



Webinar On



Stop Chasing SMEs: Build Better Collaboration and Better Docs



Speaker

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The “Compliment”

“*Easier* to work with than other technical writers.”

The Problem

It wasn't the SME. It was the structure.

Being accommodating isn't the same as being collaborative.

Three Shifts

01

Extraction → Partnership

02

Unstructured Input → Guided Contribution

03

Bottlenecks → Flow

Shift 1 – From Extraction to Partnership

Nobody pours effort into a void.

Give the SME a stake by connecting their work to something real.

Three Questions to Ask Yourself First

- Is this answering a support ticket we get over and over?
- Is a real, named customer asking for it?
- Does it close a gap we can see in user feedback?

Two Kinds of Knowledge

Neither of you makes a good doc alone.

That's the difference between a partnership and a transaction:

- The SME knows how it works.
- You know who it's for — and where it hurts.
- Your job: bring the user into the room.

Shift 2 – From Unstructured Input to Guided Contribution

Lower the **cost** of a good answer.

Instead of asking SMEs to author, give them something to react to.

Vague vs. Guided

VAGUE

“Can you explain how authentication works?”

“Can you review this doc?”

“Tell me about the new feature.”

GUIDED

“I sketched the auth flow — which step did I get wrong?”

“Two things: is the rate limit right, does the error match?”

“What do people get wrong the first time they use this?”

Don't Outsource the Cleanup

Review fatigue = the blank page in a new outfit.

Human review is non-negotiable. Make it more accessible:

- Read it first. Revise for clarity.
- Mark the few places that truly need an accuracy check.
- Guide the review. Don't make them hunt.

Shift 3 – From Bottlenecks to Flow

A bottleneck isn't a slow SME. It's an undesigned process.

Rather than chasing input, build it into the process.

Ride the Lifecycle You Already Have

Research

- Betting table
- Know what's coming

Clarify

- Internal demos
- Cycle reviews

Review

- Release cadence
- Ships with product

Questions?

Thank You!

The goal is never to just be easy to work with.
It's to be *effective* to work with.

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