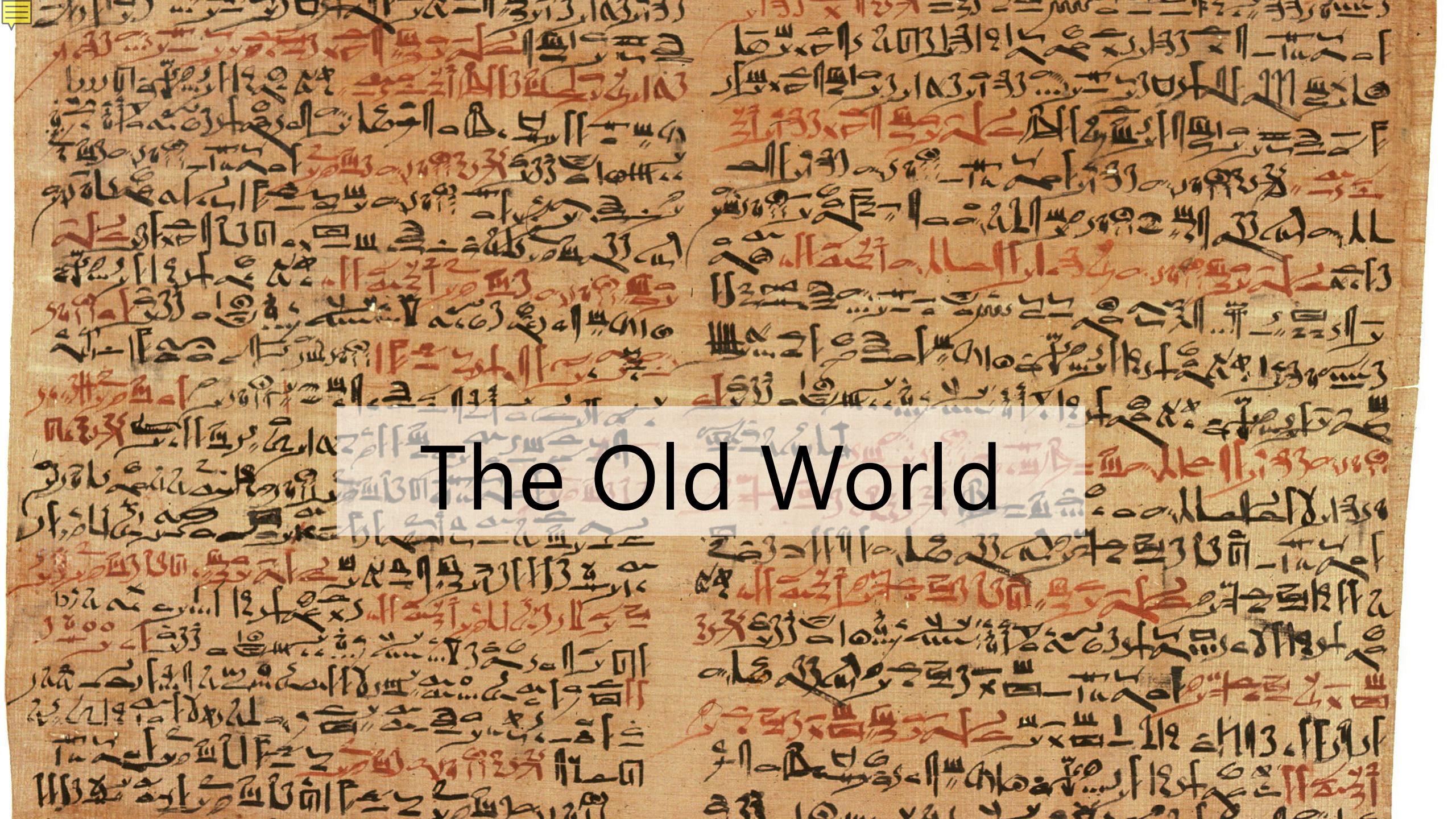




Evolution of Technical Writing at Microsoft

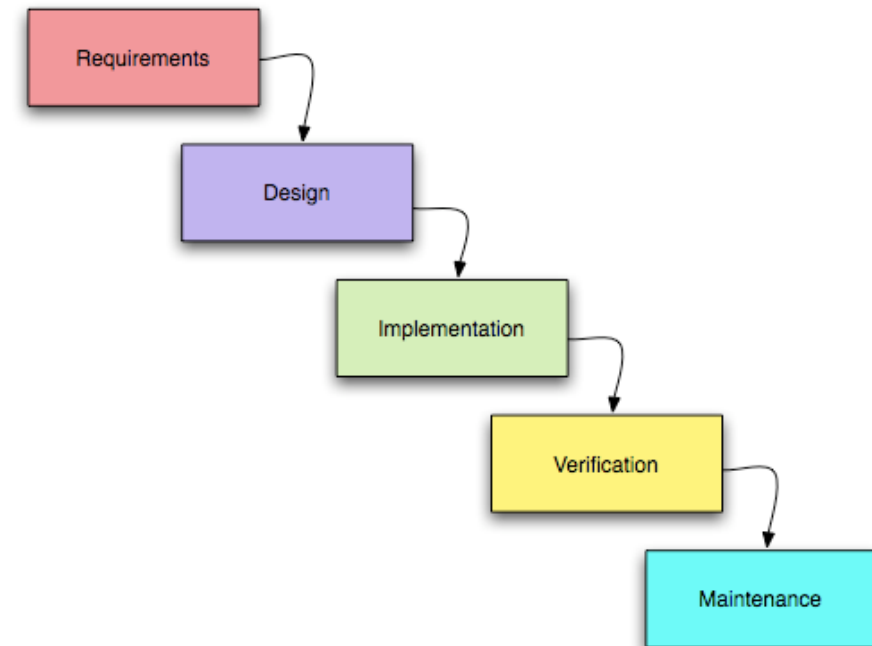
Amy Lanfear
Laura Williams
September 20, 2016



The Old World

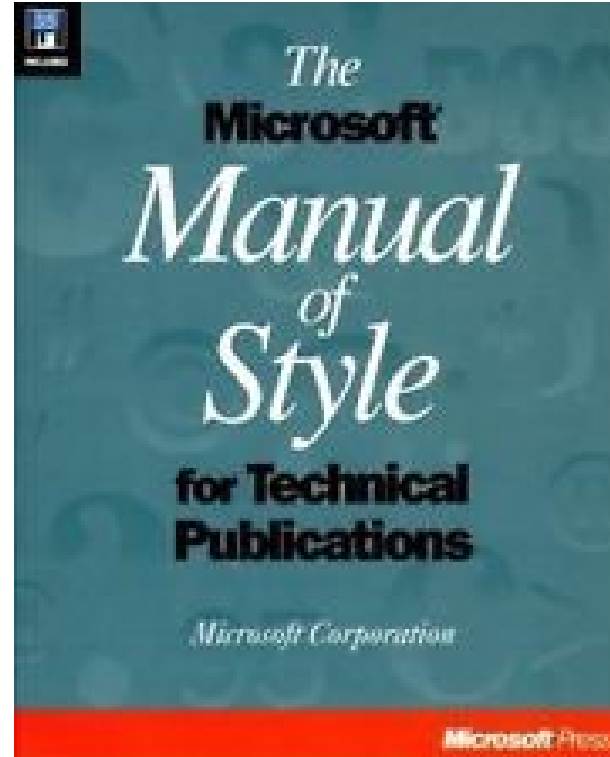
Mapping to Waterfall software development

- Multi-year release cycles
- Fully comprehensive specs
- Fully comprehensive testing
- Formal feature development review meetings
- Longer documentation planning cycles
- Formal documentation schedules
- Fully-comprehensive doc sets before RTM
- *Windows platform only*



Old school: formal and comprehensive content

- Official editor roles
- Developmental edit pass
- Line edit pass
- Copy edit pass
- Compliancy edit pass
- Fit & finish pass
- Cost-focused localization requirements influencing content experience



Evolving discipline names, job titles and functions

- *Was:* User Education (UE)
- *Then:* User Assistance (UA)
- *Now:* Content Publishing (CPub)
- ...



