

Drupal Docs Draft Project Plan

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Introduction

The base goal for our documentation is to allow people to use Drupal, from the technically inexperienced to the expert hacker, by having clear, easy to find and understand instructions. We also need to lower barriers to participation in the Drupal project so that we can continue to innovate, grow and share.

In order to meet the first goal of making Drupal usable, we need to recognize that the main problem we are having with the current version of Drupal documentation is not just about the words on the page. It is about the information architecture that has taken shape over time. We need a new structure and a new way of doing documentation.

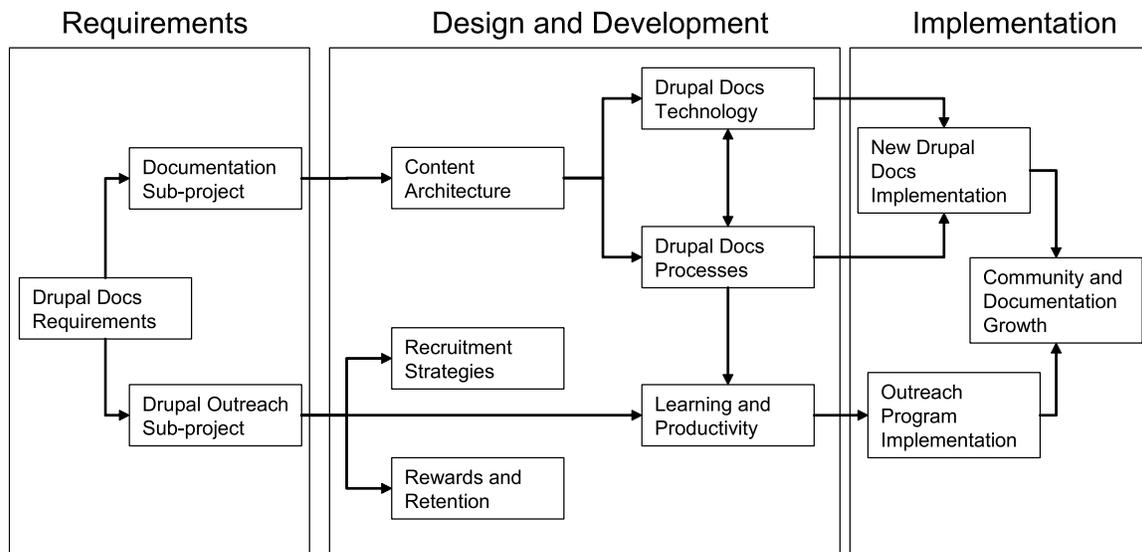
As for the second objective of lowering barriers, this cannot be met by simply improving or redesigning the information architecture. We, the Drupal community, need to find ways to reach out to the people that are not yet involved in contributing their knowledge and better support those that are. We need to make contribution easier.

These are big projects and I'm putting forth a general roadmap to get us started. This is just the beginning of a collaborative effort that will involve the entire Drupal community. I am starting out with some short term efforts that can be evaluated. We can expand on these and make adjustments as we go – given the community's feedback. The sections below define the approach I believe can get us going in the right direction given our resources and the nature of community development. It is up to all of us as a community to make things happen.

Draft Project Plan

We can't tackle all aspects of this project at once, but if we treat this like any other long-term project, we can work our way through the process efficiently. The chart below provides a very high-level view of a process I think we can use to get it done. Each box is full of activities that need to be done.

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Step 1: Requirements

Some of you know that I have been gathering, analyzing, and documenting Drupal documentation requirements over the past couple months. As part of this requirements process, I conducted a Drupal Doc Planning Sprint at the end of March, 2009 to capture the majority of the requirements. Since then I have been walking on two sides of the fence. I have been facilitating doc sprints that strive to improve the documentation we have now and I have been working to identify requirements for the new system.

The wish list of requirements is quite long, as you can imagine. With the help of many community members, I have selected the following requirements to focus on at this time. They are broken into four categories. Below are the categories and the first three goals I feel the community should address first in order to get this large project moving. The decision to focus on these categories and goals did not come lightly and involved quite a lot of discussion with various people in the community.

Content

- Establish content architecture
- Establish multi-audience content perspective and relevancy
- Maximize opportunities for single-sourced content

Technology

- Provide a consistent set of documentation tools for contributors (interact)
- Improve entry points for different audiences (consume)

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- Establish methods for deploying documentation tools (deploy)

Process

- Set up processes that make documents sustainable and maintainable
- Establish review process to ensure doc submittals meet requirements
- Define processes that ensures usage of the tools

Outreach

- Define the roles and scope of the documentation contributors
- Foster relationships between people (novices/mentors, peers, subject matter experts (SMEs))
- Create a reward system that reflects contributor needs

For each category and goal, the requirements gathering process has identified numerous tasks that need to be performed in order to meet these goals. For the full list of goals and potential tasks that have been gathered so far, please see Appendix A.

Based on the goals and tasks, I believe we, the community, are ready to move onto designing a solution that meets these requirements.

