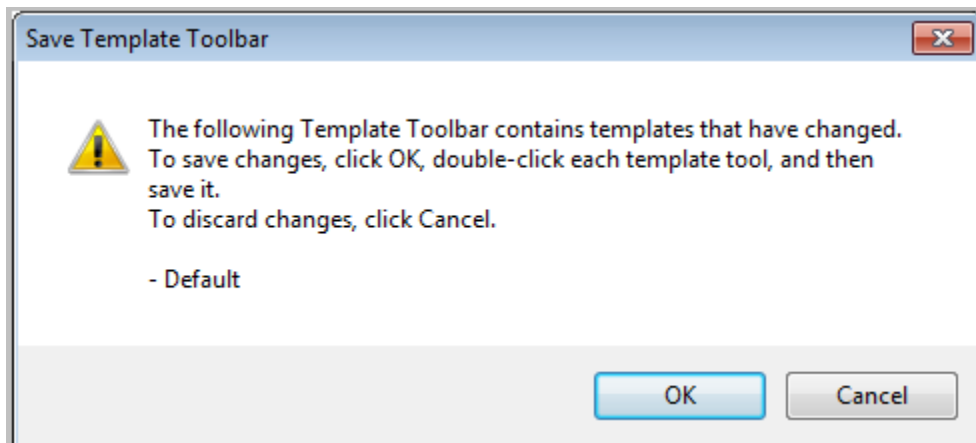


Error Message – How I Worked with the Developer as the User Advocate

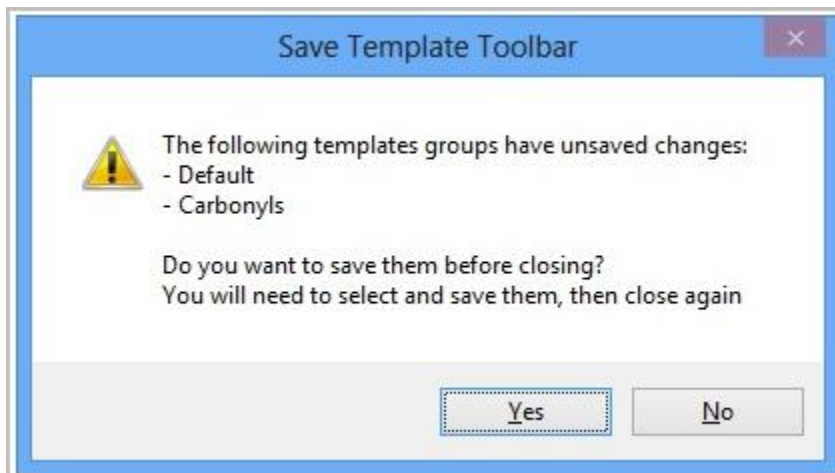
The technical writer is often the first “user” of the product and can act as the in-house advocate for the customer. Although the following is an Information Message, it shows how I would act in the case of any message the application sends to the user, including an error message, caution, or warning.

I logged an issue in Jira because of the large distance between “The following ...” and what it refers to.



The flow is interrupted by two sentences of instructions.

The developer fixed the immediate problem, but last two lines of text have issues in clarity and punctuation. Also, in the case of a single template group, the grammar is incorrect in all three sentences.



So, working side-by-side in the Team Room, the developer and I came up with the following improvements that incorporated suggestions I offered.

- The default button is Cancel because clicking OK by mistake would cause the user to lose work.

- The two final sentences have parallel construction and follow my best-practice paradigm of Purpose Precedes Procedure:

To discard your changes, click OK.

instead of

Click OK to discard your changes.

Why tell the user to “Click OK” at the beginning of the sentence if that is exactly what the user should not do? Instead, allow the user to recognize her or his goal, and then learn the action necessary to attain that goal.

- The problem of singular versus plural grammar is solved by making the underlying code aware of whether one or more template groups have been changed. The developer took this suggestion and, in the case of a single template group, incorporated its name in the first sentence.

