edge case.

Communication:

- Warn readers that the links point to external blogs.
- Let the bloggers know what the requirements are.
- Inform people via blogs that we're doing this.
- People can suggest their blog posts by dropping comments on the page.
- People can even add their own links --- see ACLA coming up next.

This is awesome, because it engages and rewards the bloggers and it also gives our readers information that we could not otherwise provide.

Engaging the bloggers:

- Add a comment to their blog post, letting them know we've linked to them.

This is a useful addition to the documentation


- Plugs a gap we could not fill. Often, technical documentation is forced to ignore the small, specific use cases. We can't cover them all, and maintaining them would become a nightmare. But if other people have documented them for us, we can point our readers to the external information, with suitable warnings that it may not be current
- Requires little maintenance.
- Engages the readers and the bloggers.
- Expands our own knowledge.

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## Open editing of wiki pages

- Is it safe?
  - Industry and environment
  - Authors
- Monitoring by technical writers
  - RSS feeds
  - Wiki watches

You can all sleep sound tonight  
We're not crazy or anything



**The Atlassian technical writers**

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### Speaker's notes: Open editing of wiki pages

Make a living, breathing, interactive set of documentation, guided by a group of people (the tech writers).

Is it safe to allow readers to update the documentation itself?

Answer: It depends on the documentation.

I'm in:

- The software development industry.
- An agile environment.
- An "open" company.

Our authors include:

- Technical writers.
- Employees: developers, support, marketing and sales.
- Community developers.
- The general public.

The technical writers monitor and fix the updates:

- RSS feeds
- "Watching" the pages and receiving email notifications

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## Wiki permissions and ACL A

- Comments – anyone can comment
- Developer documentation
  - Any logged-in user can update
- Product documentation
  - All Atlassians can update
  - Other contributors sign a license agreement first
- Atlassian Contributor License Agreement (ACL A)
  - Based on Apache Contributor License Agreement
  - Guards the rights of all

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### Speaker's notes: Wiki permissions and ACL A

We use wiki permissions to control who can edit the various types of documentation.

Comments: Anyone can comment, including anonymous users (that is, people who have not logged in to the wiki).

Developer documentation: Anyone can edit, provided they have signed up for a wiki username.

Anyone can sign up for a wiki username.

Product documentation: To edit the pages, we ask people to sign the ACL A – based on the Apache Contributor License Agreement.

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**Please delete me**

Users are cute.

*Accidental created the page – seems like my account doesn't have delete permissions.*

**Please delete me**  
Added by Haseeb, last edited by Haseeb on Jan 16, 2011 (no change)  
Accidental created the page - seems like my account doesn't have delete permissions.

Add Labels  
Add Comment

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**Speaker's notes: Please delete me**

Haseeb created the page in the SAL documentation space, with a title of "**This is a title**" and some dummy content, just to try out Confluence. Then he discovered that he couldn't delete the page, so he edited it to let us know what had happened.


The SAL space contains developer documentation, for a thing called the Shared Access Layer.

The permissions allow any logged-in user to create pages and update content. We've purposefully set the permissions to allow only Atlassians to remove pages.

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## Creative Commons

- CC-by license on all pages
- Use our docs in any way you like
- Acknowledge us as the source
- Contributors know where they stand too



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### Speaker's notes: Creative Commons

Creative Commons license on all pages:

- Anyone can use our documentation, provided they acknowledge us as the source.
- Anyone who contributes to our documentation knows that their contribution falls under the same licence.

A number of companies write their own internal procedures, based on our documentation.

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## Tweeting your release notes

The image shows a Twitter search interface for the hashtag #confluence32. On the left, a 'Realtime results for confluence32' list shows several tweets, including one from @atlassian: 'Page templates to get you started. Page templates to keep you going. Confluence 3.2 #confluence32 http://atlassian.com/dzlgsl'. A callout box with a green background and white text says 'Ooo-er, did I tweet that?' with an arrow pointing to the @atlassian tweet. On the right, a mobile phone screen shows a tweet from @atlassian: 'With just a 1 Confluence puts my PowerPoint presentation right'. Below the tweets, the text 'Bite-sized chunks', 'Interactive', and 'Shareable' is listed. At the bottom, a green banner contains the text 'Getting readers involved, by Sarah Maddox – tweet @sarahmaddox' and the number '17'.

