

# LavaConnection

74



The Monday morning crowd listening to the rapid-fire keynotes.

## Therapy Alpaca Steals LavaCon Show

by Chuck Martin

The longest line at LavaCon on Monday wasn't for lunch, wasn't at a vendor booth, wasn't even at a coffee station. It was to pet and feed an alpaca. The therapy alpaca that conference organizer Jack Molisani brought to the Hyatt foyer was the very definition of a hit.

It's not like the speakers weren't popular. The Hyatt's Grand Ballroom was nearly

packed for the morning keynotes: Reltio's Megan Gilhooly on perfectionism, Contiem's Maura Moran on getting your content initiatives adopted, and J.P. Morgan's Samantha Azzarello on building trust and credibility to create a content strategy from scratch. Many of the breakout rooms throughout the day that featured speakers on AI, content strategy, semantics, SEO, and silos saw few empty seats.

Monday, the start of the workweek, saw the midpoint of 2023's LavaCon in San Diego. Attendees had already put the pre-conference workshops and the first day of conference sessions in the rearview mirror.

It was the last day of the vendors in the Grand Ballroom, and plenty of conversations were had about tools and consulting. Attendees didn't go in there for just the food and coffee.

Andrea Ames wrapped up the official day with a workshop to help folks retain what they learned here at



## News/Announcements

### Speaker Evaluations

Please give feedback on speakers and the conference. Use the QR code on the first page of your printed program or go to <https://bit.ly/lavacon23>.

### eBook Discount

You may have seen the conference bookstore offering a discount on printed books yesterday. What you may not know is that XML Press also offers LavaCon attendees a discount code for ebooks.

Use the code `lavacon23` at checkout through October 23, 2023, when you buy any ebook at <https://store.xmlpress.com/>.



LavaCon.

The unofficial day, however, was not done. Fluid Topics and Acrolinx hosted a wine meet-and-greet, and then a mariachi band led attendees to dinner and the famed LavaCon karaoke.

Today is the last day of LavaCon 2023. Next year, LavaCon will return to Portland, where it'd be hard to imagine that AI and chatbots won't be any less a hot topic. Or maybe there will be a new hotness. Keep checking [lavacon.org](http://lavacon.org) to see when registration opens. See you there!

## Schedule Updates: Tuesday

Last minute updates from the original printed program (some changes may also be reflected in the online schedule-at-a-glance at [lavacon.org](http://lavacon.org)).

- **10:30am - 11:15am, Hillcrest AB:** Emily Straubel's *Moving the Cheese: Redesigning the IA of a Beloved Product Without Driving Users Mad* has been replaced by *AI Unveiled: A Crash Course for Content Developers*, by Regina Lynn Preciado, Content Rules, and Alvin Reyes, Tridion RWS.



# Session Summaries

## Monday Keynotes

Reltio's Megan Gilhooly noted that making unpopular policies more readable doesn't make them more popular. The problem with being a perfectionist is because it inhibits you from reliably using your data.

Maura Moran, of Contiem, addressed getting business buy-in. Trying to make a case for content investment is intrinsically hard. It's a bit niche, people don't understand what you're trying to do, and you're always competing with other projects.

Samantha Azzarello, of J.P. Morgan, came from an economist background, did not know much about content. Had lots of questions. But I knew if I built trust and credibility, could be successful.

## Stories with Soul: Staying Alive in the era of ChatGPT

Storytellers set the vision. Steve Jobs said that the most powerful person in the world is the storyteller. Storytelling has to be a big part of our toolsets.

The elements of a good story include premise, plot, character, prose, and theme. Element of humanity in all of these. Stories are always about human beings.

How to use superpowers to give my content more soul. "SOUL" is an acronym.

Sincere: Your story reflects sincere perspective.

Optimistic: Story inspires positive action.  
Unique: Perspective is unique.

Lively: Engaging language that positively challenges readers.

But more: ERA.

Empathetic: Connect with audience in an emotional way.

Relatable: Foster meaningful connections.

Authentic: Only you could write this story.

Generative AI is the ultimate research assistant. You can ask it every stupid question, explore every topic, and it can define every term, validate every assumption, generate sample text blocks, and provide a reference roadmap.

AI can't be clear, concise, or compelling.

## A Migration Is a Terrible Thing to Waste—A Roadmap for your Next Big Content Migration

Migrations are hard & tricky. Take longer than anyone expected.

Don't waste the migration opportunity. Use it to restructure and improve.

Important to start by understanding why you're migrating. Could be technical reasons. Could be functional reasons. Could be rebranding.

Start with a content audit. How many content types? Will tell how many content structures you're dealing with. How many content items. Matters less than you might think. How it is structured: Blobs or atoms? Unstructured or structured? If unstructured, do you want to make it structured as a part of the migration? Any inline styles and other markup sins? Migration is a great opportunity to clean that up. What is your best content? And what can you get rid of?

## Headless: Catch Silos If You Can

Back in the day, company had help center,



documentation, API reference, e-learning, and certifications. Help center was in one tool, documentation and API reference in another tool and e-learning and certification in a third tool.

Can we even name all the solos? Split into categories: authoring silos and customer silos.

Authoring silos have complicated linking, separated teams, fragmented authoring, and multiplied maintenance. The more tools you have, the more things can break.

Customer silos have poor discoverability, fragmented user experience, fragmented search, and medium-oriented navigation.

Silos can be solved on the team level, but there might still be silos on the company level.

## Building Business Value Through User-Centric Content Design

We need to amplify the value that our content creates. If you are able to quantify with authentic metrics, it can make your story more compelling.

Adopting a "design thinking" approach to content development. It allows our team to have a "seat at the table" for content development.

Content Value KPIs. It's a scorecard to quantify value. It includes support cost savings, or support cases deflected by documentation, returning users, revenue growth, and product answers, which increase customer satisfaction.

How get there? Largely because of adopting design thinking approach, which happened when the manager of technical publications started to report to the director of design. Data and insights from user research inform and guide content strategy. Get a lot of qualitative data from user research, which has helped realize content outcomes.

Becoming a user advocate helped us become more empathetic with our users.

