3 Business Benefits of Technical Documentation

Technical Documentation Advantages from Andrew Soosai

How many times have you needed vital technical information to solve a problem, only to discover that the expert who held the knowledge has since moved on to another organization? Or perhaps you are planning a complex integration project. The proposal requires executive buy-in, as well as an understanding of all the pieces are and how to fit them together. Technical documentation is vital in these situations.

> *Many organizations possess an impressive amount of knowledge stored in the brains of a dozen or so specialists. Without anything on paper, it is difficult to pull the pieces together and put that knowledge to work.*

Thorough technical documentation provides essential business benefits at multiple levels. A clear picture of the environment streamlines issue resolution. It also empowers executives to make critical business decisions and provides a map for current and future projects.

Efficient Issue Resolution

In any technical environment, issues will arise from time to time. Comprehensive technical documentation offers several benefits to help expedite issue resolution. For example:

- Step-by-step procedures taken to address similar issues in the past allow new team members to resolve issues using the knowledge of prior experience.

- FAQ and troubleshooting documents provide users with answers to common questions and workarounds to known issues.

- Testing plans measure the effectiveness of solutions and highlight many gotchas before user engagement.

- A map of the integration points among connected systems allows technicians to quickly identify problem areas.

With effective documentation readily available, end users can perform initial troubleshooting on their own. For more complex issues, access to detailed specifications and procedures means that technicians are no longer dependent on the availability of a single expert.

Better Decisions

To make informed strategic decisions, administration needs a detailed picture of the current environment and the way information flows within the organization. For instance, migration to the cloud can be painful without proper planning. Which elements should move to the cloud and which should remain local? How much data is involved? Where does it currently reside?

Technical documentation provides a map of the data flow within the current environment, as well as the proposed migration. With that information, executives can make key decisions on financing and the order of migration. They know what questions to ask and can anticipate problem points to address.

Once the project is complete, project summary documentation can include a prioritized list of additional projects, including necessary upgrades. This helps to inform budget forecasts.

Save Time and Money on Projects

In addition to a map of the technical environment, documentation of projects from beginning to end provides the organization with a roadmap for future projects. Memories fade, and key players come and go. Detailed process documentation significantly reduces the need to re-invent the wheel with each new project.

For example, envision a county that adds a police department to the county email system on Office 365. Documentation of that procedure and any issues resolved will smooth the way for migrating another department to Office 365 down the road. The organization saves both time and money.

Harness the Benefits of Technical Documentation

Take the time to develop in-depth documentation of your technical environment. Know what systems you have and how they integrate with each other and with outside entities. Develop step-by-step procedures and detailed security policies. Keep a database of issues resolved.

The time spent creating and maintaining technical documentation decreases future downtime by speeding issue resolution. It provides executives with the information needed to make financially prudent operational decisions. And, detailed process documentation smooths system maintenance and expansion projects down the road. Whether you are planning to boost business productivity with business cloud services or need to update line-of-business system security to guard against cyber-attacks, technical documentation provides an essential first step.

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