Bite-sized chunks  
Interactive  
Shareable

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### Speaker's notes: Twitter as medium for release notes

Each tweet:

- Reflects a major point in the release notes.
- Links to the "real" release notes.
- Contains a hash tag to tie the tweets together.

Why use a #-tag?

- It provides a way for readers at any time to see a collection of such related tweets.
- A collection of release highlights is... the release notes. That's how we use Twitter as a medium for our release notes. Ta da 🎵 🎵

Also in the above slide:

- People have re-tweeted our tweet.
- Other people have added extra tweets using our has tag – one in Dutch!

Small chunks of information (tweets) are:

- Easy to digest.
- Shareable.
- Interactive and conversational.
- Useful for drawing people to the documentation.

Is there a chance people will add unfavourable information to your stream?  
Oh yes! But that's all part of it.

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**Tips via Twitter**

#ConfluenceTips

Live Twitter stream embedded into the page

Show me

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### Speaker's notes: Tips via Twitter

We encourage readers to submit tips via Twitter.  
The #-tag is the key. For Confluence: #ConfluenceTips  
We have embedded the Twitter stream into a documentation page. So not only can people see the hints and tips from everyone via Twitter, they can also see their own names (Twitter IDs) appearing in our documentation.

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**Badges for tip tweeters**

Thanks to the generous and inventive tech writing community

**Special thanks to Vijayendra (Jay) Darode**

Win-win, like most social tools

- Community and identity
- Recognition
- Promotion

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### Speaker's notes: Badges for Tip Tweeters

People who tweet the tips often like to let other people know that they do that.

We've designed some pretty, cute badges that people can add to their blogs or other social sites.

It's a win-win opportunity, like most social tools:

- The tweeters get some recognition for their work.
- They feel part of a community, and feel an identity with the company.
- We get promotion or our "tips via Twitter" campaign, and of the product too.

Where did the idea come from?

Vijayendra (Jay) Darode, a technical writer, came up with the idea and posted a comment on my blog!

The technical writing community is very generous and very inventive.

How does it work?

We host the badge images on our documentation site.

We provide HTML code that people can copy and paste into their blog "widgets" or other locations.

The code grabs the image and links it to our "Tips via Twitter" documentation page.

When people click the badge on someone's blog, they come to our page.

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**Doc sprints**

Shut 'em up in a room together  
Don't let 'em out until the documents are written

The slide features several cartoon illustrations of monkeys: one hanging from a banana, one sitting, one wearing glasses, one sitting on a typewriter, and one climbing. A large typewriter is also illustrated. At the bottom, there is a green bar with the text 'Getting readers involved, by Sarah Maddox – tweet @sarahmaddox' and the number '20'.

### Speaker's notes: Doc Sprint

A very good way of engaging people in the documentation is to get them together in the flesh, in real life, to write documentation. So we've held a couple of "doc sprints".

A doc sprint is a short period of time when a group of people collaborate to write a specific set of documents.

Our first doc sprint focused on plugin and gadget tutorials. Our second focused on user documentation, and specifically on quick-start guides.

We put 20+ developers in a room with computers for 3 days. We didn't know whether to expect some classy tutorials or ... the complete works of Shakespeare.

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**Doc sprinters** Given a focus, people do awesome stuff



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### Speaker's notes: Doc sprinters

Give people a focus, an opportunity and something to be excited about, and they climb in and do awesome stuff.

23 people took part in our first doc sprint: 19 Atlassians and 4 community developers

Our second doc sprint had around 30 sprinters: 14 from outside the company!

People from all over the world, including Russia and Israel, working remotely as well as in the Sydney and San Francisco offices.

### Background information:

Why do people take part in doc sprints?

- I read a study on why people are willing to contribute their time to community documentation projects: [Why do people write free documentation?](#) Ours is not exactly free documentation, but I think the same sort of motivations apply.
- People enjoy learning cool stuff from the other experts on the sprint.
- External developers enjoy the contact with your company, and employees enjoy and learn from the external developers who are using your tools.
- People like helping other people.
- People get a sense of satisfaction from fixing documentation that is out of date.
- People feel good about developing a new tutorial that is as near perfect as possible.

