Can documentation be fun?

An exploratory journey

Dimple Kuriakose, Technical Author

Documentation

What is it?

Documentation

Documentation

Getting started guides

Product documentation

Explanations

API documentation

User manuals

How-to guides

Videos

Release notes

Architecture design doc

Articles

FAQs

Licenses

Code documentation

Blogs

Tutorials

Reference material

Marketing material

Comments

Standard operating procedures

Contracts

Feature list

Product Documentation

Product Documentation

Inclusions

API documentation
User manuals
Architecture design doc
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Documentation

Why is it needed?

People need information

Documentation

How to do it well?

People

People

People

Consumers / Users

- Product user – one who uses
- Developer – one who develops new features
- Buyer – one who decides

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- Developer – one who develops new features
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Producers / Creators

- Engineers
- Technical writers
- Managers

People related needs

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How to make it easier for the reader?

- information should be easy to – find, understand and use

People related needs

How to make it easier for the reader?

- information should be easy to – find, understand and use

How to make it easier for the writer?

- number of decisions to be taken should be minimal – writing style, language, woke
- appropriate tooling – docs as code
- appropriate automation – spelling checkers, linters, API doc generators

Information related needs

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How to organise and maintain information?

- appropriate information architecture
- appropriate review processes

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How to strive for functional quality ?

- information is – accurate, precise, complete, consistent, useful ...

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How to strive for functional quality ?

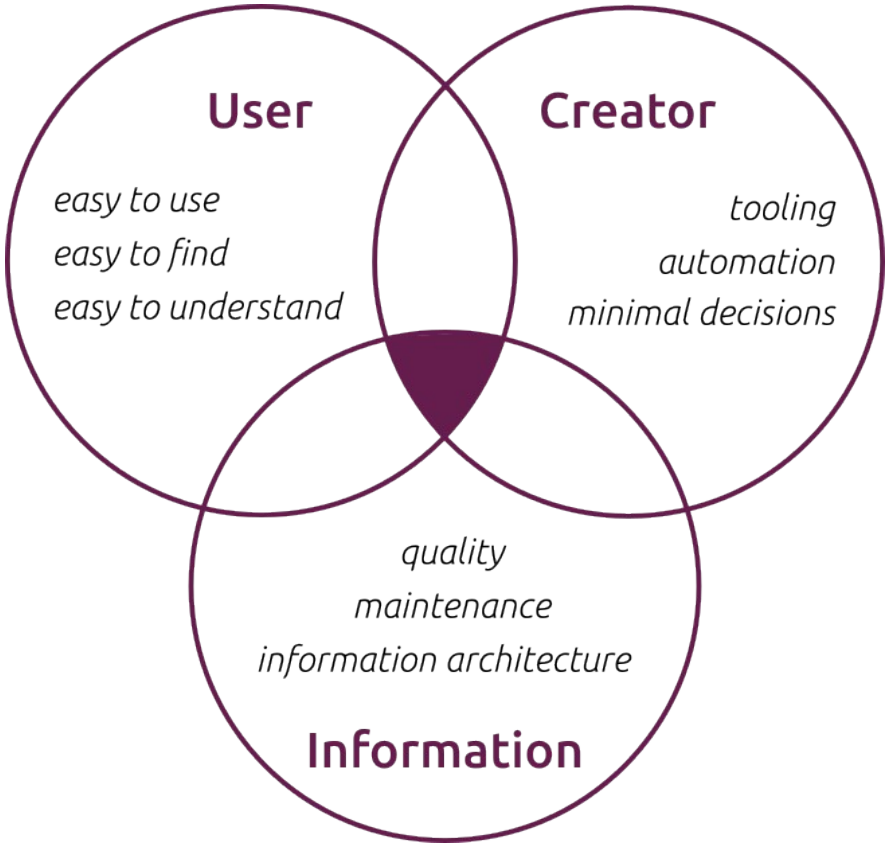
- information is – accurate, precise, complete, consistent, useful ...

How to strive for deep quality ?

- documentation – feels good to use, has a good flow, anticipates the user, is beautiful

Problem

Problem


User
easy to use
easy to find
easy to understand
Creator
tooling
automation
minimal decisions
quality
maintenance
information architecture
Information

Documentation

How to solve this problem?

