



What Can Documentation Do For You?

*A Guide by
Carolyn S. Brajkovich*

What Can Documentation Do For You?

Table of Contents	1
Introduction	2
What's So Important About Documentation	3
Benefits From Good Documentation	4
What Makes A Good Document	5
How To Reach Me	6

Introduction

Your customer service department has reached that overload status that has impacted your operations. What could you have done differently that would have reduced the number of calls received? One place that might have been overlooked is your documentation.

Our education has put us into a mindset that learning is painful and long-winded. We can look at our past and choose the teachers that were most effective. Likewise, we also remember the ones who weren't.

In a similar manner, user documentation can either inform the user with the right amount of information, or confuse them into frustration. By checking with your representatives who have direct contact with the public, you can gauge your customer's reactions to see if your company is on the right document path.

The choice to develop documentation, whether it is educational or informational, is a choice that only you can make. Even one person who pushes the envelope can change the destiny of a company. Make your documentation powerful, so that it will take you down the path of success. Everyone wants to be surrounded by successful people, so why should a company be any different?

What's So Important About Documentation

Your documents are your face to the world. Just as we all check our appearances carefully before starting our day, we need to review all documents to ensure that their communicating effectively. It's not just about the information, but it's also about the design and presentation for the correct audience. Each audience has a tone and an interest, and to ignore the audience dynamics is to shut down the communication channel.

A company that chooses to ignore the call for adequate documentation need only review the growth patterns of their own company. If the employees are not properly trained, or the processes are not clearly defined, then there is a failure in the company knowledge base. And if this communication pattern continues without any resolution, then people will shut down or maybe even leave. With each departure, a portion of the company's knowledge goes with them. And if that knowledge isn't documented, then the company is doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past. These mistakes can lead to costly outcomes in time and money.

Today's investors are very information-savvy, and will not maintain their loyalties to a close-minded company. Growth requires the knowledge that information must be shared in order for it to evolve to its new state of being.

Benefits From Good Documentation

A documentation library is a treasure trove of information. It's existence should be shared by everyone involved in the development, production, and service processes, as well as with the external user's environment. Not all information will be shared equally, but uniform knowledge can simplify everything.

Some positive results from good documentation include:

- A uniformity of product knowledge that simplifies communications and magnified errors to be corrected.
- Clearly defined processes that allow for increased quality and output.
- Knowledge that is transferred to its user allows for further development.
- Increased visibility in your market can lead to increased market share.
- Trust in your brand leads to loyalty.
- A reputation that paves your way for new and prosperous relationships.
- A great foundation that will build a stronger company.

What Makes a Good Document

The rating of a good document is obviously in the eyes of the beholder. Everyone has a different objective when reading a document, but the main intent is to be educated on the topic. Some things to look for in a good document are:

- The document is laid out in such a way that aids the user's experience.
- It uses a single voice and speaks to a specific target. It won't try to make everyone happy, which is an impossibility.
- The images relate to the topic, and strengthens the written information.
- The document uses legible fonts with adequate white space to help with the content's comprehension.
- There is a continuous flow from section to section, with each one building on its predecessor until a complete picture is formed.
- Only pertinent information is included.
- It's been reviewed by multiple organizations, and then tested in a real-time environment.
- There's a proper archive of revisions to track the document's history.
- It's been developed by a professional who's proficient in technical communications.
- It's controlled and modified by a single organization, so as to eliminate the potential for discrepancies.

How To Reach Me

My name is **Carolyn S Brajkovich**, and I'm a technical communicator.

If you want to find out more about what this technical communicator can do for your communication needs, just reach out and find me.



I'll be more than happy to help you find a customized communications solution that will fit your needs.

This work is copywrited by the author, and is intended for informational purposes only.
It was created in July 2002, and has been updated in May 2011.