DEFINING THE MEANING OF QUALITY
IN SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION

11 ASPECTS OF QUALITY FOR YOUR SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION QUALITY FRAMEWORK

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AGENDA

- What is Quality?
- The Research
- The Results
- A Framework for Measuring Quality

WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF "QUALITY"?

"*How good or bad something is.*"
(Cambridge Dictionary)

"*Quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy given needs.*"
(American Society for Quality)

"*The standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something.*
A distinctive attribute or characteristic possessed by someone or something."
(Oxford Languages)

WHAT IS THAN QUALITY IN SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION?

"*How good or bad **software documentation** is.*"

"*Quality is the totality of features and characteristics of **software documentation** that bear on its ability to satisfy given needs.*"

"*The standard of **software documentation** as measured against other **software documentation** of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of **software documentation** .*

*A distinctive attribute or characteristic possessed by **software documentation** .*"

THE RESEARCH

Question asked: "In your opinion, what makes software documentation a high-quality documentation deliverable?"

Time period: beginning of 2021

Audience consists of: technical writers, software developers, people interested in technical communications

Region coverage: global

Participants: 31 people attended, anonymized

THE RESULTS

Defining quality aspects allows technical communication experts and team leads to evaluate software documentation quality against a benchmark – "The Perfect Document".

Using the results from the research you can define KPI and objectives to fulfill for your documentation deliverable that increases the quality of the software documentation.

Software Documentation Quality Chart
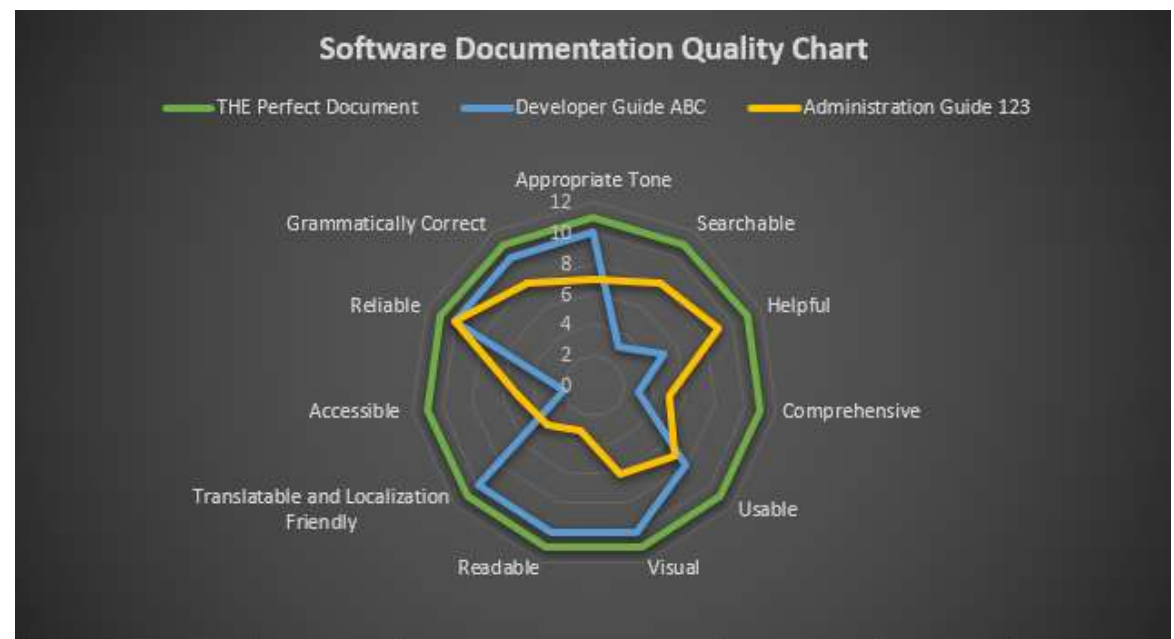
WHAT DID PEOPLE ANSWER?

Easily accessible is easy to follow equals a high-quality software documentation deliverable. Easily accessible in that it needs to be in a shared and logical location. Easy to follow in that it needs to be simple and succinct.

1. Well organized content -- not just by features, but by typical usage workflows (scenarios); 2. Ability to find locate the problem quickly; 3. Short and to the point (as much as possible) answers with links to details in someone needs.