A note about Old versus New

As with any other project with a legacy system, the legacy system needs to remain in place and maintained while the new system is designed, built, and implemented. Migration plans will need to be made to ensure that valued information is not lost during migration.

For those of you who want to make a difference by fixing the existing pages that need to be fixed and by creating new documentation, please don't stop. Your work will become part of the new Drupal documentation.

The remainder of this draft project plan focuses on getting the new system designed, built, and implemented.

Step 2: Design

There are three design efforts that I would like to focus on first. The results of which will feed into other design tasks (as shown in the project plan diagram above). The three design tasks are:

- Content Architecture
- Recruitment Strategies
- Rewards and retention

Documentation: Content Architecture

Based on the three categories of requirements, I believe we need to focus on content first. This project involves creating a user-centered blueprint for the migration of the Drupal Documentation content, as well as a strategy on how docs will scale over time, and how it can grow to accommodate all of Drupal's diverse audiences and the variety of content available out on the web.

An information architecture project requires consideration of the users, context and content of a site. There are a mix of activities we will go through to get a better understanding of both the Drupal Docs team - our stakeholders - and users of Drupal Documentation. We'll use a content inventory to understand the current structure of what exists content-wise and to find patterns and relationships in the data. Once we get these going we can start recruiting for online card sorting, which will help us determine how best to label and categorize the content in Documentation.

How to Help: Community Interviews

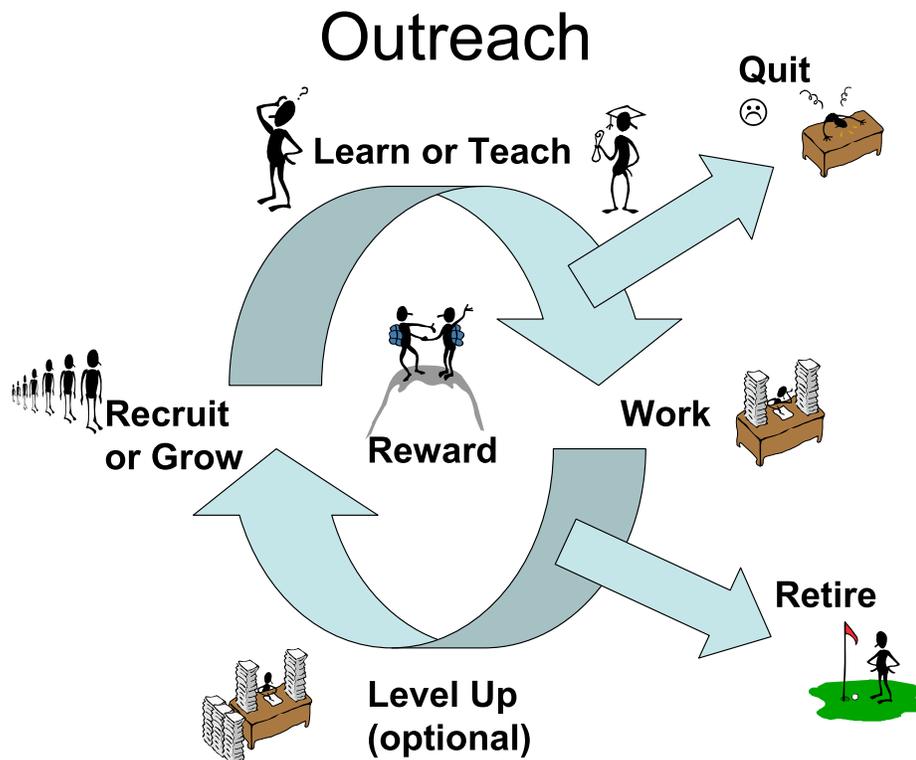
The community is what makes documentation happen, and to move forward we'll use community interviewing as a tool to better understand each other's experiences working with Drupal Docs. There will be a simple interview script so people can interview each other; it's a fun way get to know people and gather great stories which we can turn into more goals and requirements. The script and instructions will be available in the Content architecture group of the community initiatives section on Drupal.org (<http://drupal.org/node/489388>) once we get it ready.

Next Steps for the Documentation Sub-project

Once we start gathering information and developing new ideas for the content architecture, we'll be posting more tasks with the goal of getting a new plan in place and then implementing it. We will need to also explore the processes and technology required to support and maintain the new architecture.

Outreach: Recruitment and Rewards

When working to organized what we gathered regarding outreach during the Toronto sprint, we came up with this rough diagram below.



The cycle starts with *recruitment*, where folks first enter into the community. They then move on to *learning* and continue on to do *productive community work*. For people that do not *quit* or *retire* from the cycle, they often continue around to *grow* in skills and knowledge. They keep learning, or some will even move on the *teaching* others and taking on more leadership within the community. The whole movement of the process relies on some sort of *reward*, which can mean different things to different people.

Outreach is a never ending process. The purpose of outreach for documentation is to:

- Fill gaps (Expertise, Content, Maintenance)
- Provide support to existing resources
- Diversify the mix of contributors

In order to design recruitment strategies and rewards, we need to know what motivates people. We need to know why people contribute to documentation. And, if they don't, what would help change their minds.

