



Webinar On

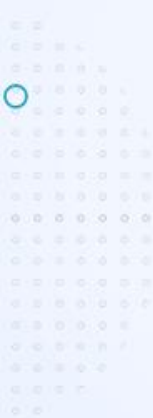


Documentation Insights: Role of Context in Technical Communication



Speaker

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Overview

From Information to Knowledge

User-Centric Documentation

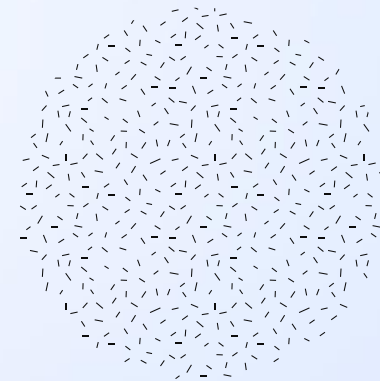
Wittgenstein's Language Games and Technical Communication

Feedback Loops

Information vs Knowledge

Information:

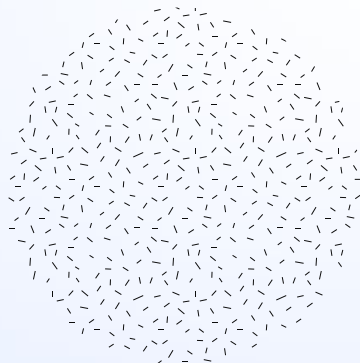
- facts about a situation, object, person, event.
- The term “information” in colloquial speech is currently predominantly used as an abstract mass-noun used to denote any amount of data, code or text that is stored, sent, received or manipulated in any medium.
- Latin Etymology: *In-formare* to shape, to give structure or form, delineate.



Information vs Knowledge

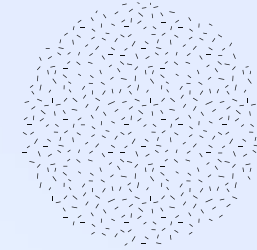
Knowledge:

- Information **and** understanding of a subject, familiarity with, skill, experience of.
 - **Proto-Indo-European:** The root **ǵneh₃-* means "to know" or "to recognize".
 - **Sanskrit:** It appears as *jñā* ज्ञ (to know), which is related to words like *jñāna* ज्ञान (knowledge).
 - **Greek:** evolved into the verb *γινώσκειν* (gignōskein), which means "to know" or "to recognize".
 - **Latin:** the root evolved into *cognoscere*, meaning "to get to know" or "to recognize".
 - **Old English:** the Proto-Indo-European root evolved into the word *cnāwan* (to know).



Information vs Knowledge

- **Information:** The existence of a dish called pizza, created by humans, illustrates an information. This general statement underscores human creativity and capability, contrasting it with animals, which do not possess the ability to cook or create such culinary items.
- **Knowledge-That:** Knowing that making pizza involves mixing dough, letting it rise, and baking it with toppings is *knowledge-that*. It includes having a list of necessary ingredients and understanding the steps but lacks *finesse*, context, and practical know-how to execute them effectively.
- **Knowledge-How:** Knowing how to make pizza means having the skills to do it well. It involves not just following a recipe, but also knowing the right timing, recognizing when the dough is right, and understanding how factors like humidity and temperature affect the process. It's about being able to adjust and adapt to get the best results.