- Technical Writer
- Content Publisher
- Content Developer
- Instructional Designer
- Technical Editor
- Managing Editor
- Site Manager
- Production Engineer
- Information Architect
- ...

Evolving content success metrics

- *Then:*
 - Reducing support costs through great Self Help content
 - Deployment/Setup
 - Customization
 - Customer satisfaction (*delight*)
- *Now (above, plus):*
 - Adoption
 - Retention
 - Reach
 - Discoverability
 - Engagement
 - Productivity (e.g., *task completion time*)



A painting depicting a woman with long red hair, wearing a blue dress, standing on a rocky shore and looking out at a turbulent sea. In the background, a ship is wrecked against a rocky cliff. The scene is dramatic and atmospheric, with a focus on the woman's contemplative expression.

Microsoft's Sea Change

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer *a sea-change*
Into something rich and strange.

--William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. Act I, Scene 2

Enter Satya Nadella



Key themes

- Mobile-first, cloud first world
- Be customer-obsessed
- Be data-driven
- Embrace a growth mindset
- Innovate; Fail fast

“Productivity and platform company for the **mobile-first** and **cloud-first** world.”

“We need to modernize our engineering processes to be **customer-obsessed**, **data-driven**, speed-oriented and quality-focused.”

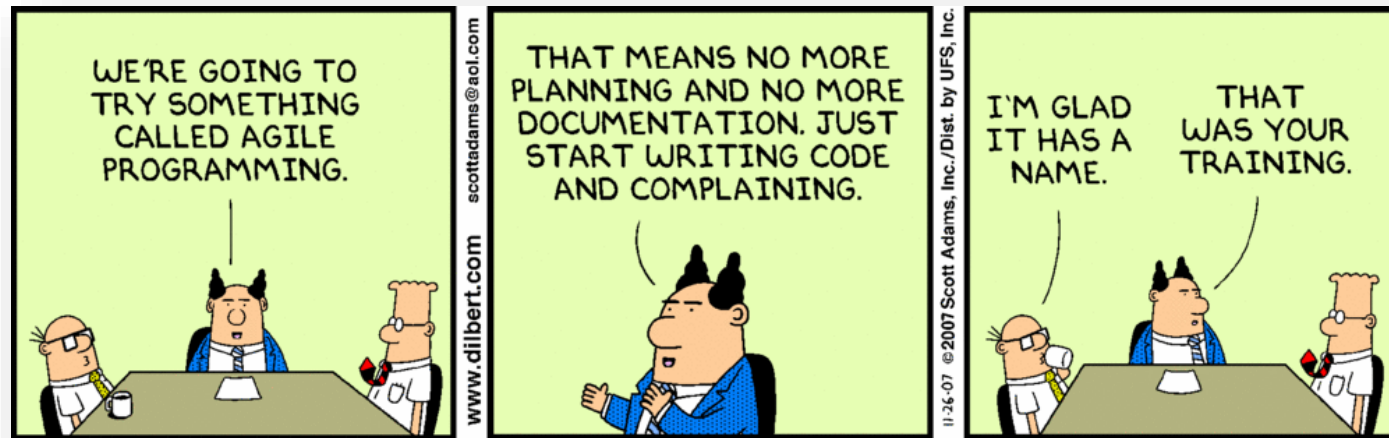
“Our industry does not respect tradition -- it only respects **innovation**.”

Agile software development & combined engineering

- In Office, we used to ship roughly every 3 years, on one platform.
- Now, our product teams ship weekly, monthly, or as the spirit moves them. Releases are “quality driven,” not “date driven.”
 - There’s no predictable release cycle across teams.
 - Features ship to multiple platforms.
- Content teams need to partner even more tightly with product group to track what’s shipping.
 - Formal feature specifications are largely a thing of the past.
 - We no longer have dedicated test teams.
- Content teams are more leanly resourced than in days of yore.
- Content teams are planning & tracking their own work in sprints: working agile, while living downstream from agile.

What does this feel like for content teams?

#alwaysbeshipping



Cross-platform world

Windows



Office Desktop apps



Office for Windows tablets



Office for
Windows Phone

Android



Android tablet



Android
phone

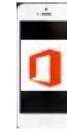
Mac/iOS



Mac



iPad



iPhone

Web



Office Online

Modern voice and peer reviews

"You're trying to take something that can be described in many, many sentences and pages of prose, but you can convert it into a couple of lines of poetry and you still get the essence."