Precise and accurate content along with proper content sequence

THE FRAMEWORK - OVERVIEW

The participants in the research outlined 11 main characteristics of high-quality software documentation. High-quality software documentation is:

- Helpful
- Comprehensive
- Searchable
- Visual
- Usable
- Readable
- Reliable
- Grammatically Correct
- Translatable and Localization Friendly
- Accessible
- And uses Appropriate Tone
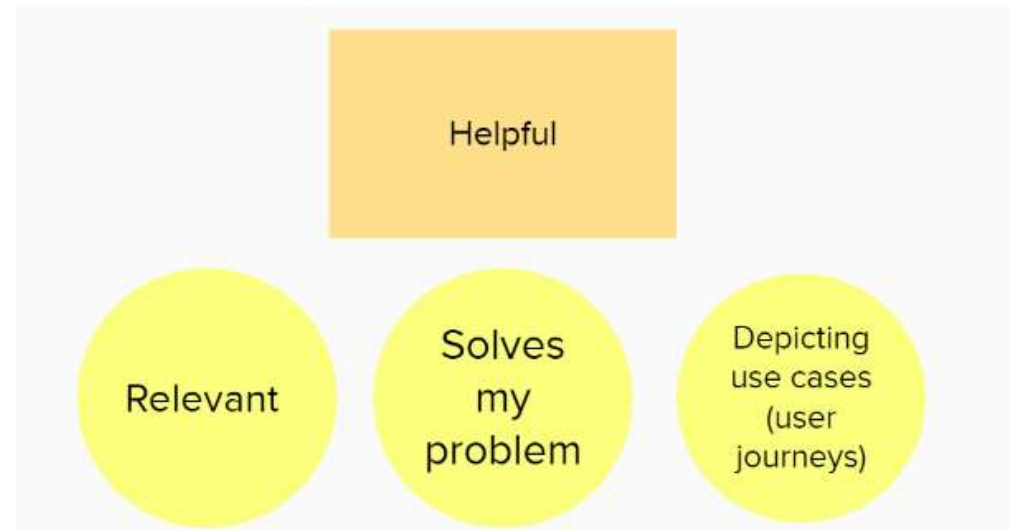
High-Quality Software Documentation is

Appropriate Tone	Searchable	Helpful
Comprehensive	Usable	Visual
Readable	Translatable and Localization Friendly	Accessible
Reliable	Grammatically Correct	
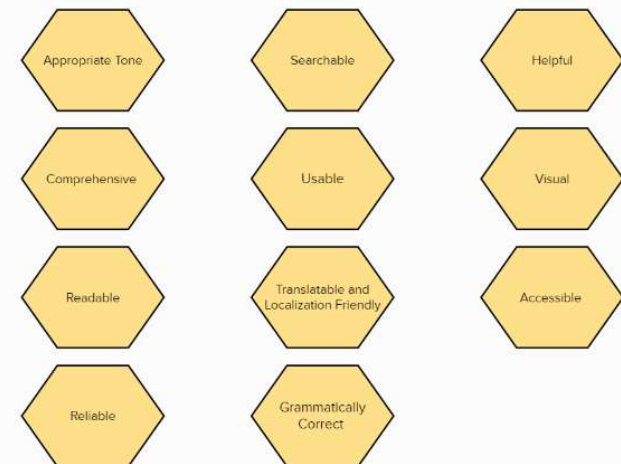
HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IS HELPFUL

The research shows that helpful documentation has qualities such as:

- Being relevant for a target audience

- Helps the consumer solve a particular problem

- Tries to follow the logical sequence of steps one follows to use the software. This sequence of steps can be following a user journey throughout the software and/or specific use cases in which the software is being used.

HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IS COMPREHENSIVE

Comprehensive documentation takes care to cover all aspects of use of the software application. It also uses consistent terminology and meets the requirements of the standards accepted in the given industry.
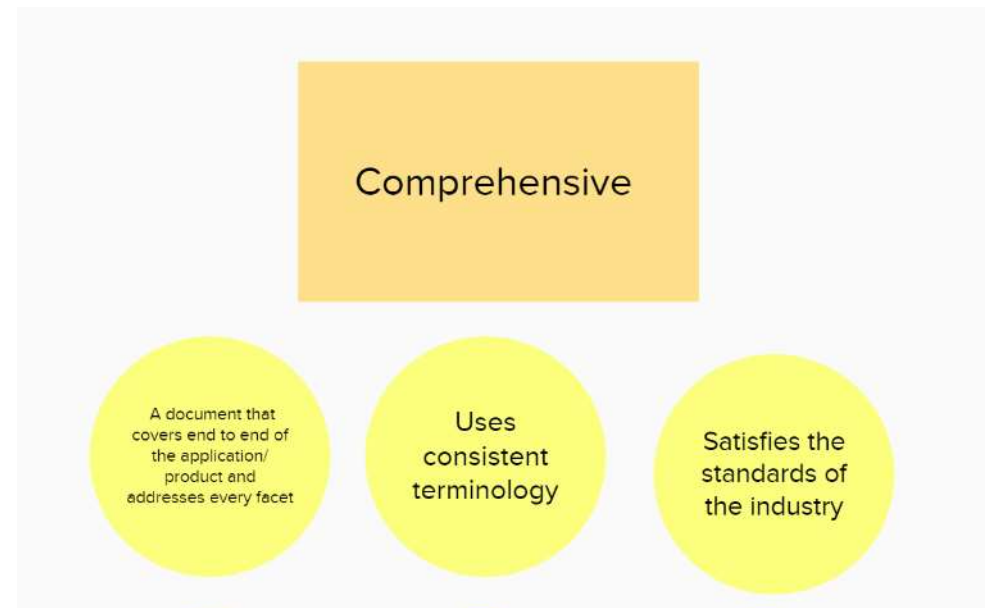
HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IS SEARCHABLE

Searchable means that even if you have great documentation but it cannot be found, it shall bring no value to the customer. That is why you must have documentation that is easy to search and retrieve.
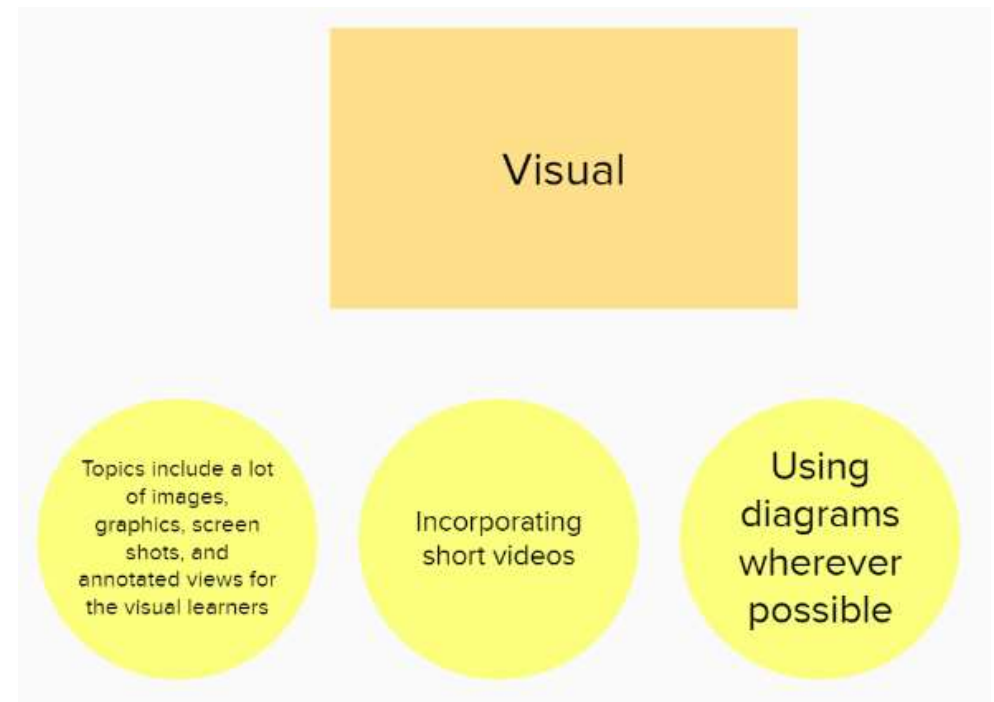
HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IS VISUAL

Software documentation must not be text-only. It must provide content that facilitates the information consumption and makes the documentation instructions easy to consume and follow.

Make sure you use visual elements, such as diagrams, screen shot and infographics.

There are instructions that are much easier to follow using an instructional video instead of text.

HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IS USABLE

The documentation must be straight to the point, no unnecessary content, logically structured and organized. It must address the needs of the information consumer in a logical manner, guiding him or her through the documentation.
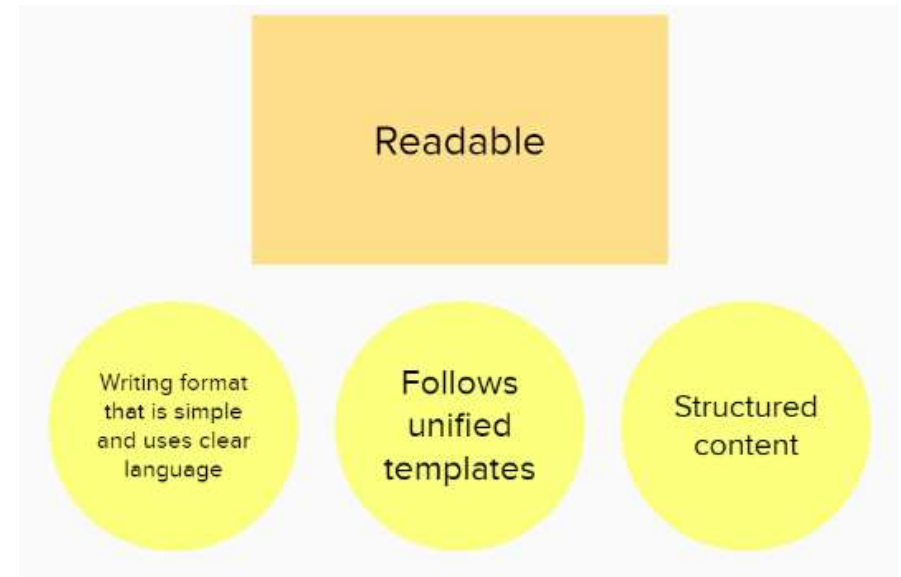
HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IS READABLE

Content must be visually organized in clear and well structured format.

The content formatting, fonts, colors and spacing between the paragraphs – all that has an impact on the consumer's perception of the content, making it easier or harder to consume the information.
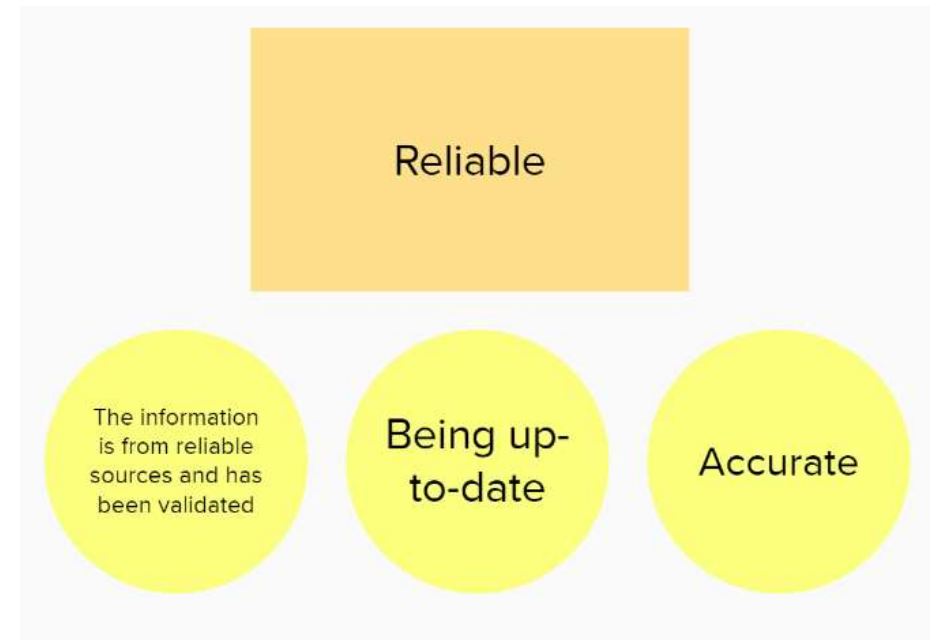
Using standardized templates for consistently deliver the different information types also ease the information consumption.