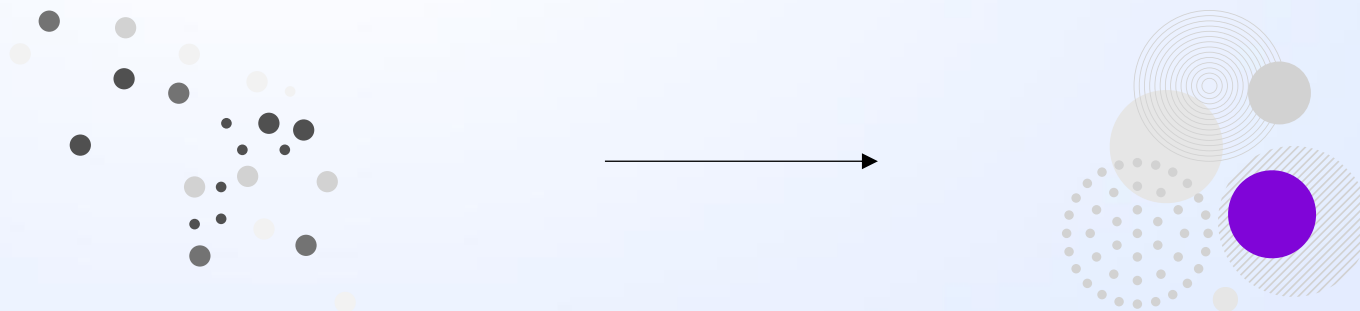


Information vs Knowledge

- **Information:** A user manual is available to assist users in understanding and using the software.
- **Knowledge-That:** Being able to understand the manual and that it features a section dedicated to a specific hardware.
- **Knowledge-How:** Following and using the manual + identifying that the documentation may not cover the specific parameters needed for the hardware when the software is installed in that particular operating system context.

Knowledge is the integration of information with understanding, context, and experience

Why this matters: Effective documentation must do more than simply provide information, which can be disjointed and lack clarity. Documentation should guide users not only on what to do but also on how to do it successfully, transforming isolated pieces of information into comprehensive knowledge through context and clarity



User-Centric Documentation

Documentation Personas key concepts



Definition and Purpose: Personas are detailed user archetypes created from research and data analysis

Creation Process: Personas are developed by collecting and analyzing user data to create fictional characters that reflect real users' characteristics, goals, and challenges, aiding in user-centered design.

Application in Design: Personas guide design and documentation decisions, enabling the creation of intuitive and user-friendly content.

Benefits of Using Personas: Using personas enhances usability by providing a clear understanding of user needs and improving problem-solving during research and design.

Designed by [Freepic](#).

User-Centric Documentation

Key Benefits of Using Personas

- **User-Centered Design:** Ensure designs meet real user needs by focusing on their goals and behaviors.
- **Guided Decisions:** Make informed choices about user experience and interface design.
- **Improved Communication:** Use personas as a shared language for team alignment.
- **Enhanced Usability:** Tailor content and features to boost user satisfaction.

Best Practices

- **Develop Detailed Personas:** Base them on comprehensive research, including interviews and surveys.
- **Integrate Throughout Design:** Use personas at every stage to align features and content with user needs.
- **Regular Updates:** Keep personas relevant by reflecting changes in user behavior and market trends.

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- **Oversimplification:** Maintain important nuances of user behavior in personas.
- **Assumption-Based Personas:** Ground them in real data, not stereotypes. Talk with your colleagues, have 1:1, create forms.
- **Neglecting Active Use:** Ensure personas are a core part of the design process, not just documents.

User-Centric Documentation

Persona	SME User: the Senior Developer	Basic User: The Newcomer
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Role: Senior Developer at a tech company• Experience: 8 years in software development• Goals: Develop efficient, scalable software solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Role: Internship at a tech company• Experience: Limited experience with digital tools• Goals: Learn to use company software for daily tasks
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tech-Savvy: Expert in multiple programming languages and frameworks• Problem Solver: Enjoys tackling complex coding challenges• Learner: Continuously seeks to improve code quality and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beginner: Needs step-by-step guidance• Apprehensive: Hesitant about using new technology• Learner: Eager to improve skills but requires support
Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive API documentation and code examples• Access to advanced technical resources, user stories, and tickets• Regular updates on software best practices and new technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple, jargon-free documentation• How-to guides and software functionalities overview• Clear instructions for basic tasks and troubleshooting
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping up with rapidly evolving technologies and frameworks• Balancing feature development with code maintenance• Ensuring code quality and performance under tight deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overcoming fear of making mistakes with technology• Understanding technical terms and concepts• Finding time for training amidst daily responsibilities