- Personal email invitations were very powerful. One of our external attendees mentioned this specifically, during our retrospective session.

Who did we invite?

- Developers from within the company.
- Community developers, via targeted invitations.
- Technical writers from all over the world, via targeted invitations and tweeting and blog posts.
- Anyone who wanted to join us, via a couple of blog posts..

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**Doc sprint results**

**Doc Sprint Tutorials**  
Added by Sarah Maddox [Atlassian Technical Writer], last edited by Sarah Maddox [Atlassian Technical Writer]

This is where we'll store the tutorials under development during our the [Atlassian Doc Sprint](#).

- [Internationalising your Plugin](#)
- [Plugin Gadget tutorial - Multi staged tutorial](#)
- [Plugin Gadget Tutorial - Using the FishEye REST API to Write a Gadget to Monitor Recent Changes](#)
- [Plugin Gadget Tutorial - Writing a gadget that displays the days left in a version](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Adding a custom action to Confluence](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Adding your own Menu Items to JIRA](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Adding your own Menu Items to Confluence](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Create a JIRA Report](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Creating Custom Workflow Elements](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Create a New JIRA Custom Field Type](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Persisting Data in Confluence](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Scheduled Events \(SAL\)](#)
- [Plugin tutorial - Writing an admin configuration screen](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Writing Integration Tests for your JIRA plugin](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Writing Unit Tests for your Plugin](#)
- [Standalone Gadget Tutorial - Writing a JQL Gadget](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Writing a Confluence macro that uses JSON](#)
- [Plugin Tutorial - Defining a Pluggable Service in a Confluence Plugin](#)

The [Webwork Sample](#) plugin is a third-party follow-along tutorial describing how JIRA uses Webwork.

**The biggest sign of victory is how many pages I managed to delete!**

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**Speaker's notes: Doc sprint results**

The results of the first sprint:

- We produced 19 awesome tutorials on how to develop gadgets and plugins.
- A few developers decided to spend the first day of the sprint looking over the existing reference documents and doing a mass update, before starting the tutorials.
- Some even decided that this was the most valuable exercise for the entire sprint.
- One person was heard to exclaim, "The biggest sign of victory is how many pages I managed to delete."

The results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> sprint:

- We produced 23 guides, some of which consist of many pages and were worked on by multiple authors.
- It was great collaborating with technical writers all over the world, as well as all sorts of people within the company.

Feedback:

- Overwhelmingly positive feedback from the participants. (We were expecting some negative feeling about doing documentation, especially from the developers, but that didn't happen at all.)
- Positive feedback from the company.
- We'll do it again.

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**Doc sprint wiki**

- Planning
- Templates
- Tutorials themselves
- Retrospective
- Fun stuff
- Hall of fame

The wiki was awesome



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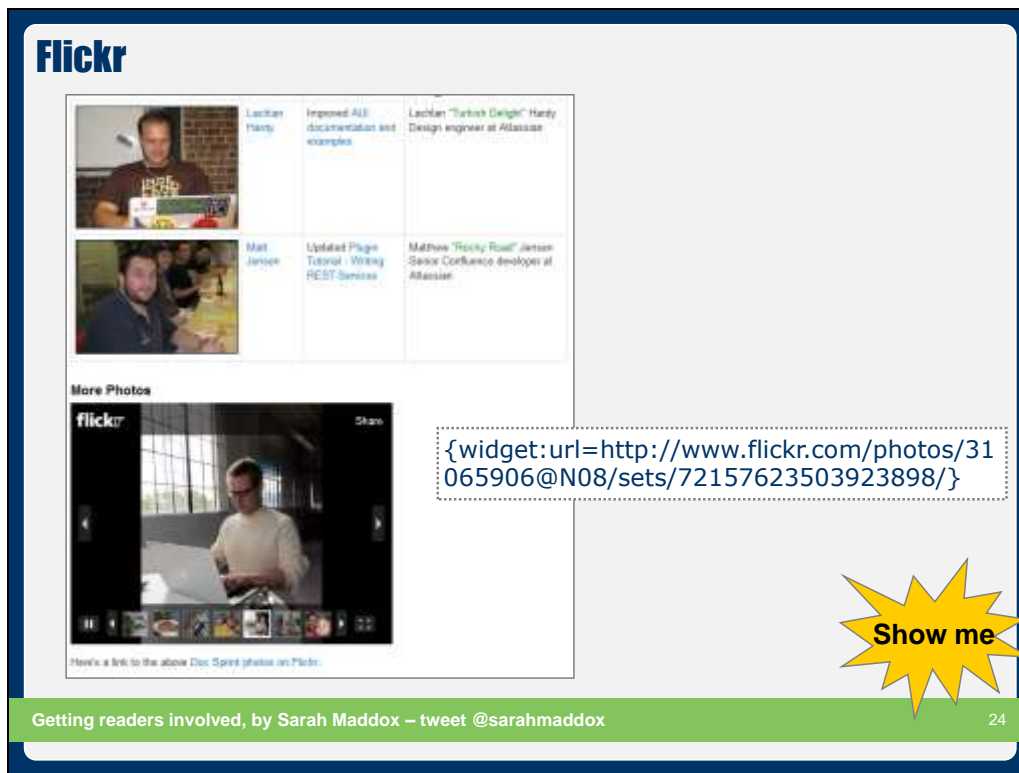
### Speaker's notes: Doc sprint wiki

