

How Documentation Combats the Talent Shortage

How bad is the problem

According to a recent [PwC Pulse Survey](#), 48% of executives said “talent shortage” is their largest risk of 2022. Hiring and retaining talent has made it really difficult for companies to grow and caused pressure and stress for long-time staff.

Part of the problem is the current US unemployment rate of 3.5% (October 2022) suggests the country is close to full employment. Beyond the tight labor market, people are quitting jobs at alarming rates. Whether it’s to retire, change industries or start their own business, the talent shortage is making it difficult for businesses to replace and retain talent.

Documentation, an unexpected solution

One method of retaining talent– and a costly one at that - is offering higher wages. However, [a recent study](#) by Lincoln Financial Group says that 64% of employees would rather choose a less stressful work environment than a higher salary, while the inflationary environment is already [contributing to a wage-spiral upwards](#).

To combat these challenges, companies should be looking to do more with what they have– supporting and growing current employees while attracting new talent. Enter **documentation**, your under-utilized, forgotten employee just waiting to help!

What does dense, confusing documentation have to do with your efforts to hire and retain employees?

- Trainees are often confused and slow to learn, taking too long or quitting before they make an impact.
- Knowledgeable employees have to answer everyone’s questions and leave a giant hole behind when they’re on vacation or, God forbid, retire.
- Employees are frustrated and burnt out from overcomplicated processes, fixing errors and putting out fires.
- Companies run from issue to issue instead of taking the time to look at root causes.

Changing the way your employees capture knowledge and deliver information will immediately change your business and address these challenges. In this tight labor market, **your documentation can, and must, do its job.**

Where can you make an immediate impact?

1. Faster, better onboarding

It often takes a year to bring on a new employee, from reading all the relevant material, to testing, to on-the-job training. Simplifying processes, training materials, and roles so employees can learn as they go **significantly reduces training time while improving training effectiveness.**

Another important outcome is reducing the drain on your current employees from supervisor questions and correcting errors. Simpler documentation improves employee access to information in the field and their retention of key concepts, helping them **find and use information when they need it.**

2. Capturing employee knowledge

Employee knowledge is one of a company's most important assets, yet many companies over-rely on what's in a few key employees' heads. What happens when they retire or their dream job pops up?

Supporting highly skilled employees to **capture and share their knowledge** protects companies from a knowledge drain while immediately improving the work experience for everyone. You can teach your Subject Matter Experts to quickly share information in a way that others can use and understand.

3. Improving efficiency

If employees' tasks are more efficient and less frustrating, if they can find answers to their questions when they need them, they are more likely to be productive and **protected from physical effects like fatigue and burnout.**

Crystal clear **documentation is your perfect partner for process improvement.** How do you make changes without first understanding the current state- how things are actually being done? Documentation often does not match reality or overcomplicates things by sending people in circles or including inconsistent, outdated and conflicting information.

Addressing these issues can capture low-hanging fruit while helping your experts clearly see further areas of opportunity.

4. **Better employee experience**

Ever try to learn a new process in an environment where everyone is busy and the documents make no sense? How hard is it at your company to complete a task for the first time?

New employees often feel unsupported, unproductive and like a burden. Improving training content and supporting documentation will prevent frustration, reduce turnover, and free up employee time for their more valuable tasks.

5. **Skill building**

How do you attract talent at such a competitive time? **Culture, skill-building and support.** Investing in employees' communication and writing skills **opens opportunities for career growth.** And you may not even have to hire new talent when you already have happy, committed employees who can grow into new roles!

Your good documentation checklist

How do you determine if documentation is an area of opportunity for your team? Use the checklist below and think about how your documentation measures up. Is it:

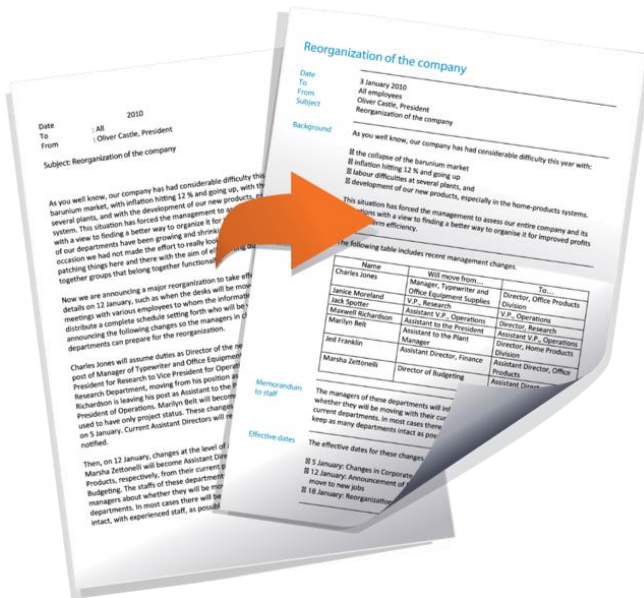
- Easy to access and find information?
- Accurate and up to date?
- User-focused?
- Comprehensive yet direct?
- Agile and adaptable?
- Technology compatible?
- Standardized and scalable?

If you answered no to any of these questions, you have a great opportunity in front of you.

How to improve your documentation

Unfortunately, the majority of business documents are written in long paragraphs that are inconsistent and too complex- many of you are familiar with the dreaded “wall of words.”

Documentation should be simple, structured, and user-focused:



Information Mapping® is our research-based Methodology for better documentation. Like Lean Six Sigma, our Methodology sets a process that all writers can follow to

- analyze their audience,
- organize their knowledge, and
- present their information.

This Methodology enables organizations to standardize quality across departments and skill sets. One **global pharma company** harmonized global Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and saw:

- A 40% reduction in SOPs
- \$2.1 million savings in document maintenance costs
- \$2.5 million reduction in training costs.

Another global telecommunications company focused on training documentation, experiencing:

- 50% reduction in training time
- 34% decrease in training costs
- Improvement from 75% to 96% average test score.

What to do now?

You can't reverse the talent shortage with just one solution- you need to make an impact across the board on processes, people, and skills. Hopefully this paper has provided a reason to look at **your documentation as a solution, not the problem**, and given you a **Methodology** and some ideas that can get you there.

Whether your focus is on improving the training process for new hires, improving efficiency for your current employees, or building your employees' skills, your business can at least survive the trend and perhaps even prosper above the competition.

This all starts with clear and structured documentation. [Contact us today](#) to learn more about how this works, and let's talk about how Information Mapping® can help you.