Readable

Writing format that is simple and uses clear language

Follows unified templates
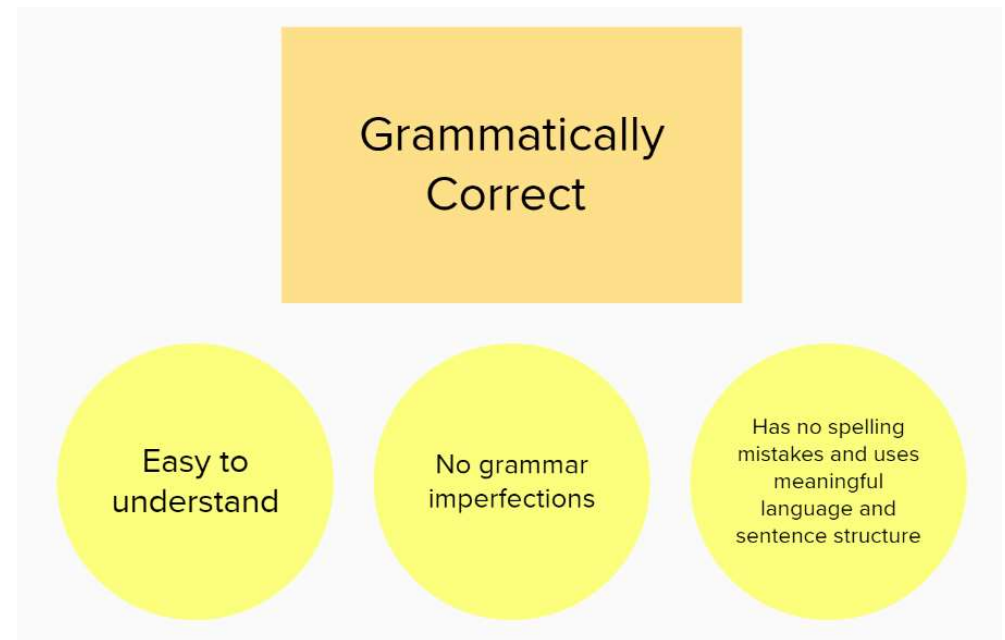
Structured content

HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IS RELIABLE

The content has been well researched and is correct.

HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IS GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT

High language quality ensures that the documentation is easy to understand and will have no incorrect or confusing information due to language mistakes.

Grammatically Correct

Easy to understand

No grammar imperfections

Has no spelling mistakes and uses meaningful language and sentence structure

HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IS TRANSLATABLE AND LOCALIZATION FRIENDLY

An important personalization aspect of the software documentation is to make it translatable to the language of the information consumer and also to be able to localize if for the needs of the specific region where the customer is located.

THE FRAMEWORK IN DETAILS
HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IS ACCESSIBLE
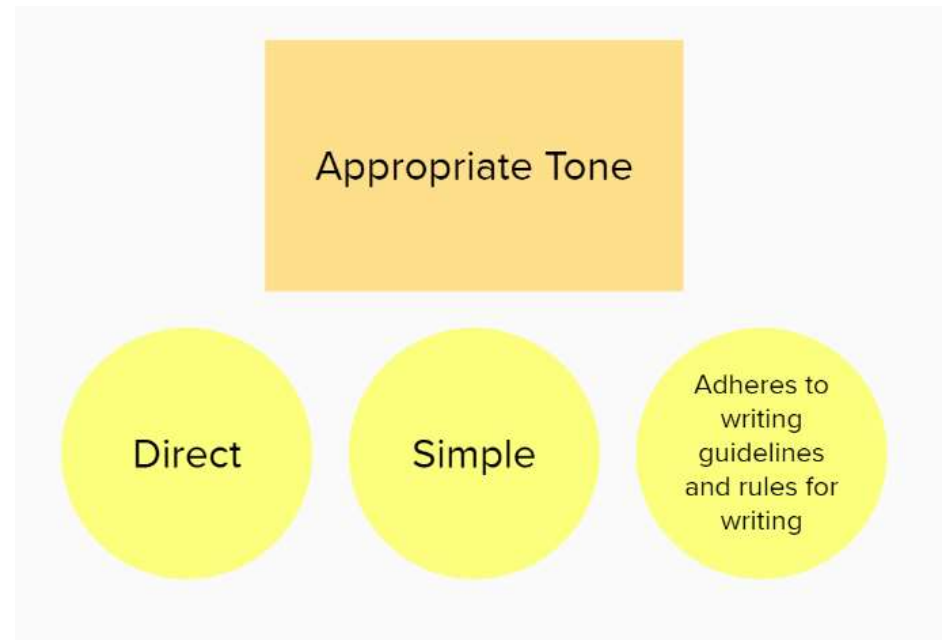
Content can be consumed in the preferred way for the customer.

HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IS USING APPROPRIATE TONE

The software documentation must sound in a way that speaks to the user with the right style and tone. Your brand message and style will be established by using guidelines and standardized rules for writing.

Thank you!

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