



How to Keep Your Docs Alive When You Don't Have a Team of 20

Tags

Content Design

Information Architecture

UX Writing



This piece is based on how I've approached documentation cleanup and sustainability in past roles. Most of the internal docs I've worked on live behind firewalls or were created under NDA, so this example walks through the thinking, structure, and process I've applied while organizing scattered documentation into something usable. It's written for small teams that don't have a dedicated documentation department but still need clarity and consistency.

Context

Most orgs treat documentation like a luxury or an afterthought. Until someone leaves. Then everything breaks.

This guide came out of my own frustration working in environments where content was scattered, stale, or stuck behind someone's brain. I wrote it to give teams a survival plan. Something they could use to keep knowledge flowing even when headcount or bandwidth is tight.

Problem

Small teams and under-resourced departments often rely on one "documentation person" (if they're lucky enough to have one). When that

person is out, changes roles, or burns out, the whole system freezes. Docs go stale, new hires get stuck, and support requests pile up.

What I Did

I broke the problem into six friction points I kept seeing across industries: ownership, versioning, structure, voice, findability, and sustainability. For each one, I offered lightweight, practical tactics that didn't require a KM department or a giant overhaul.

I used real examples and wrote in a plainspoken, irreverent style to keep people engaged. Because lifeless docs about documentation don't get read either.

Result

This piece has been shared with project managers, support teams, and lone writers trying to get buy-in for sustainable doc practices. It also showcases my approach to internal content: clear, strategic, and built to hold up under pressure.

How to Use This Document

This guide is meant for teams that are drowning in Google Docs, duplicate how-tos, or Slack threads full of answers no one can ever find again. It's a reusable approach to turning scattered knowledge into a working documentation library.

Guiding Principles

- **Start small.** You don't need a perfect system to begin. You just need a single source of truth.
- **Document the repeatable, not the rare.** Prioritize what people ask for most often.
- **Make it scannable.** Your audience is busy. Write like a teammate, not like a textbook.
- **Update without the guilt spiral.** A doc that's 80% useful and recently updated beats one that's 100% perfect and two years out of date.

Suggested Setup

1. Choose a Platform That Works for You

Options include Notion, Confluence, SharePoint, or even a well-structured Google Drive folder. The tool doesn't matter as much as the structure.

2. Set Up a Simple Folder or Page Structure

- SOPs
- How-to Guides

- Policies or Standards
- Templates
- Archived Content (for older versions)

3. Create a Style & Tagging Guide

- Tone (plain language, no filler)
- Formatting conventions (headings, bullets, images)
- Last updated tag on each page
- Optional: author or team contact

4. Start with the Top 5 Most Asked Questions or Tasks

- What new hires or teammates ask you about repeatedly
- Things buried in Slack
- Processes people *think* are documented but aren't

5. Build Update Rituals

- Add a monthly "doc audit" to your calendar
- Encourage small edits instead of waiting for full rewrites
- Consider version notes for major updates

Example Page Titles

- How to request asset data from Facilities
- Steps for onboarding a new vendor into the CMMS
- Email templates for equipment service follow-up
- Who to contact when SharePoint access breaks
- Monthly checklist for documentation audits

Your documentation library should feel like a shared workspace, not a graveyard of outdated PDFs. Keep it light, make it useful, and don't let "perfect" block "usable."