User journey

User journey

Introduction

what is it?
what are its features?
what is it used for?
pre-requisites needed

User journey

Initial trial

install

configure

test

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configure new features
install add-ons
solve problems
try different options

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Making changes

add new features
use it in new ways
use it to create something new
solve low-level problems / bugs
understand technical details in depth

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read about its roots
understand design reasoning
learn about other contexts for use

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Explanation

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Serves study

Serves work

Understanding-oriented

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Practical steps

Serves study

Serves work

Theoretical knowledge

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Diátaxis

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Reference

Diátaxis

Does it help the creator too?

The compass

The compass

If the content describes…	…and it serves the user's…	…then it must belong to…
practical steps	study	a tutorial
practical steps	work	a how-to guide
theoretical knowledge	work	reference
theoretical knowledge	study	explanation

Examples

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- Teaches you how to use Inkscape

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- API documentation for a microservice

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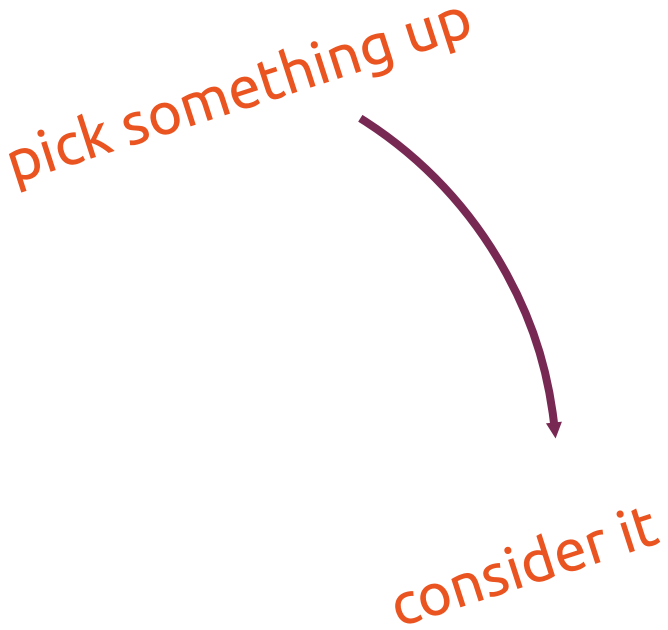
- API documentation for a microservice --- Reference
- Instructions for upgrading a driver --- How-to guide
- Rationale behind certain UI features --- Explanation
- Steps to set-up your VPN --- How-to guide