I can make assumptions about why people contribute but I would like to hear from you. Once we understand the documentation community better, we can develop an outreach program that will meet the community's needs.

Outreach Goals

Outreach is a large enough project on its own that I've broken it out to a sub-project with its own set of goal categories. I am providing them here so that you can gain some insight into what we hope to accomplish. A more complete list of potential goals and tasks can be found in Appendix B.

Recruitment

Getting new, diverse contributors with a range of expertise is fundamental to getting our work done.

- Foster relationships between people (mentors, peers, subject matter experts (SME))
- Create a program to identify potential contributors
- Improve the visibility of, and respect for, doc efforts

Learning/Productivity

For those working with the community on documentation, we need to align contributors with our goals and provide avenues to be productive.

- Create easy on ramps, match people to tasks
- Document rules and processes (keep them short and to the point)
- Establish a model that organizes domain expertise

Reward/Retention

To retain contributors and make them feel effective, we need to offer them what they need to keep coming back.

- Create a reward system that reflects contributor needs
- Create processes that manage issues of getting people on board and keeping them

Growth

Provide paths for contributors to grow and expand their knowledge and skill base. This helps individuals, as well as the entire community and documentation efforts.

- Create contribution maps to show where people can go
- Create guidance/mentoring processes
- Identify professional growth paths

Leadership

As people grow we should create more leaders and mentors, as well ensuring structure for things like transition management as new people enter and leave.

- Define the roles and scope of the documentation contributors
- Increase efficiency for community management

How to Help: Community Motivation Survey

To kick things off towards these outreach goals, I'd like to start by understanding the needs of the documentation community. I would like to hear from those who have contributed documentation and those who have not. We have a short survey set up at <http://docs.drupaltest.org/survey/may09/how-say-thank-you> and there will be more surveys that follow. You can sign up on the survey site (<http://docs.drupaltest.org>) to be notified when we issue new surveys.

Next Steps for Outreach

The next step is to take what you offer and design recruitment strategies and rewards and retention strategies. There will be more details on that process once we have gathered information to work from.

Steps 3 and 4: Development/Implement

I don't want to venture forward on what exactly we need here. I think there are a lot of good ideas to be considered, information to be gathered and decisions to be made. As we make our way forward in the initial phases, get feedback, and the next steps become more clear, I'll post another roadmap document.

Schedule

As I mentioned earlier, we have the project to create the new Drupal documentation solution and we have a need to keep working on the legacy documentation so that it will be ready for the new system.

Below is a table with activities and target dates for the rest of 2009. Keep in mind that these are "targets" and subject to feedback and change.

Date	New	Legacy
July 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft content architecture submitted to the community.• Review outreach motivators and kick-start the design of outreach recruitment and rewards strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine process and content needs to begin documentation for Drupal 7.
August 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Process feedback and finalize content architecture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Archive, remove or update Drupal.org documentation for all 4.x Drupal versions.
September 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create use cases to establish such processes as editorial review, new contributions, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete Drupal 6 Getting Started guide.• Outline and first drafts of Drupal 7 Getting Started guide.

Date	New	Legacy
October 30		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce the “Pages with comments” list to under 50 pages.
November 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New content architecture is in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drupal 7 Getting Started documentation and API review complete.
December 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish reward system for documentation contributions (may be part of a broader Drupal contribution reward system).• Outline next six month’s goals and schedule.	

Communication

To get a whole community to work together on large goals like these we need to keep communication flowing. This is an overview of the resources we can use to share work and let others jump in.

Community initiatives

The Community initiatives section of Drupal.org (<http://drupal.org/community-initiatives>) is available for everyone to use to set up landing pages for what a particular group is focusing on and important issues or steps to be tackled. There is a Documentation roadmap section (<http://drupal.org/community-initiatives/documentation/roadmap>) specifically set up for roadmap organization, and there are a few topics started. *Everyone* should feel free to edit these pages, and add new pages, to list resources, point to important issues in the queue, and organize work. Keep in mind that these are for organizing data, not for discussion or decision-making, which belong in the issue queue or the mailing list.

Issue tagging

Most of our work should take place in the Drupal.org issue queues (either the documentation queue, <http://drupal.org/project/issues/documentation>, or the webmasters queue, <http://drupal.org/project/issues/webmasters>, whichever is most appropriate to the task). To keep track of topical issues and allow people to quickly see lists of active issues, we should make use of the free-tagging available on issues. To help people find issues and know what tags we are using, we should list our tags on the community initiative pages.

Discussions

Broader discussion or back and forth communication that does not lend itself to the issue queues should take place the documentation mailing list (<http://lists.drupal.org/listinfo/documentation>). Any major announcements that are made to the mailing list will also be posted to the documentation team announcement page (<http://groups.drupal.org/documentation-team>).

Conclusion

We are setting out to take on an ambitious and vital project for our community. The interest and discussion around documentation has been great so far this year and with so many new faces and fresh energy, we have what it takes to really make this happen. Even if the overall project may seem like a lot to tackle, we can each play a small part and, as a community, drive the change for better documentation. I look forward to working with everyone and mining the true gold of open source: teamwork.