Expert Support
The Technical Writing Company

Improving Documentation At Scale

Paul Gustafson
CEO, Expert Support Inc.
December 7, 2023
Write the Docs: Australia

Agenda

→ Introductions

→ The challenge

→ The approach

→ Lessons for every technical writer

→ Improving the process

→ Looking ahead

Introductions

- ➔ Me: Paul Gustafson (https://linkedin.com/in/psgustafson)
  - ◆ Lived and worked in Silicon Valley since 1984
  - ◆ Stories for the hallway

TEKNOWLEDGE

Adobe

tda
Tech's Marketing Agency

VIRTUS

General Magic™

Joint Venture
SILICON VALLEY

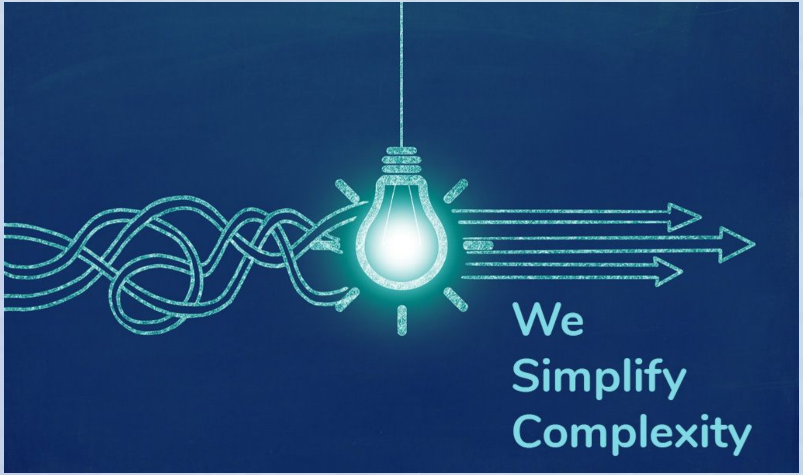
parc®
A Xerox Company

Expert Support, Inc. ©2023 All rights reserved.

What I do now

- Expert Support - Silicon Valley’s technical writing company
  - www.expertsupport.com (founded in 1990 by ex-Teknowledge colleagues)
  - Mostly software docs for developers, IT professionals, and end users (UX)
  - Odd-ball projects, too:
    - Flying robot maintenance manual
    - Industrial coffee roaster installation guide

EXPERT SUPPORT

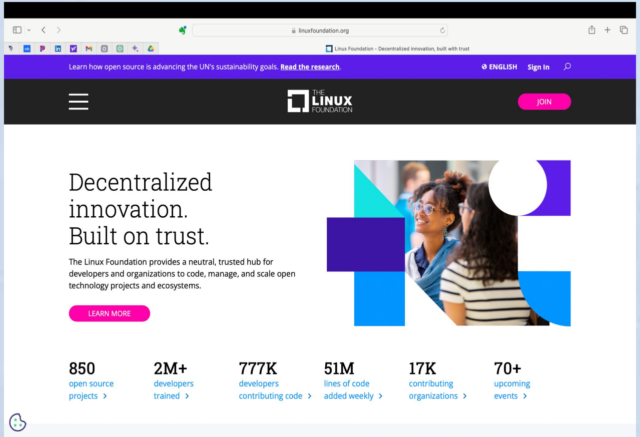


We Simplify Complexity

Expert Support, Inc. ©2023 All rights reserved.

The relevant client project

- ➔ The Linux Foundation
  - ◆ linuxfoundation.org



Learn how open source is advancing the UN's sustainability goals. Read the research.

Decentralized innovation. Built on trust.

The Linux Foundation provides a neutral, trusted hub for developers and organizations to code, manage, and scale open technology projects and ecosystems.

850 open source projects ›

2M+ developers trained ›

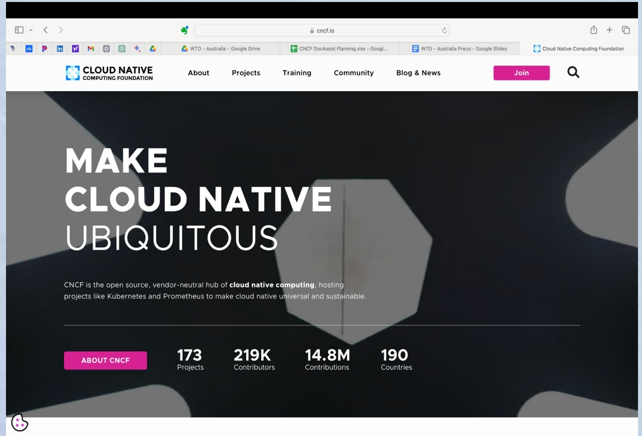
777K developers contributing code ›

51M lines of code added weekly ›

17K contributing organizations ›

70+ upcoming events ›

- ➔ Cloud Native Computing Foundation
  - ◆ cncf.io


cncf.io
WTD - Australia - Google Drive
CNCF DocAssist Planning.xlsx - Googl...
WTD - Australia Prezo - Google Slides
Cloud Native Computing Foundation
CLOUD NATIVE COMPUTING FOUNDATION
About
Projects
Training
Community
Blog & News
Join
ABOUT CNCF