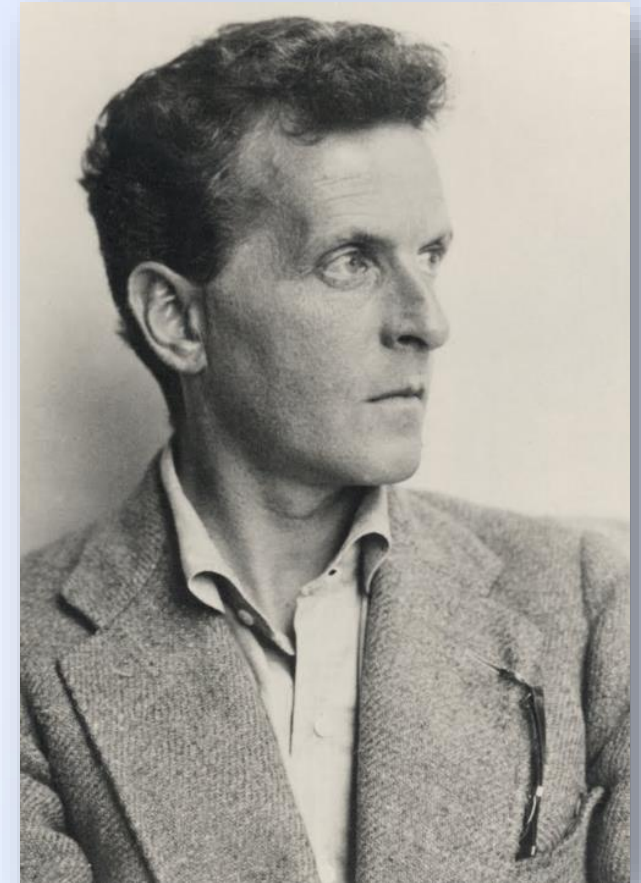
Wittgenstein's Language Games

- **Ludwig Wittgenstein:** A key 20th-century philosopher, noted for his work in the philosophy of language and contributions to analytical philosophy.
- **Philosophy of Language:** Wittgenstein examined how language shapes understanding, emphasizing that meaning comes from use, not inherent properties.
- **Language Games:** He used language games to show how words gain meaning through function and use in life, like following game rules.
- **Contextual Meaning:** Wittgenstein argued that understanding language requires examining its practical use, with meaning radically changing based on context and interactions.

“The point is not to explain a language-game ... but to take account of a language-game.”

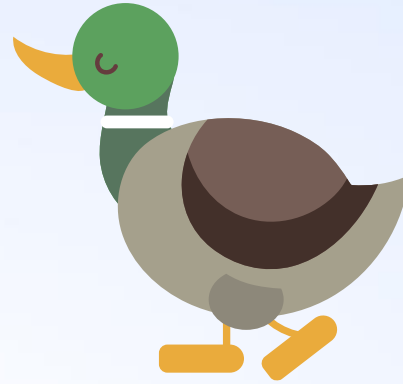
“If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.”

Photo By Moritz Nähr - 1930 Austrian National Library, Public Domain.



Wittgenstein's Language Games

- **Case 1:** Someone yells DUCK!
 - The Animal vs Dipping/Avoiding
- **Case 2:** Draw the Bow
- **Case 3:** Draw the Bow (again?)



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Disambiguation

Removing ambiguity through **context clarity and adopting better terminology**

Term	Context 1 - Information Technology	Context 2 - Manufacturing	Context 3 - General
Thread	A sequence of executable commands in a program.	A thin strand of fiber used in textiles	A narrative element or theme in storytelling / A series of messages or posts on an online forum or email chain
Pipeline	A set of data processing elements connected in series	A sequence of stages in a production process	A long pipe for transporting oil or gas
Patch	A set of changes to update or fix a program	A piece of material used to repair a product	A small piece of ground, especially one used for gardening
Hook	A mechanism to insert custom code	A tool used to lift or move materials	A curved device used for catching fish
Kernel	The core part of an operating system managing resources	N/A	The edible part of a nut
Bus	A communication system transferring data between components	A line of belts for moving materials or products	A large vehicle carrying passengers

- **Textile Manufacturing Scenario:** The software controlling the threads requires careful monitoring to prevent disruptions.
- **Issue Report:** Threads issue has stopped production. In this context, "threads" refers to the physical fibers spun on a spindle in textile production



Feedback Loops

- **Spiral-like Progression:** Each cycle builds on the previous ones and should enhance understanding, value and clarity.
- **Iterative Improvement:** Continuously refine through feedback, incorporating new insights for documentation effectiveness step by step.
- **Dynamic Evolution:** Adapt and grow, using each new understanding as a foundation for further enhancement.
- **Validation:** Test the improved content with subject matter experts and new users. Good documentation allows diverse readers to grasp varying depths of information.

