Three Essential Aspects of Technical Documentation

The following points highlight the importance of technical documentation and how user understanding increases productivity and greater product support.

Know Your Audience

Tailor your documentation to meet the needs of your audience. Develop a persona representing your users that understands their requirements to ensure clear and concise communication.

When writing a document, keep your audience in mind. If your audience is a vague persona, your documentation will not be concise and to the point. For example, when creating a user guide for a non-technical audience, use familiar terminology and define technical terms.

Research Your Topic

Research your topic. Gain a deep understanding of the product feature by testing it if possible. Read available resources such as technical specifications, release notes, and design documents. Engage in discussions with engineers, subject matter experts, and other designers to gather insights. Take detailed notes for future reference. For example, I research the new topic searching for any internal or external documentation that provides insight. After exhausting these resources, I request additional information or instructions that are applicable to the new topic.

Draft a Clear Outline

Write a clear and concise outline that includes all aspects of your topic. Seek input from other users and stakeholders to ensure completeness. Discuss the outline with the stakeholders to clarify the scope of the documentation. Define the 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why', and 'how' about the product or feature to guide your content creation.

The three most important pieces of technical writing are understanding your audience, researching your topic, and writing clear and concise content.