Abstract

This case study examines the influence of technical writing on knowledge management systems and its subsequent effect on business performance

The Impact of Technical Writing on Knowledge Management Systems and Business Performance

Case Study Analysis

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# Abstract

*Organizations regard knowledge as a vital asset, on par with technological resources. Technological and business writing practices have evolved as technology advances and business regulations change. This case study examines the influence of technical writing on knowledge management systems and its subsequent effect on business performance.*

# Keywords

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Technical Writing, TW, Knowledge Management Systems, KMS, Knowledge base, KB, Business Performance, Case Deflection, Customer Satisfaction, CSAT, Product Usage, Regulatory Adherence, Legal Liabilities, Machine Learning, AI, User Enablement, Developer Workload, Subject Matter Expert, SME

# Introduction

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| In the contemporary business environment, technical writing has emerged as a crucial instrument for communication. It simplifies complex information, making it easy to understand. This case study delves into the significance of technical writing in business and its various advantages. Elevate's 2023 CSAT results underscore the importance of technical writing in enhancing customer satisfaction. Feedback highlights how adequate documentation has increased customer satisfaction ratings, demonstrating the value of clear and comprehensive technical information. We will further explore how technical writing aids in efficient knowledge management and boosts business performance. | A diagram of writing process  Description automatically generated |

# Gilbert + Tobin (G+T) – Our Esteemed Client

Gilbert + Tobin (G+T) is a leading Australian law firm providing comprehensive legal services since its establishment in 1988. The firm caters to a diverse range of clients, including corporations and government entities, both within Australia and on an international scale. G+T is also committed to social responsibility, actively participating in pro bono work and community service initiatives.

G+T has a strong presence in the major Australian cities of Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth. Its focus extends to the Asia-Pacific region. One of G+T's unique aspects is its flat hierarchy, which distinguishes it from traditional law firms. This structure promotes a culture of openness and collaboration, fostering a more inclusive and efficient work environment.

A testament to G+T’s expertise and influence in the legal field is their advisory role in the most significant public Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A) deal in Australia’s history. They advised on the A$39 billion acquisition of Afterpay Limited by Square, a significant player in the financial technology industry. This landmark deal underscores G+T’s ability to handle high-stakes, complex transactions and its position as a trusted advisor in significant corporate matters.

## Gilbert + Tobin (G+T) on Technical Writing

Gilbert + Tobin (G+T) has expressed high satisfaction with the Technical Writing services they have received, particularly in the areas of quality of work, peace of mind, and value. The ratings reflect a positive experience across these key dimensions:

* **Quality of Work (9/10):** G+T has expressed high satisfaction with the quality of work the Technical Writing team delivers, a key factor that significantly contributes to their overall satisfaction. This score suggests that the team's output consistently meets G+T's standards and expectations.
* **Peace of Mind (10/10):** The perfect score in this category is a testament to the Technical Writing team's effective communication and updates, significantly enhancing G+T's peace of mind. This aspect of the service, which G+T highly values, is deeply understood and appreciated.
* **Value (9.5/10):** The near-perfect score in this category is a testament to the value G+T perceives in the Technical Writing team's services. This is due to the quality of work, expertise, and outcomes, which they consider to be excellent value for money.
* **Innovation (8.5/10):** While still a high score, the slightly lower rating in this category might indicate a desire for more innovative approaches in delivering Technical Writing services.
* **Proactive Partnership (8/10):** This score suggests that while G+T appreciates the efforts of the Technical Writing team, there is room for improvement in a proactive partnership involving more stakeholder interaction and anticipation of G+T's needs.

# Problem Statement

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| A person and person in different poses  Description automatically generated | Organizations increasingly rely on Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) to facilitate knowledge creation, sharing, and application in the modern business environment. These systems are crucial in improving organizational performance by promoting informed decision-making and fostering innovation. However, the effectiveness of KMS is often hindered by the complexity of technical information and the need for more precise, concise, and understandable documentation.  The challenge is that while technical information is abundant, it is often presented in a manner that is difficult for non-technical personnel to comprehend, which creates a barrier to the effective use of KMS, leading to sub-optimal decision-making and reduced organizational performance. |