Workflow

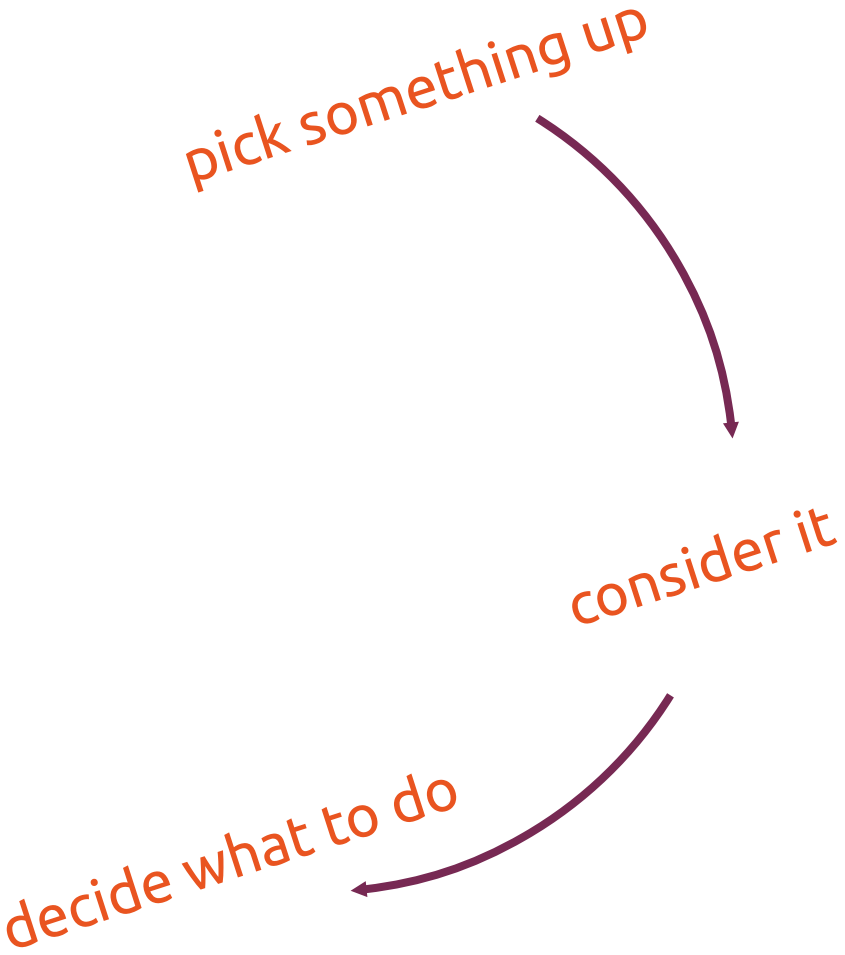
pick something up

Workflow

Workflow



Workflow



