Future techcomm trends – differing opinions, and why everyone could be right

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9th International Conference on Technical Communication
Overview
Overview

About me

Our surveys

There are different types of Technical Authors

Implications and questions
About me
About me

Director at Cherryleaf, a technical writing services and training company

Based near London
My biases

We work mostly in the software sector

I read only content in English and German

My network comes mostly from the IT sector
Our surveys
We ran two surveys

One via Social Media

Another using Microsoft Forms
What trends do you think there will be in Technical Communication for 2021 and beyond?

32 responses
What is one goal you’re setting for 2021?

124 responses
There were differing opinions over:

XML, DITA, structured content

Silos

The status of technical communicators

Outputs
Who was right?
There are different types of Technical Authors
They work in different environments

- Localisation
- Internet of Things (APIs)
- General Products
- Product Safety
- Software as a Service
Reducing calls to Support

Stopping the user from getting stuck
What do most Technical Authors do?

Explain technical “stuff” to a non-technical audience

Enable users to be better, safer users

Understand (WHAT to do and HOW to do it)

Using words, mostly
Deliverables

Online Help
Reference guides
Getting started guides
Quick reference cards
User guides
Training guides
Screencasts
Tools

Help Authoring Tools

Component-based Content Management Systems

General Products
“Technical Author”

“Technical Writer”
Localisation

Reduce the cost of translation

Content reuse

Consistency
Deliverables

Online Help
Reference guides
Getting started guides
Quick reference cards
User guides
Training guides
Screencasts

Localisation
Help Authoring Tools
Component-based Content Management Systems
Structured writing

Localisation
“Technical Author”

“Technical Writer”

“Information Developer”
Customer retention
Onboarding
Customer Experience
Usability
Time to market
Software as a Service
Deliverables

UI text
Onboarding guides
Tutorials
Onboarding emails
Help
Knowledge Bases
Tools

Excel

Information Development Environment

Figma/Zeplin/Ditto/Adobe XD

Help Authoring Tools

Component-based Content Management Systems

Software as a Service
“UX Writer”

“Content Developer”
Developer audience

Time to First “Hello World”

What does it do/Why should you use it
Deliverables

- Conceptual information
- Cookbook
- API reference
- Getting started guide
- Tutorial/Codelab
- One-pager summary
- Case study

Internet of Things (APIs)
Deliverables

API Guide

Cheat sheet

Release notes

Internet of Things (APIs)
L18N?

Google Maps Platform

Découvrez comment développer votre activité grâce à des insights concrets et des expériences de localisation immersives.

Premiers pas

99 % de couverture mondiale
Profitez de données complètes et fiables pour plus de 200 pays et territoires.

25 millions de mises à jour quotidiennes
Appuyez-vous sur des informations de localisation précises, disponibles en temps réel.

1 milliard d'utilisateurs actifs par mois
Évolvez en toute confiance grâce à notre infrastructure.
PREMIERS PAS
- Premiers pas avec GMP
- Sélecteur d'API
- Crédits du compte de facturation
- Facturation GMP
- Rapports GMP
- Questions fréquentes concernant GMP
- Assistance et ressources GMP
- Gestion des incidents GMP

MAPS
- API Maps JavaScript
- API Maps Static
- API Street View Static
- API Maps Embed
- URL Maps

ROUTES
- API Directions
- API Distance Matrix
- API Roads
- Services de jeux

PLACES
- API Places
- SDK Places pour Android
- SDK Places pour iOS
- API Places Library, Maps JavaScript
- API Geocoding
- API Geolocation
- API Time Zone

AUTRES RESSOURCES
- Bonnes pratiques concernant les clés API
- Détails des couvertures de carte
- Guide d'optimisation
- Abandons
- Forfait de suivi des ressources GMP
- Questions fréquentes sur la migration des autorités de certification racine GMP
- Programmes publics
- Forfait Premium

SDK Maps pour Android
SDK Maps pour iOS
Tools

Static Site Generators

Markdown/AsciiDoc

OpenAPI specification files

Internet of Things (APIs)
“Technical Writer”

“Documentarian”

“API Documentation Writer”

“Writer/Developer”
Legal compliance

ANSI Z535.6

ISO/IEC 37:2012

STE-100

Structured Product Labeling

S1000D
Deliverables

Printed content

Videos

Product Safety
Tools

Word

FrameMaker

InDesign

Help Authoring Tools

Component-based Content Management Systems

Camtasia

Product Safety
“Technical Author”

“Technical Writer”
Implications and questions
Is there a single destination?

Maturity models suggest there’s a single destination
Analogy

Bikes can have different functions

Images:
Richard Masoner / Cyclelicious, Adam Leadbetter, ubrayj02
The users’ needs can differ

- Speed
- Repairing
- Loading and Safety
We’re unlikely to all ride the same type of bike

Image: theraplay.co.uk
We will have some shared activities
They could overlap

Localisation

Internet of Things

Product Safety

SaaS
There are common skills needed

General Products
But significant differences could remain
Comments
Brian Buehling

“I see a slightly different grouping:

1. SaaS (same)

2. Cloud / API (virtually the same with a different label)

3. Product (often driven by localization, but also service and distributor documentation requirements)

4. Regulatory (SPL, S1000D, Pharma)…

Founder and Managing Director of Dakota Systems
Brian Buehling

...The most interesting point is that I see the job requirements and tools for tech writers are now diverging for these clusters after years of convergence.”

Founder and Managing Director of Dakota Systems
More information
Our podcast

Apple Podcasts

cherryleaf.podbean.com

Many other podcast platforms
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