## Cost Implications of Inadequate Documentation

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| Studies indicated that the absence/inadequacy of technical documentation had financial repercussions for a company in terms of:   * **Customer Retention:** Poor documentation led to dissatisfaction, potentially resulting in business loss. * **Employee Efficiency:** Inefficient internal documentation wastd time as employees search for required information instead of performing their revenue-generating roles. * **Regulatory Adherence:** Failure to comply with technical documentation requirements set by government or industry regulatory agencies led to hefty fines. * **Legal Liabilities:** Insufficient technical documentation exposes companies to product liability lawsuits, which were financially detrimental. | A person standing in front of a large stack of money |

## Challenges and Opportunities

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| Customer feedback from the 2023 CSAT results highlights several key areas needing improvement, such as enhanced customer service and better functionality. These challenges are addressed by implementing robust technical writing practices and improving overall customer experience and operational efficiency. Additionally, knowledge management systems will be affected as technology progresses and new privacy regulations are adopted. The primary drawback of these transformations is that they may diminish the distinct features of the involved technical and business writing. However, machine learning AI allows software to process and understand data faster, though it also has drawbacks. For instance, while AI can process large volumes of data quickly, it may need help understanding the subtleties of human language. |  |

# Proposed Solution

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|  | Technical writing addresses several critical issues in business, including case deflection, customer satisfaction, and product adoption:   * **Case Deflection:** Technical writing reduces the number of support tickets by providing users with accessible and relevant information, allowing the support team to focus on more critical tasks. * **Customer Satisfaction:** Informative technical documentation enhances the customer experience and demonstrates the company's commitment to their needs. The 2023 CSAT results indicated a positive response to the quality of documentation provided, with a notable increase in customer satisfaction ratings. * **Product Adoption:** Technical documentation, available 24/7 and potentially including videos, URLs, or interactive elements, allows users to access relevant information conveniently. |

## Technical Writing: The Role

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| Technical writing plays a crucial role in addressing the above challenges. By translating complex technical information into user-friendly content, technical writers can bridge the gap between technical and non-technical personnel, facilitating effective use of KMS and improving organizational performance. As a technical communicator, the role involves preparing documentation such as information booklets, guides, and leaflets that instruct users on how to use products like smartphones. |  |

## Technical Writing: The Nature

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| Technical writing is a form of communication that involves converting complex technical information into easily understandable, relatable, referable, and reusable content. Unlike creative writing, technical writing does not manipulate the reader's emotions but focuses on presenting information clearly and concisely. |  |
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## Technical Writing in Knowledge Management:

Technical writing plays a significant role in knowledge management systems. A technical author is an expert who excels in crafting straightforward and succinct documents for intricate technical topics. They translate complex technical information into user-friendly content that the target audience can easily understand. For example, a technical writer might create a user manual for a new software product, ensuring that users can understand and use the product effectively.

Technical writers play a crucial role in supporting Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) in several ways:

1. **Content Creation:** They generate high-quality content for the KMS, such as documentation, user guides, FAQs, and troubleshooting articles.
2. **Content Organization and Categorization:** They structure and organize information effectively within the KMS, facilitating easy navigation and retrieval.
3. **Standardization and Consistency:** They ensure the content within the KMS adheres to consistent writing styles, terminology, and formatting.
4. **Content Updates and Maintenance:** They review and update existing content to reflect product changes, processes, or industry standards.
5. **User-Friendly Documentation:** They produce intuitive guides that cater to the requirements and tastes of the system's end-users.
6. **Searchability and Metadata:** They comprehend the significance of metadata and keywords for efficient discoverability within the Knowledge Management System.
7. **Collaboration with Subject Matter Experts:** They work closely with SMEs to gather information and ensure the accuracy and completeness of the content.
8. **Training and Support Documentation:** They create training materials, user guides, and support documentation within the KMS.

**Periodic and systematic customer feedback** within Elevate has consistently affirmed the pivotal role of the Technical Writing (TW) team in augmenting the usability, accessibility, and value of the Knowledge Management System (KMS). The TW team's contribution in creating, organizing, updating, and maintaining content is integral to effective knowledge distribution within businesses. Their expertise in crafting clear and user-focused guides proves indispensable for internal and external KMS users.

