Purpose & audience

Last Modified on 12/28/2022 12:24 pm EST

Clearly defining your knowledge base's purpose and audience can make deciding on features and workflows a lot easier to answer.

You might already have this clearly defined from an RFP (Request for Proposal), a company vision, a department plan, or something else.

Ultimately, you'll want a statement that looks a bit like this:

We're creating this knowledge base to store information about _[what]_. Info stored here will be accessed by _[who]_ and created/maintained by _[by whom]_. We'll know our knowledge base has successfully addressed _[why]_ when _[the ultimate goal]_.

To start, answer who, what, and why:

- **What: What content or knowledge will be stored here?**
  Are you copying content that already exists somewhere else and adding it to KnowledgeOwl, or will you be creating new content from scratch? Who "owns" that knowledge currently, and will you need to collaborate with them?

  > **If you're bringing content into KnowledgeOwl, we recommend reviewing and updating that content as you add it, rather than doing a large import and then having to tidy it up later.**

- **Who: Who is this content for?**
  Is this knowledge base something you'll share with your coworkers? Only members of your support team? Your customers? Your students? Members of an elite group of owls trying to make the world a better place? (If it's that last one, you are DEFINITELY in the right place.)
- **Why: Why am I creating this knowledge base?**
  Or, to put it another way: will this knowledge base solve an existing problem or knowledge gap? If so, describe the problem or gap in detail.

The final three questions can be hard to answer if you're in the very early stages of a knowledge base, but they are very useful for decisions you'll have to make further down the road, so we want you thinking about them now:

- **How: Should some or all of this content be available to the general public?**
  Product support documentation, for example, may be something you want available freely on the internet, but you probably don't want your internal HR policies to be. You can choose to have a totally public knowledge base, a public knowledge base with some private content, or a totally private knowledge base. Having this info now can help you make good content layout and feature decisions. ☺ Answering this may help you refine the Who, What, or Why above.

- **By whom: Who will be responsible for creating/maintaining this knowledge base?**
  This, too, can impact feature choices and even design considerations. If you're a solo writer, you'll approach feature decisions and content layout very differently than if you know you'll have to justify, explain, and train those decisions to a team of 15 writers in the next 6 months. If you're proposing a knowledge base to your team or company, this is usually one of the first questions managers ask!
- **The ultimate goal: How will you know if your knowledge base is successful?**
  This can be the hardest question to answer, and it's okay if you don't have an answer right now. Knowledge bases can feel like a "never done" project, and having a definition of success can help you keep some perspective.
  Sometimes this idea comes naturally from the problem you're trying to solve with the knowledge base. For example, if you're implementing a knowledge base to provide product support, your knowledge base could be considered successful if you reduce inbound support requests. (And if this success is something you can explicitly measure in some type of number, this can be useful down the road to show your boss or management.) Sometimes it's harder to define: success might mean that our entire support team only has to check this single knowledge base to answer a question, instead of sifting through chat histories, Google Drive, or a shared network drive. Or success might be that we get all of our HR policies into a single knowledge base with a last-reviewed/last-updated date clearly displayed. Or it might be that you can get rid of that Confluence site administered by a manager who left the company two years ago. There is no right answer here; but like your why, it helps to know how you'll determine if you've met that why.

Plug these answers into the statement template at the start of this section, and you're done with this step. Strong work!