Photo by Yana Marudova on [Unsplash](#)



What to avoid

- **Ignoring Outdated Content:** Failing to regularly update or remove outdated information can lead to confusion and inefficiency.
- **Overlooking Dead Links:** Allowing links to point to non-existent or irrelevant content disrupts the user experience and diminishes trust.
- **Neglecting User Feedback:** Not incorporating user feedback can result in documentation that doesn't meet the needs of its audience.
- **Redundant Content:** Repeating information unnecessarily can make the documentation cumbersome and difficult to navigate.
- **Complex Navigation:** Creating [overly complex navigation paths](#) can frustrate users and make it difficult to locate relevant information.

Image: Escher's Relativity – [Blender Render](#)

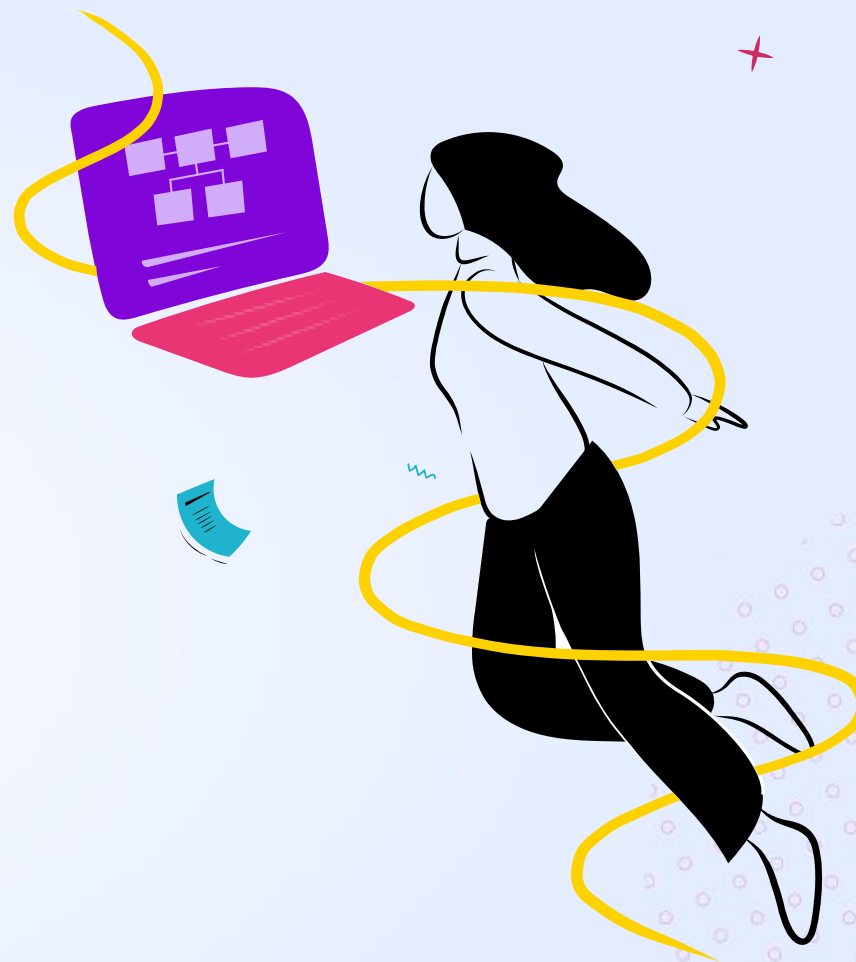
Questions ?

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Thank You!

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