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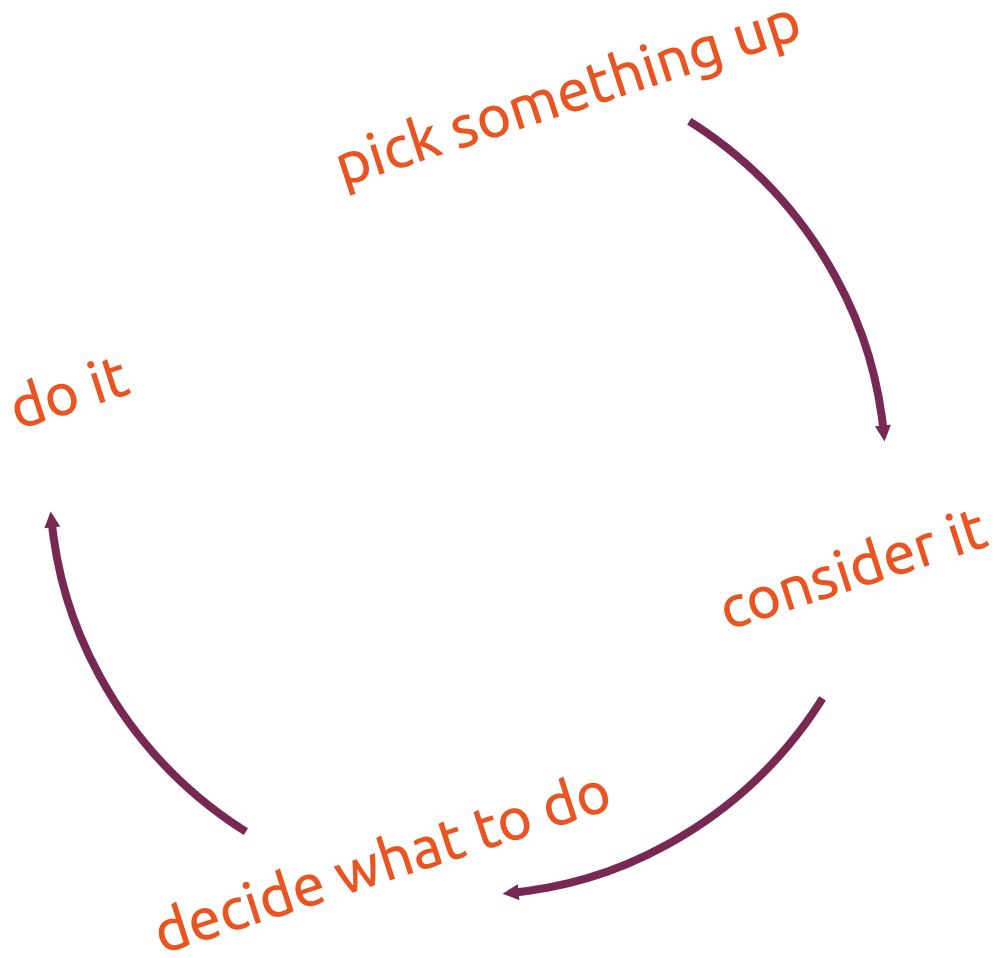
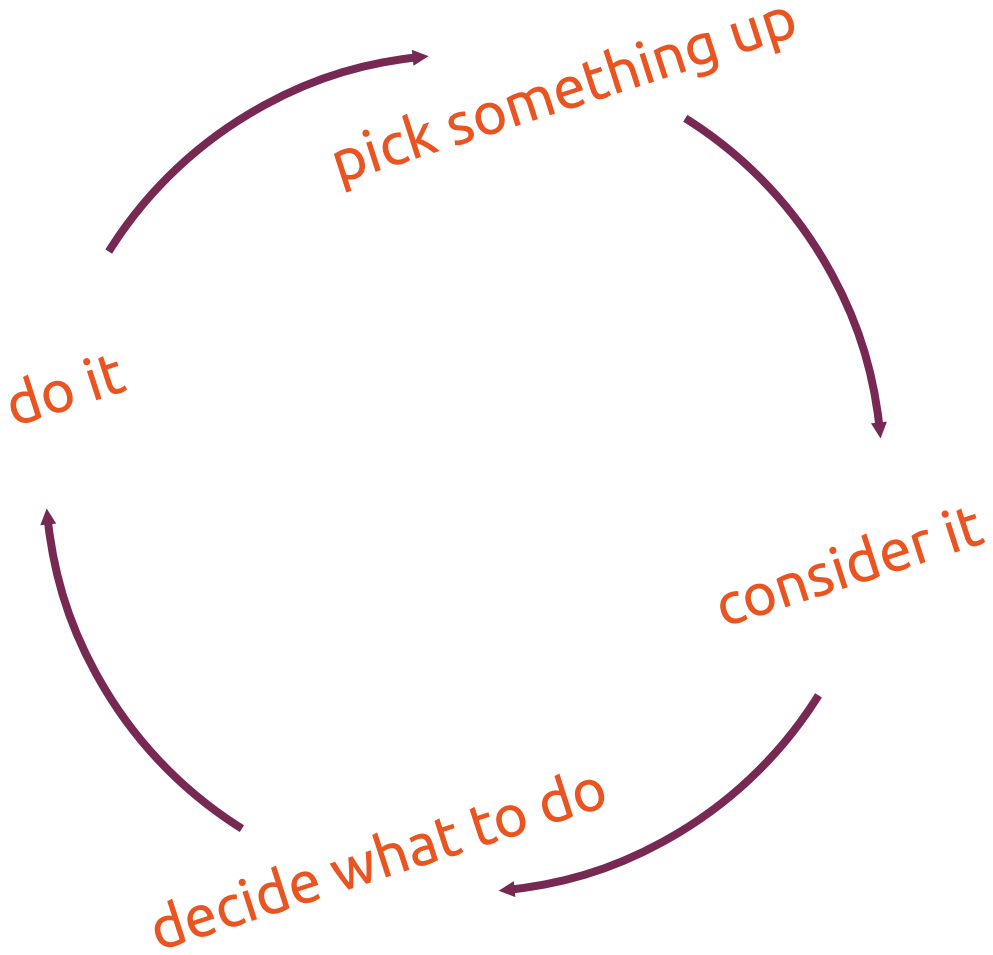