A wiki or other social/collaborative platform is very useful.

How we used the wiki:

- Planning – the wish list, schedule, signup and all necessary information.
- Templates.
- The tutorials themselves – we wrote them in the DOCSPRINT space then moved them to the official documentation after review.
- Retrospective – we published the interim and final results of the retrospective on the wiki.
- Fun stuff – crossword puzzles, haiku, chocolate blind taste test.
- Our hall of fame, containing photographs of the sprint and the people – these help to engage both the people who were there and the people who may be there next time.

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The screenshot shows a Flickr widget with the title "Flickr". It displays a grid of photos with captions: "Lachlan Hardy: Improved All documentation and examples", "Lachlan 'Turkish Delight' Hardy: Design engineer at Atlassian", "Matt Jansen: Updated Plugin Tutorial - Writing REST Services", and "Matthew 'Rocky Road' Jansen: Senior Confluence developer at Atlassian". Below the grid is a "More Photos" section with a larger photo of a man at a laptop. A code block is shown: `{widget:url=http://www.flickr.com/photos/31065906@N08/sets/72157623503923898/}`. A yellow starburst button says "Show me".

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**Speaker's notes: Flickr**

Link to the doc sprint hall of fame.  
Play the Flickr slide show.

Photographs are really great:

- For the people who attended the event, photos bring back fond memories.
- For people who didn't make it this time, the photos show how much fun it was. People can see the sprinters who took part, realise that the doc sprint is not scary, and be encouraged to sign up next time.

Our doc sprint "hall of fame" shows a photograph of each sprinter, as well as a slide show of photographs drawn from Flickr.

Flickr is an online service where you can upload photographs, videos and other images and share them with other people.

The Flickr API also opens up many opportunities for "mashups", such as embedding Flickr images into other web pages.

In Confluence, you can use the Widget macro to embed a Flickr image, or a set of images, onto a wiki page.

If you embed a set of images, it shows as a slide show.

Format of the Widget macro:

{widget:url=http://www.flickr.com/photos/31065906@N08/sets/72157623503923898/}  
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## Dragon Slayer – the problem

- Cool integrated development suite **but**
  - Complex installation and configuration
  - Emerging technologies (gadgets, OpenSocial)
- Dragon Slayer docs to the rescue
  - Lead you through the setup
  - Demo the cool integration possibilities
  - Document the steps and the pain
  - Track the improvements
  - Turn pain to fun



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### Speaker's notes: The Dragon Slayer – the problem

We provide a number of products that can work together to provide a useful, pleasing development environment: bug tracker, agile project management tool, wiki, gadgets, source repository navigator and continuous integration tool, all tied together by a unified user management and single sign-on tool.

But installation and configuration are complex:

- The applications were not originally designed to work together.
- The applications were developed at different times by different teams, some not even Atlassian.
- The points of integration are varied, some quite deeply embedded in the product and others simply a gadget.
- We use newly emerging technologies, such as OpenSocial gadgets, which change as we develop on top of them.

