

Building the Perfect Knowledge Base

Table of Contents

- [What is a Knowledge Base?](#)
 - [Characteristics of an Ideal Knowledge Base System](#)
- [Responsibilities of a Knowledge Base](#)
 - [Offer Self-Service](#)
 - [Designing A Knowledge Base](#)
 - [Pick A Platform](#)
 - [Selection of Topics](#)
 - [Knowledge Base Structure](#)
 - [Have A Standard Format For The Content](#)
 - [Assign Content Writers & Reviewers](#)
 - [Delivering the Content](#)
 - [Using Media in Knowledge Articles](#)
 - [Keep Things Simple](#)
 - [Avoid Content Repetition](#)
 - [Keep Improving](#)

Creating a knowledge base is a great way to offer quick solutions to your customers and reduce pressure on your customer support team however a poorly designed knowledge base can cause more problems than it is expected to solve. You need to make sure that your knowledge base is well-designed, properly structured, and easy to use. Read on to find out how to ensure that your knowledge base meets these requirements.

Building **Perfect** Knowledge Base

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What is a Knowledge Base?

A knowledge base is a library of information about a service, product, topic, or department that is designed to provide self-serve help, enabling your customers to help themselves, help to make your team more efficient, and ensure that your customers receive better service.

Characteristics of an Ideal Knowledge Base System

The information contained in the knowledge base should be easy to search and knowledge articles should be easy to read. A knowledge base should have one goal and that is to help you deflect a support ticket by offering the right answer to your users, at the right time.

Responsibilities of a Knowledge Base

The primary responsibilities of a knowledge base system are:

It should provide customers with direct access to up-to-date, accurate product information.

It should allow differential access to the knowledge, based on the type of users.

It should provide support agents with easy access to product information so that they can assist the customers in a better way.

It should allow subject matter experts (SMEs) to maintain information about their subject directly in the knowledge base.

It should reduce unnecessary phone calls/chat requests/trouble tickets/emails to support agents.

Offer Self-Service

One of the best ways to provide top-level support to your customers is to actually allow them to help themselves in a self-serve manner and you can do this by setting up a knowledge base. A knowledge base is a repository of information that is accessible to all your customers. In it, you can create answers to all the most common questions, as well as issues that are less common. Your customers can then quickly search this library of knowledge to find the answers they need.

This can be quicker for them than sending in a ticket and waiting for a response. Many people prefer to search for answers themselves, and as long as you have a detailed knowledge base that is intuitive and easy to search, this can be the best way to help your customers. On top of this, it takes the pressure off your support agents because they will not have to spend

time responding to tickets that the customer has solved on their own.

Designing A Knowledge Base

A knowledge base is a self-serve online library where your customers can find additional information about your products, services, or departments. It doesn't have to just be technical information in your knowledge base; instead, it can offer tips-based content that informs the customers on how to get the most out of your product or service. Designing a knowledge base is not an easy task but it's not difficult too. With the right tools, guidance, and asking the right questions, you can create informative knowledge articles that customers will benefit from.

Building a perfect knowledge base is not just about dumping all of your user documents and manuals into a single folder — even if you provide the customer with the ability to search it. A truly helpful knowledge base requires proper categorization of the content, time, and effort to ensure accessibility and usability, so make sure that the effort you are spending on building your knowledge base is worthwhile.

Pick A Platform

Rather than creating something from scratch, get started with the help of a **knowledge base software** that integrates with your website. There are many knowledgebase software platforms to choose from. While I am not going to recommend one over the other, it is important to find one that can scale as you grow, integrate with your website platform, and fit your budget. Using a platform for the knowledge base enables you to get it set up quickly and offer something that looks professional. It also makes it much easier to continue adding to it or updating existing content.

Selection of Topics

The very first step is to choose the topics that your customers will find useful. Input for topics comes from your customers and support agents. You can ask your staff for their perspectives too. The best way to pick the most useful and relevant topics is to select the ones that get the most inquiries. If you have a search bar on your website, check the most searched terms to find the best topics. For example, if one of your top queries from customers is "how to return products", you can write a knowledge base article giving them this information.

Put yourself in your customer's shoes and then as a customer thinks about what kind of information you expect from the company if you were a customer of your product. This will really help you figure out what kind of queries your customers might raise whenever they have an issue with your product or services. Finally, intuition should also be used for deciding what article topics will be needed in the future. For example, when you launch a new product or change a service, you should anticipate these questions and prepare an article that explains the change.

Knowledge Base Structure

Within the knowledge base, there are often technical tutorials or step-by-step instructions for how to do something with your product or service. Once you know what articles need to be created, you need to plan how your knowledge base articles should be structured. Think about the type of articles you need to create. There are various types of articles you create in the knowledge base — for example, step-by-step guides, technical tutorials, visual references, or glossaries. For each topic you'll cover, consider what format would best suit the content you are going to share.

Have A Standard Format For The Content

To optimize the results for the customer, it's important to have a standard format for the content that focuses on what's most relevant. That means these pieces do not have to be very long. If anything, keep them as brief as possible. This is especially true of the tutorials, which should be in a recipe format with just the action steps listed. Customers want to get in, get the information and get out to fix their issue as quickly as possible so they can finish everything else on their list.