# The Impact of Knowledge Management on Organizational Performance

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| Knowledge management (KM), including knowledge processes and infrastructure capabilities, affects all aspects of organizational performance directly or indirectly. KM practices allow businesses to quickly disseminate information across various departments, including training materials and business data. Readily available business knowledge can foster more efficient and cost-effective operations. For instance, a company with a well-structured KM system can reduce employees' time searching for information, increasing productivity.  Knowledge management significantly impacts organizational performance, and its implementation is urgent for businesses striving for efficiency and cost-effectiveness. |  |

## Elevate Customer Success

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|  | Technical writing enhances customer satisfaction and product adoption and mitigates potential financial and legal risks. Simplifying complex information and empowering users contribute significantly to a company's success. The 2023 Annual CSAT Results for the Legal Operations Services at Elevate demonstrate this impact, particularly for customers like G+T. The feedback includes comments such as "The Elevate Team continually goes above and beyond to analyze, report, and manage deadlines" and "We have a great team supporting us"(2023 Annual CSAT Result…). |

## Simplified Complexity

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|  | Today's products, both corporate and personal, are complex. Technical writing can speed up understanding these products by providing users with the necessary information upfront. Enhanced even the internal quality of Knowledge Bases (KBs) to a higher level, guided by pre-established audit metrics about the simplicity of a KB, user comprehension, and its searchability across the Knowledge Management System (KMS). |

## Elevate Success

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|  | Professionally designed technical documentation enhances a company's financial health by:   * **Empowering Users and Potential Customers:** It provides comprehensive information for informed decision-making, enabling users to excel with the product. * **Reducing Developer Workload:** Handling documentation tasks alleviates developers' workloads, facilitating timely project delivery.   The CSAT results highlight the effectiveness of technical writing within Legal Operations Services. The NPS for Legal Operations Services improved significantly from 50 in 2021 to 62 in 2023(2023 Annual CSAT Result…). This improvement is also attributed to the high-quality documentation and support provided by the technical writing team. |

# Knowledge Overview Dashboard



# Results

* **Increased Organizational Efficiency:** Implementing the KBs increased organizational efficiency by defining clear KM objectives and goals.
* **Improved Taxonomy and Discoverability:** Conducted keyword analysis and optimization for KM content in the KBs, increasing organic traffic.
* **Enhanced Training Effectiveness:** Creating about 200 training materials based on the KBs improved training effectiveness.
* **Boosted Team Efficiency:** Co-managing a 200-article knowledge base for three teams led to an improvement in team efficiency.
* **Quality Improvement:** The KBs were instrumental in improving the quality of 200 documents, as evidenced by an increase in quality following quarterly audits. Over the course of July 23-24, the quality delivered internally was 92%, and to the customer, it neared 100%.
* **Customer Satisfaction:** The 2023 CSAT results highlighted an overall satisfaction score of 80% for the technical writing services provided, with specific praise for the team's professionalism, responsiveness, and technical competence.

## Performance Evaluation for Technical Writing Against Key Business Attributes

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| Based on the performance evaluation chart results, the Technical Writing team has been performing commendably, as evidenced by the positive feedback in areas such as Proactive Partnership, Quality of Work, and Value. These ratings indicate successful collaboration with stakeholders, high-quality output, and valuable organizational contributions.  In terms of fostering an innovative approach, the team did meet expectations set by Elevate. It streamlined processes and devised efficient solutions, thereby augmenting their impact on the organization.  Feedback related to the 'Peace of Mind' aspect has proven the team's ability to instil confidence and alleviate stakeholder stress. | A chart with green and yellow dots  Description automatically generated |

# Conclusion

Considering the rapid technological advancements, the role of technical writing in enhancing knowledge management systems has become more critical than ever. The 2023 CSAT results underscore this, with high satisfaction scores and commendations for the team's professionalism and competence serving as a testament to the effectiveness of our technical documentation. This feedback indicates how technical writing simplifies complex information, empowers users, and directly contributes to business performance. As we navigate the evolving landscape of technology and privacy regulations, these insights will guide our continuous efforts to adapt and improve our practices. Ultimately, through this commitment to excellence in technical writing and knowledge management, we will maintain our competitive edge and continue to deliver a high-quality user experience.

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