

Write a user manual for your software

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1 Introduction

Good user manuals are non-technical documents to educate users about the product's features while teaching them how to use those features effectively. You have to develop your user manual along with your software.

*A good manual does not just happen, it is planned, executed, and tested with the same attitude, care, and attention as the product itself.*¹.

This document is a brief description of aspects that we expect to find in your user manual if applicable to your project. For each demo it is expected that the user manual should cover the sections of the system that is implemented at that stage.

2 General information

2.1 Title Page

System name and the names and/or affiliation of all stakeholders.

2.2 System Overview

Explain in general terms the system and the purpose for which it is intended. Use non-technical terminology. The summary should outline the uses of the system in supporting the activities of the different types of users.

2.3 System Configuration

Describe and depict graphically the equipment, communications, and networks used by the system. Include the type and configuration of computer input and output devices.

¹<https://www.hci.com.au/read-the-manual/>

2.4 Installation

Detailed description of where to find the software and how to install it.

3 Getting started

Describe the procedures necessary to access the system, including how to get a licence, user ID and log on. Describe how the user changes a user ID. Describe the actions a user must take to change a password.

Provide a general walkthrough of the system from initiation through exit. The logical arrangement of the information should enable the potential user to understand the sequence and flow of the system. Use screen captures to depict examples. Give reference to where these are explained in more detail the manual.

Describe the actions necessary to properly exit the system.

4 Using the system

This section forms the bulk of the user manual. It consists of a detailed description of the system functions. Each function (use case) should be described. Include screen captures and descriptive narrative to explain **when, why and how** each function is used.

If the system has query or retrieval capabilities, the instructions necessary for recognition, preparation, and processing of a query applicable to a database should be explained in detail. If the system can create reports, describe all reports available to the end user. Include report format and the meaning of each field shown on the report.

Use appropriate data examples to explain the full extent in which each function can be used.

5 Troubleshooting

Describe all recovery and error correction procedures, including error conditions that may be generated and corrective actions that may need to be taken.

If there are special actions the user must take to insure that data is properly saved or that some other function executes properly, describe those actions here. Include screen captures and descriptive narratives, if applicable. For example, Show screen shots of error messages produced by your system and for each explain what may have caused the error and explain how the user can avoid the error.