--Satya Nadella, Microsoft CEO



Microsoft's brand voice: above all, simple and human

Our voice is:

- **Warm and relaxed**—We're natural. Less formal, more grounded in real, everyday conversations. Occasionally, we're fun. (We know when to celebrate.)
- **Crisp and clear**—We're to the point. We write for scanning first, reading second. We make it simple above all.
- **Ready to lend a hand**—We show customers we're on their side. We anticipate their real needs and offer great information at just the right time.

Style tips

A few key elements of writing Microsoft's voice:

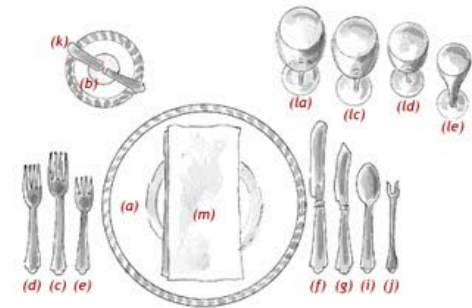
- **Get to the point fast.** Start with the key takeaway. Put the most important thing in the most noticeable spot. Make choices and next steps obvious. Give people just enough information to make decisions confidently. Don't get in the way.
- **Talk like a person.** Choose optimistic, conversational language. Use short everyday words, contractions, and sentence-style capitalization. Shun jargon and acronyms. And never miss an opportunity to find a better word.
- **Simpler is better.** Everyone likes clarity and getting to the point. Break it up. Step it out. Layer. Short sentences and fragments are easier to scan and read. Prune every excess word.

Lean content development

In Office:

- Ship what you think the customer minimally needs. Use data signals to augment or update.
- Be selective and deliberate about the content type that will best meet customer needs.

Don't serve finger food on a full, formal



Don't ship a



if a



will do the job.

More visually engaging content

Skype for Business Voice Solutions

Choose an all-in-the-cloud, hybrid, or on-premises solution

How to begin

Cloud PBX, Enterprise Voice, Choose your solution

The infographic details three deployment models: 1. All-in-the-cloud (Cloud PBX), 2. Hybrid (Cloud PBX with PSTN/Cabling service), and 3. On-premises (Cloud PBX with on-premises PSTN connectivity). It includes flowcharts for each model and a 'Choose your solution' section with decision points for various needs like international calling, PSTN connectivity, and on-premises integration.

Microsoft Office Training

Deleting a page in Word

Office Videos

143,351

1,631 views

The video shows a man in a maroon shirt looking at a document, demonstrating how to delete a page in Microsoft Word. The video player interface includes a search bar, play/pause button, progress bar (0:05 / 2:30), and a subscribe button.

OneNote 2016 Tips & Tricks

Shortcuts and timesavers for your favorite note-taking app

Applies to OneNote 2016 for Windows

Timesavers!

10. Don't feel like typing? Record audio

Handy shortcuts!

Hidden features!

The infographic features a purple header and lists various tips and tricks for OneNote 2016. A prominent tip is '10. Don't feel like typing? Record audio', which includes steps for using the Record button and the Audio Recording feature. Other sections highlight 'Handy shortcuts!' and 'Hidden features!'.

Delete VS Archive

Delete **Archive**

How it works

Why it's special

The infographic compares the Delete and Archive actions. It features icons for both buttons and a table with two columns. The 'Delete' column explains that clicking the button gets rid of the message and is a 'good old' feature that zaps away messages for good. The 'Archive' column explains that clicking the button keeps the message and is a one-click way to keep a message without needing to file it into a folder.

How it works	How it works
✗ Clicking the Delete button will get rid of the message.	☑ Clicking the Archive button will keep the message.
Why it's special	Why it's special
☆ It's the good old Delete button! Put plainly, it zaps away your message and eventually it will get deleted for good. (Well, unless you undo or recover it.)	☆ It's a one-click way to keep a message. No need to carefully file it into a folder or subfolder. One click, or tap, files it away for safekeeping.