So the Dragon Slayer documents have a four-fold purpose:

- Lead you through the installation and configuration of a unified suite.
- Demonstrate the cool integration possibilities, by showing an example of each type.
- Highlight to us the steps required and the pain points that we should address first.
- Allow us to track the improvements in the procedure itself.
- Convert the pain to fun.

Documentation is a good way of fixing a painful procedure in the short term.  
Because this procedure is so painful, we decided to turn it into a game and make it fun.

Slide 26



### Dragon Slayer – the game

- 9 stages, each with many steps
- Rewards:
  - Charlie's clothing and armour
  - Fun and camaraderie with Atlassian and other dragon slayers
  - Getting the complex task done
  - Sense of achievement
  - T-shirt, fun

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### Speaker's notes: Dragon Slayer – the game

The game:

- 9 stages
- Charlie starts out with very little clothing or other accoutrements. Actually, he's naked, and has just a staff.
- "Charlie" is the nickname for the dude in the Atlassian logo.
- As the reader works their way through the steps, Charlie acquires a piece of armour or a bigger weapon.

The rewards:

- Charlie acquires clothing and armour.
- The person feels part of a community of "dragon slayers". Camaraderie and contact with Atlassian.
- The person gets a difficult task done by following step-by-step, top-down instructions. Sense of achievement, conquering the dragon and telling everyone else how much they have managed to do too.
- Fun.
- T-shirt.

Slide 27

## Dragon Slayer pages

Fun stuff is at top and bottom of page

Good solid, well-tested "how to" instructions in between

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### Speaker's notes: The Dragon Slayer pages

Format:

- Fun stuff is at top and bottom of page.
- In between is solid, well-tested "how to" information.

Slide 28

The screenshot shows a web page titled "Dragon Slayer interactivity" with a blue header. The main content area is divided into several sections. At the top, there is a "Here Be Dragons" section with a blue dragon icon and a text box containing the instruction "[tweet your status]" and a URL: "http://twitter.com/home?status=My status goes here". Below this is a "Getting help" section with a yellow background and a link to "Dragon Slayers' Forum". The main content is titled "Rushing into the Dragon Lair" and features a green "Join your Arsenal" button and a "Join the Atlassian Dragon Quest" button. To the right of the main content is a "Live Twitter stream" widget displaying tweets from users like @josh\_bellamy and @james\_confidence. A green arrow points from the "Join the Atlassian Dragon Quest" button to the text "Link to dragon slayers' forum". Another green arrow points from the "Live Twitter stream" widget to the text "Live Twitter stream on the page". A dashed box around the widget contains the code: "{widget:url=http://search.twitter.com/search?q=AtlassianDragons}". At the bottom of the page, a green footer contains the text "Getting readers involved, by Sarah Maddox – tweet @sarahmaddox" and the page number "28".

### Speaker's notes: Dragon Slayer interactivity

Interactivity:

- Tweet directly from the wiki page.
- Real-time display of tweets on the page.
- Link to Twitter for people who want to follow the other dragon slayers via the Twitter web interface.
- Link to forum, where people can meet other dragon slayers and help each other. The Atlassian support team also monitors the forum and helps with problems.

Slide 29

### Dragon Slayer Twitter stream



People love a game



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### Speaker's notes: Dragon Slayer Twitter stream

People love a game.

The suggested tweets are funny, in context and a call to arms.  
Other people join in – more hijacking of the twitter hash tag.

When I got into the office on the first day after publishing the Dragon Slayer documentation, I saw the Twitter stream and thought,  
“Wow, people are actually doing it. They’re doing the dragon quest and tweeting all over the show!”

It was an awesome feeling!

Slide 30

### Dragon Slayer T-shirts

How often is documentation cool enough for a T-shirt?

Getting readers involved, by Sarah Maddox – tweet @sarahmaddox 30

### Speaker's notes: Dragon Slayer T-shirts

Everyone loves a T-shirt.

This is a picture of the Atlassian technical writers, all wearing the Dragon Slayer T-Shirt.

Anti-clockwise from the front left: Ed, Giles, Andrew, Rosie, Sarah.

How often is documentation cool enough to warrant a T-shirt?

