# Transcript: IT Podcast - EP 146 - C850 Tips with Tom Milham

*The following transcript is a verbatim account of the video or audio file accompanying this transcript.*

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

WGU's IT audio series; flexible, portable, profound.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

Welcome back to the IT Audio Series. I'm Jessica Galterio and I've been a program mentor with WGU since 2015. Today I have with me Tom Milham from the Cloud computing cluster, who has been with WGU since 2013. Thank you for joining me today, Tom.

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

Thanks for having me.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

We are here today to talk about C850 Emerging Technologies. Tell me what this course is about?

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

The emerging technologies course is about how a business can bring on or adopt an emerging technology and all the relevant steps so that it will function and match the business's needs.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

I see. Specifically, what are the best resources that students should use in this course?

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

The course contains its own course material content. A number of the resources cover business concepts. This course covers how to write a business proposal and how to match the needs of the company by choosing an emerging technology. Students are taught the steps how to bring on an emerging technology and match it to an individual organization's needs. The key resources used in the course are the course materials that reflect on the Gartner maturity level, the Gartner Hype Cycle, and the Gartner street method. These are highly renowned and recognized business organizational steps. The Gartner Group has been around for decades. The resources that we use to describe the adoption of emerging technology are industry standards.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

That's fantastic. Students can really expect to apply this stuff someday at their job as well?

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

It's entirely possible, yes, because in today's world, IT professionals are expected to stand or be part of a committee where they may have to submit a proposal or a recommendation about an upgraded technology.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

Fantastic. Now, in your experience, what are some common barriers that students tend to run into?

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

Some students have not written a business proposal before. It's a different type of writing format than a traditional essay. This is not a technical report either. Instead, there are specific requirements that the course contains, so there is guidance provided. It's not as if a person has to make this up from scratch. Also, the current ability to work with students about their writing skills. We also have the writing center at WGU in case students need assistance with English grammar, punctuation, or other aspects of writing.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

That's really fantastic. I know that's going to be a relief because writing papers in general, a real sore spot for students and knowing that all of these resources are available to you should definitely make it easier to get that paper completed.

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

Correct, yes.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

Now, this is a performance assessment which means we're going to turn something in. Give me some tips that are specific to this performance assessment that can really help students succeed?

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

Of course, the first step is for the student to read the case study. In order to succeed in the course, they have to read the tech fight case study, which is a fictitious company, but it's a government contractor. A government contractor must maintain strict security rules and compliances to be successful. In this situation, students have an option, but all they need to do is solve one of tech fights business problems. Once they choose which problem to solve, then they can match it to a relevant Cloud computing technology to solve that one specific problem.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

Now students are expected to come up with a Cloud technology, just point to one that would fit for this fictitious business?

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

Correct. They can point to one, but we also offer suggestions and as instructors we can guide them to potential solutions based upon the student's own research.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

That's great, it's wonderful support. Now, if a student needed more information and they wanted to book time with their course instructor, what type of information would you be ready to give them?

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

First, I would give them the context about the case study. I would explain that they only need to solve the business problem. Then secondly, to match it within an appropriate Cloud computing technology. Then I would have the opportunity to explain how to explain why that particular technology is indeed an example of an emerging technology.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

How much of the assessment would focus on that explanation?

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

There are a total of six requirements. It would be one requirement of six.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

Understood. Now, any of those six requirements, do any one in particular gives students more trouble than the next?

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

What I would say is, students need to take their time. The most common reason that students do not succeed on their first attempt, which by the way is important to us and to students, is because there's missing items. What we are doing as instructors is reviewing the student's writings to make sure nothing is missing. I would say that there's not a particular requirement that stumbles them more than others, but that there's a lot of many or sub-requirements for each of the larger requirements. There's multiple parts for each requirement.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

I see. Essentially students should use not only the rubric, but the assessment as well as checklists before they turn them in?

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

Correct. We send our students a very detailed checklist so that they can print it out and literally make checkmarks on it so that they're-

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

I love it.

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

-not forgetting to include all the relevant requirements.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

It's a wonderful resource and also a great tool for students to feel confident when they turn it in on that first time. Because like you said, it means a lot to us all to make sure we pass it on the first time and move right along.

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

Correct. We also want to make students aware that writing is not something to be afraid of, that we explain the writing method for this course and we are also sensitive to students whose native language may not be English. Again, we have the resources at our writing center, but we also work with students to engage them and to make sure that they recognize we're with them every step of the way. We divide the course requirements in half, asking the students to write the first three of six, looking it over to make sure they're on the right track. Then after that, the student will complete the entire task and send it for review a second time to make sure there's no missing components.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

Wow, that is wonderful guidance because that is a really tough part about writing, is if you finish and you realize you were way off.

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

Right. Instead of wasting valuable time, we're making sure that early on the student has clear directions, but also once they start running a rough draft that we're reviewing it after the first three requirements. That has helped to save students a great deal of time.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

That's wonderful. Again, students can just book time with you to achieve that, or would you prefer that they just emailed it to you?

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

We prefer an initial 15 minute appointment to make sure that the student has an opportunity to ask questions after they've read the study guide. Before they start writing, we encourage students to never submit the task until we have reviewed it first. At this time, the student does not use a course instructor at all, their success rate in this course is less than five percent on a first attempt. Whereas if they work with us, their chances of passing go up a factor of times 10 or higher. It's clearly advantageous for our students to work with the course instructor for 15 minutes. It's a short amount of time. It's a brief commitment of 15 minutes to make sure the student clearly understands how to get started. That is the most common concern, is the students are not clear how to get started after reading the course. This is a sure way leading to students success quicker.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

Thank you so much for that information. I know as a program mentor, I encourage my students to book time with their course instructors on this one, but I'm going to require it from here on out.

Speaker #3 (Tom Milham):

Great. We appreciate that.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galterio):

Tom, I really want to thank you today for taking the time to meet with me and share all of your wonderful knowledge about emerging technologies. Thank you to our listeners. Be sure to check out other episodes of the IT Audio Series.

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

Schedule time with your instructor to explore more deeply. WGU, a new kind of you.