Activity 7: Docs Friction Logging

Goals

1. Understand how usable your current documentation is via friction logging with documentation users.

Prerequisites

None

Who Should Participate?

Documentation creators and consumers

Length

30-60 minutes for documentation consumer, additional time for creators to review results and update documentation as needed.

Definition

A friction log is a document that lists the elements that make a tool hard to use but frames it around a narrative or customer use case. The critical difference between a friction log and a bug list is that the friction log puts the issues in context. It tells the story of the entire user experience from start to finish.

Pre-Work

Decide which elements of your current end-user documentation you'd like to evaluate. You may wish to evaluate "user manual" type documentation for your application (e.g. how to create an account or how to upload an image), or program-focused documentation (e.g. how to contribute code or how to submit a bug report). The most useful friction logs will evaluate documentation that lots of folks are likely to use.

A good example of a friction log can be found about halfway down this blog post:

https://www.trychameleon.com/blog/friction-logs

Instructions for Program Staff

1. Determine which elements of your current end-user documentation you'd like to evaluate.

2. Identify community members to serve as loggers. Make choices based on what you're testing; and try not to choose people who are so familiar with the system that they'd know how to skip over the hard or confusing parts.

3. Create a friction log template (example on page 4 below). Include at least the following questions:

    a. Logger's name

    b. Platform/language/browser (if relevant)

    c. Date

   d. Product used for the log (if your program supports >1)
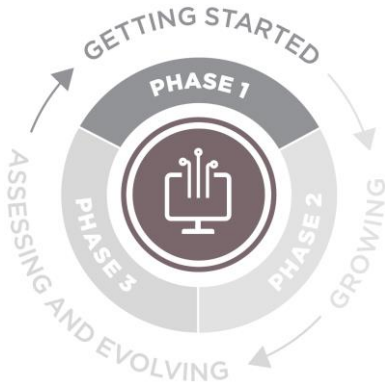
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    e. Brief description - no more than two short sentences - of the scenario/use case the logger is following the docs for - such as:

       i. I want to figure out how to contribute code to the platform.

       ii. I am trying to add a new user and give them account permissions.

4. Include a link to the documentation (or attachment if it's not available online)

5. Provide the friction logger with the logging template

6. Once the logger has completed the work, evaluate the comments, and determine if any changes or improvements need to be made to the documentation

Instructions for Friction Logger

1. Using the provided template and following the instructions in the documentation, create a log of what you did to complete your scenario / use case, and any reactions you had while doing so. For example:

    a. If you searched a wiki or GitHub repository, write down the search terms

    b. If you typed commands into a command line, copy and paste your command into the log

    c. Make note of any places where the documentation was not clear, or the instructions didn't work as written

2. Record your reactions for each step, such as "Now I'm frustrated," or "Copied and pasted this from the docs, didn't bother reading the prose."

3. Stoplight-colored highlights (red, yellow, green) in the log can be used to point out particularly excellent or problematic parts of the experience.

    a. Green: Something delightful. Maybe there was a great example, or something worked right out of the box without requiring extra configuration.

    b. Yellow: Something that was frustrating. Perhaps you couldn't find relevant docs after 10 minutes of searching.

   c. Red: Places where you would have given up if this wasn't your job.
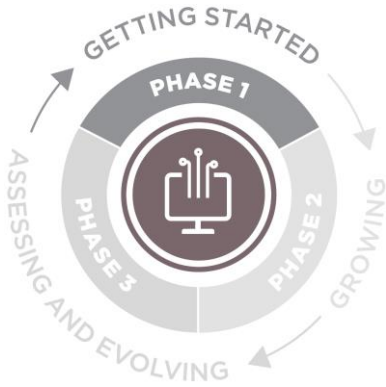
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Example

Scenario: Create a Microsoft Teams account

Steps:

1. Use Google to look up "Microsoft Teams"

2. Click on the first result - "Video Conferencing, Meetings, Calling | Microsoft Teams"

3. "Sign up for free" is the first thing I notice on the screen, so I click on that button

4. I enter my email and click Next

5. I am using this to participate in volunteering, so I select "For work and organizations"

6. Enter password? They want the password to my email account, or do they want me to create password for this Teams account? This is confusing.
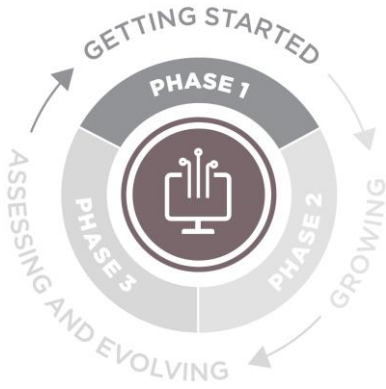
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Friction Log Template

Name:

Platform/Language/Browser:

Date:

Platform:

Scenario / Use Case (two short sentences):

*Create a narrative that tells the entire story, from start to finish, of your scenario or user story. Include every step you took and reaction you had. Stoplight-colored highlights (red, yellow, green) or prefixes in the log can be used to point out particularly excellent or problematic parts of the experience: **Green**: Something delightful, **Yellow**: Something frustrating, **Red**: Places where you would have given up if this wasn't your job.*