Slide 31

The slide features a blue border and a light gray background. At the top, the title "Which emotion would you rather have?" is written in bold blue text. Below the title, there are two main content areas. The first is a yellow-bordered box representing a user comment. It starts with a question mark icon, followed by "Anonymous says:" and the date "Jul 21, 2008". The comment text reads: "Horrible workaround. Why is rich text editing not a core feature?". Below the text are links for "Edit", "Remove", and "Reply", and a small icon of a speech bubble. The second area is a screenshot of a Twitter post. The tweet says: "Woo hoo! I got my #AtlassianDragons t-shirt! And it is pretty cool, actually...". The user's name is "mitchgoldstein" (Mitch Goldstein). To the right of the tweet is a green speech bubble containing the text "We've got both" and a smiley face emoji. At the bottom of the slide, a green bar contains the text "Getting readers involved, by Sarah Maddox – tweet @sarahmaddox" and the number "31".

### Speaker's notes: Which emotion would you rather have?

Which emotion would you rather see in people reading your documentation?  
Frustration or exhilaration?

We have both. We're constantly working to move from the one to the other.

### Background information: What we've learned

People are social beings. Both our staff and the customers benefit from communicating directly with each other.

When I got into the office on the first day after publishing the Dragon Slayer documentation, I saw the Twitter stream and thought, "Wow, people are actually doing it. They're doing the dragon quest and tweeting all over the show!"

It was an awesome feeling!

People like to help other people. It makes everyone feel good.

People like it when we acknowledge their research and skill.

Contributions to the documentation fill a gap that we can't fill. Often, technical documentation is forced to ignore the small, specific use cases. We can't cover them all, and maintaining them would become a nightmare. But if other people have documented

them for us, we can point our readers to the external information, with suitable warnings that it may not be current.

The benefits outweigh the maintenance effort.

We learn a lot, both about how people use our products and about the products themselves.

Slide 32

**Contacting me**

- Email: [sarah@atlassian.com](mailto:sarah@atlassian.com)
- Twitter: [@sarahmaddox](https://twitter.com/sarahmaddox)
  - <http://twitter.com/sarahmaddox>
- LinkedIn: <http://au.linkedin.com/in/sarahmaddox>
- Blog: <http://ffeathers.wordpress.com>
- Other blog: <http://travellingworm.wordpress.com/>

Let me know if you've done something similar. Or totally different.

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Slide 33

## Taking your own wiki for a spin

Download Confluence or try it online:  
<http://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence/try.jsp>

Documentation:  
<http://confluence.atlassian.com/display/DOC>

Licensing:

- Free evaluation for 30 days
- Free for non-profit and open source organisations
- \$10 for a 10-user licence (proceeds go to “Room to Read”)
- Commercial licences based on number of users

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### **Speaker’s notes: Taking your own Confluence for a spin**

It’s surprisingly easy to install and play with Confluence. You can run it quite easily on your laptop.

If you do decide to buy a commercial licence, note that the licensing fees are based on number of users. A “user” is a person who can log in. You can have an unlimited number of users able to view the content, provided that you make your wiki viewable by anonymous users.

#### **References**

Download your own wiki or try it online:  
<http://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence/try.jsp>

Confluence pricing:  
<http://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence/pricing.jsp>

Confluence “starter” licences (\$10 for 10 users):  
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  - Creative Commons licence:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/au/>
  - Atlassian Contributor License Agreement:  
<http://confluence.atlassian.com/display/ALLDOC/Atlassian+Contributor+License+Agreement>
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<http://www.apache.org/licenses/icla.txt>

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<http://ffeathers.wordpress.com/2011/01/02/how-to-embed-twitter-streams-and-prepopulate-tweets-in-your-document/>
  - Anne Gentle's article on twitip: <http://www.twitip.com/focus-on-twitter-for-technical-documentation/>
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<http://ffeathers.wordpress.com/2010/11/07/every-doc-sprint-is-different/>
  - My post on planning a doc sprint:  
<http://ffeathers.wordpress.com/2010/03/13/planning-a-doc-sprint/>
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<http://confluence.atlassian.com/display/DOCSPRINT>

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  - Google Talk: <http://www.google.com/talk/>
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**The end**

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