Workflow

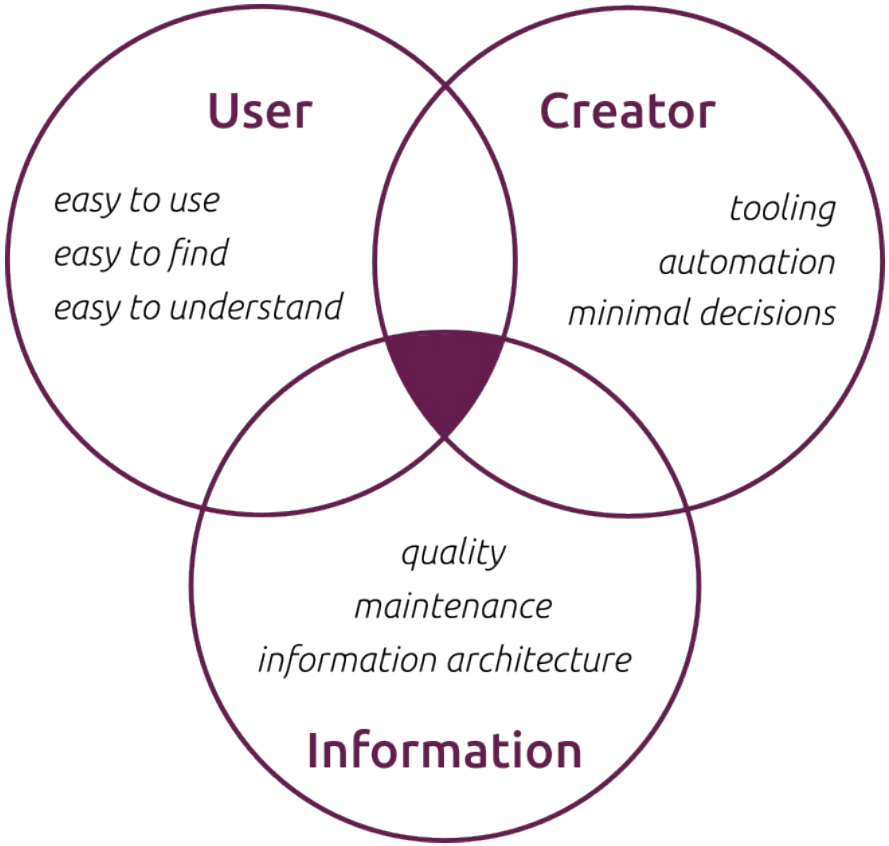
Iterative evolution



Documentation

Bringing it all together

Problem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Solution – Diátaxis?

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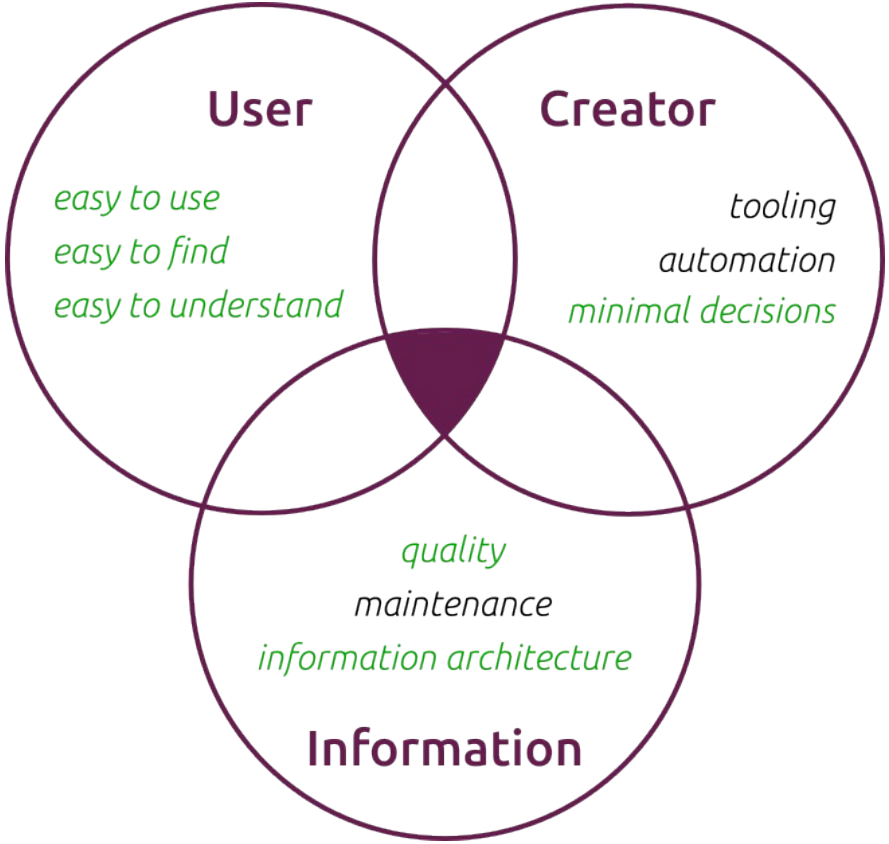

Documentation

Is it fun?

Fun parts of documentation

Fun parts of documentation

Writing

Automation

Problem solving

Testing

Questioning

Domain expertise

Creativity

Coding

Design

Reading

Understanding

Different perspectives

Helping people

No people issues

Quick results

Maintenance

Constant improvements

Working with multiple teams

Thank you. Questions?