Start by making each knowledge article as easy to follow as possible, beginning with the basics and moving on to the more advanced parts of the article. Identify the shortest path from point A to point B. Only after explaining the basics can you move to more advanced or optional recommendations.

For most knowledge base articles, the best way to start off is with the question you are answering as a heading followed by a short description. Use visuals and screenshots to reinforce the information you're giving. Different people learn in different ways, so it can help to present a variety of types of information to help readers better understand the topic you're

discussing. For example, if you are creating a knowledge base article on how to install a piece of software, it can help to have images of each screen as well as text descriptions. Videos can be another great way to explain processes, especially if they're on the complicated side.

If you're just getting started with your knowledge base, start small. It's better to ensure that the information you are providing is of use to the reader so that you can ensure you are not wasting their time. Start with a small pilot, and make it available only to a select group of trusted customers for their feedback before going wider to the general public.


Assign Content Writers & Reviewers

Designate people on your team who can write the content. While some of the content is not as technical, other answers might need someone on the technical side to provide assistance to your content writers. Once you have writers to work with, give them the topics and clear instructions, formats, or templates, as well as the expectations for what the content should focus on. Even an outline for each article or tutorial can mean they nail it the first time so you can get this helpful content in customers' hands as quickly as possible.

Note: It is very important to have a technical reviewer go through all this content carefully. The last thing you want is technical content that is full of mistakes or misinformation, including links that don't go anywhere.

Delivering the Content

Add a short introduction to each knowledge base article to explain the scope of the article and briefly cover what the rest of the article contains. This allows readers to quickly assess whether an article will answer their question, without needing to read through the entire thing. After adding an introduction, you can move on to explaining the content.

 It is good practice to separate instructions with a heading so that the text is easy to read. Make good use of bullet points, numbered lists, and white space on the page. Content that is in long paragraphs can be difficult for a reader to navigate. Therefore breaking it up into smaller paragraphs will improve content visibility and readability.

When creating a list, make sure you only have one step of the process for every point. Do not have multiple steps at one point since it will confuse the reader. Putting one step-per-point also makes it easy for the user to backtrack if they get lost down the road.

Using Media in Knowledge Articles

It is good practice to use media (images/video) in your knowledge base articles because it makes it easier for people to understand the information you are sharing with them. Different people learn in different ways. Some may prefer a numbered list of steps to follow, but on the other hand, it might be easier for other readers to look at screenshots or follow a video.

Make sure any screenshots or images used are in the right proportions (height-to-weight ratio). They should not be stretched beyond their normal dimensions otherwise they will look odd. Moreover, they should adapt to the responsive layout of your knowledge base. Screenshots show the customer if they are making progress and what to expect at every point before moving on to the next step, so definitely consider building these into your knowledge base articles.

There are a variety of ready-to-use design elements in PHPKB knowledge base software that makes content authoring super easy. You can point-click and insert a variety of design elements from our elements gallery. Adding an editable information box, warning message, alert box, success message, quote, or highlight note is very easy. If you need to share a certain list of commands or code snippets in the knowledge base article, there is a syntax highlight facility for them.

Keep Things Simple

Avoid using complex language in your knowledgebase articles. Always put yourself in the shoes of a customer who doesn't have any technical knowledge of your product. Make sure that you stay far away from jargon and specific industry terminology that may confuse the customer more than it educates them. If your knowledge base articles are very long and complex, try to separate them into smaller articles — for example, instead of one long article, you can create one article for basic steps followed by another containing advanced information. After reading the basics, the customer can follow the link for additional instructions, if needed.

It's important that your knowledge base software makes it simple for knowledge managers (content authors, subject matter experts, writers, editors) to add articles to your knowledge base. You will need to structure the list of categories property so that information stays organized and employees can add an article in the category it falls under. You can also create groups so that content writers of one group can only add information to the list of categories assigned to their group. This way, you will have full control over what content is being posted in your knowledge base and review it before it gets published to the customers.

Encourage the use of keywords so that users can query the information by keywords.

Avoid Content Repetition

Avoid repeating the content by creating [internal linking between knowledge base articles](#). This makes it easy for the customers to locate the information they need. If a certain piece of information is contained in another article, create a link to that article in your content and avoid repetition of information across articles. This will not only point the customer in the right direction but also help in keeping knowledge organized. If your knowledge base is available online, this gives SEO benefits too.

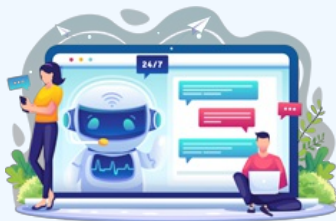
Keep Improving

Once your knowledge base is launched it needs to be maintained and kept up to date. This includes periodic review of content and updating the articles based on changes in technology, procedures, and products within your company.

As your frequently asked questions change, make sure that the knowledge base reflects these adjustments. The knowledge base needs to be thought of as an integral part of your organization and, if created and maintained properly, is one of the best entry points for your customers to find solutions to their issues.

Find out how PHPKB knowledge base software can help you to provide the best self-service experience to your users so they can easily find what they need. Get a privately hosted 30-day trial to take a deeper dive into PHPKB!

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Online URL: <https://www.phpkb.com/kb/article/building-the-perfect-knowledge-base-187.html>