

DocuZENTation

A case study by Averil Robertson, Program Lead, Engineering Documentation, Zendesk

Zendesk is a customer service software company with support and sales products designed to improve customer relationships. This case study discusses how Zendesk's Engineering Organisation is solving internal documentation challenges.

The challenge

As our engineering organisation continues to expand, we needed to double down on simplicity to enable us to scale quickly and effectively. With a digital-first approach and remote working arrangements a reality for many people, documentation has become key to this. The key challenges we needed to address include:

- Information overload reported by new engineers, namely around currency and discoverability.
- The need to empower new engineers in knowing where to get help easily without having their workflow disrupted unnecessarily.
- The need for our infrastructure teams to quickly and efficiently provide support to other engineers.

The solution

In 2020, Zendesk Engineering ran a pilot program using the Zendesk Guide product to solve these challenges. The goal of the pilot was to establish if a case could be made for unifying our how-to documentation under an instance of Zendesk Guide. Feedback from the pilot told us it was the right thing to do, so we worked on:

- Documenting how we wanted writers to use the tooling
- Making sure writers feel supported during planning and writing
- Gathering feature requests and working on the look/feel and user interface to make sure it is fit for purpose (Zendesk Guide is highly customizable in a lot of areas)
- Introducing a dedicated support role – my role provides people with a dedicated touchpoint for training, support, feedback and discussion.

Our values—our documentation

Focus on relationships: We build and foster strong relationships across the Engineering function through knowledge-sharing.

Practice empathy: We provide clear, structured and helpful information, so our engineers can do their jobs with as much ease as possible, and we ask engineers to look up the documentation first if they need help.

Be humblident: We are confident that what has been built to support our engineers is awesome, but we stay humble to document how to use these tools, and constructively take on feedback from readers.