Straddling On Premises and SaaS

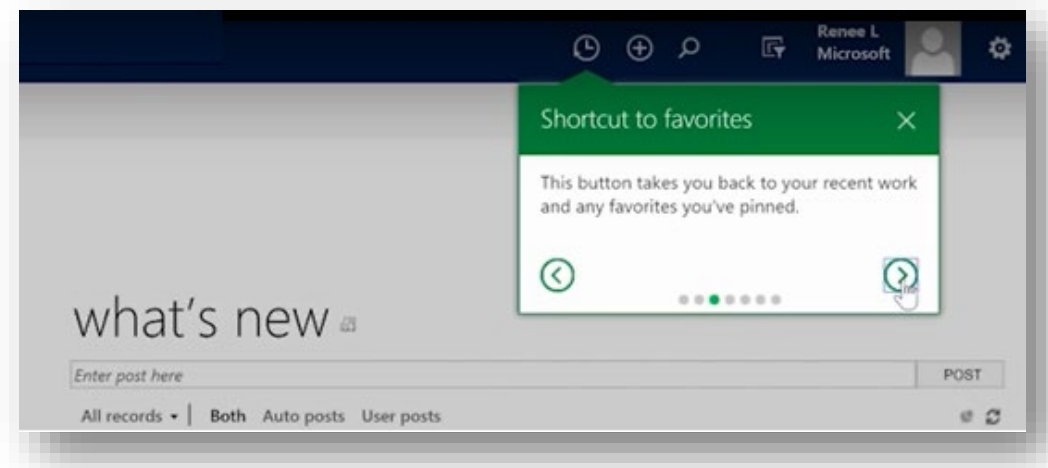
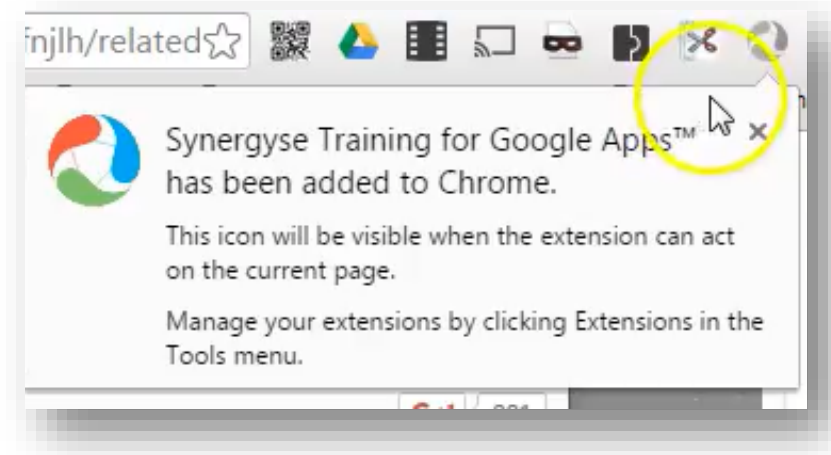
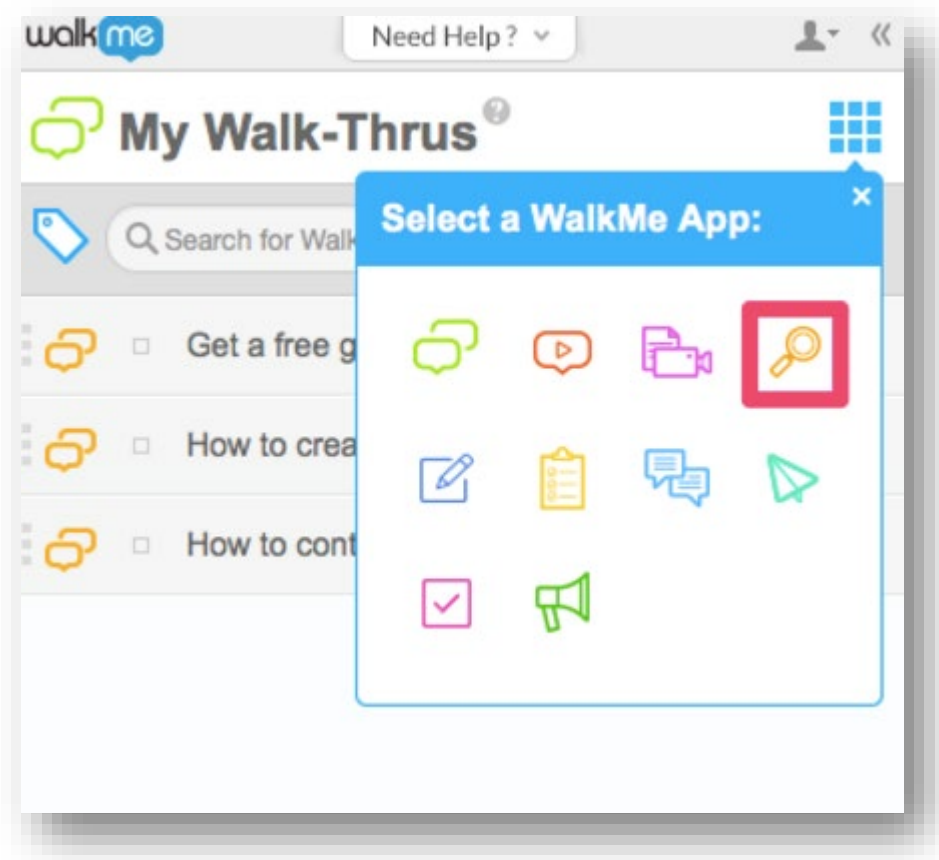
Challenges in Office:

- Supporting periodic “major” product releases while continuously supporting weekly/monthly service updates.
- Maintaining a portfolio that encompasses both evergreen service content *and* multi-version legacy content, some of which is single-sourced across both categories.
- Just-in-time content delivery for on-premises server products (support planning deployment tasks @ RTM; backfill operations content in subsequent months).



Ongoing Evolution

In-product contextual guided Help solutions



User assistance chatbots



Open source documentation



- Emerging trend
- Different approaches and platforms in different groups

It's about enabling people outside the content publishing team (product group, support, etc.) or even outside the company, to contribute to documentation.

A screenshot of the Microsoft Graph documentation website. The page title is "Overview of Microsoft Graph". A red box highlights the "Edit in GitHub" button in the top right corner. Below the title, there is a search bar and a navigation breadcrumb: "Docs \ Enterprise Mobility \ Intune \ Understand & Explore". The main content area shows an article titled "Introduction to Intune" by Linda Avraamides, dated 8/10/2016. A red box highlights the "EDIT" button in the article's right-hand sidebar. Below the article, there is a section titled "Enterprise mobility vision" with a blue header and icons for User, Devices, Apps, Data, and IT.

Community engagement

Ask a Question

Subject *

How do I create a pivot table?

We may have content matching your question
Check out these results before posting

- ☆ [How can I build a pivot table from two different tables in Excel for Mac?](#)
Hello ! I am trying to do exactly this: <http://www.laptopmag.com/articles/excel-2013-pivot-table-from-multiples> I need to create a pivot table from two data sources, but in Excel for Mac there's no...
- ☆ [Pivot table destroying user defined order](#)
Dear all, I am trying to create a pivot table. The table containing the data to make the pivot table is ordered in a certain way. I would like to have the column ordered the same way in the pivot...
- ☆ [How to populate the same filter in 10 Pivot tables](#)
Hello group. I have created 10 pivot tables with associated graphs in the one workbook. Each table has the same 2 filters. Filter 2 will not change. I need to change filter 1 and would like it to...

Ongoing (and never-ending) evolution

- Writers do more than write (yes, this has *always* been true). There's an increased need for individuals who can:
 - Work with multiple sources of data (content BI, product telemetry, industry info) to develop content strategy & make content decisions.
 - Engage in A/B testing, experimentation, iteration to achieve desired content/business impact.
 - Embed with product groups/track scrum meetings to track feature change.
 - Identify efforts to achieve true business impact through content (e.g., drive product adoption or feature usage in measurable ways).
 - Write clear, engaging content without formal editing support.
 - Pivot across technologies.
- Emerging need for people in “curation role” → “Content PMs”
- Data analysts playing even stronger role within content publishing orgs.

Q&A