MAKE CLOUD NATIVE UBIQUITOUS

CNCF is the open source, vendor-neutral hub of **cloud native computing**, hosting projects like Kubernetes and Prometheus to make cloud native universal and sustainable.

173 Projects

219K Contributors

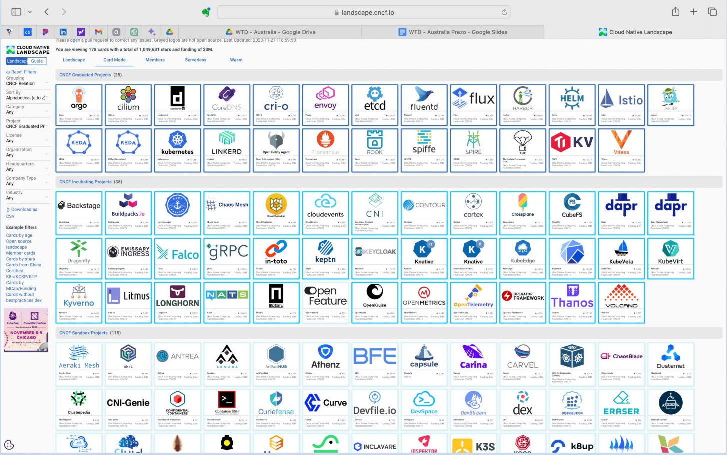
14.8M Contributions

190 Countries

Expert Support, Inc. ©2023 All rights reserved.

The challenge

- ➔ 170+ projects
  - ◆ Varied technology landscape
  - ◆ Multiple learning curves
  - ◆ landscape.cncf.io
- ➔ Inadequate documentation
- ➔ Non-profit org (limited funds)
- ➔ Limited time from maintainers and contributors
- ➔ Lack of writing contributors (good tech writers get paid)



landscape.cncf.io

WTD - Australia - Google Drive | WTD - Australia Prezo - Google Slides | Cloud Native Landscape

Please open a pull request to correct any issues. Greyed logos are not open source. Last Updated: 2023-11-21T16:59:50.

You are viewing 178 cards with a total of 1,049,631 stars and funding of $3M.

Landscape | Card Mode | Members | Serverless | Wasm

Reset Filters

Grouping: CNCF Relation

Sort By: Alphabetical (a to z)

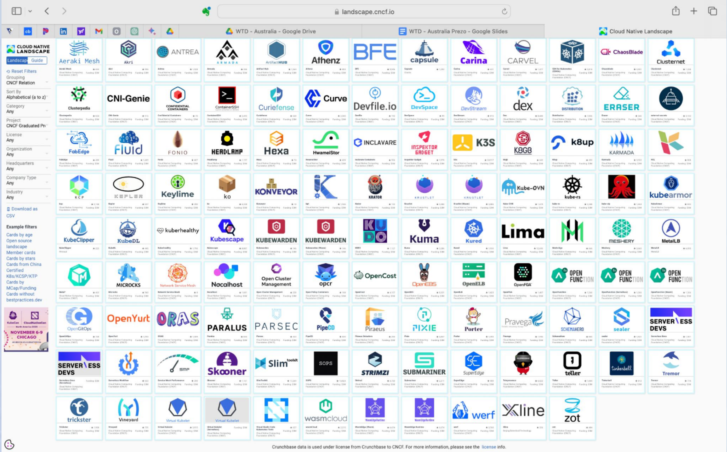
Category: Any

Project: CNCF Graduated Pr

CNCF Graduated Projects (25)

CNCF Incubating Projects (38)

CNCF Sandbox Projects (115)



Crunchbase data is used under license from Crunchbase to CNCF. For more information, please see the license info.

https://landscape.cncf.io/card-mode?project=hosted

Expert Support, Inc. ©2023 All rights reserved.

The approach

CNCF Documentation Assistance Program

1) Basic technical documentation training
   - *Open Source Technical Documentation Essentials (LFC111)*
   - *Creating Effective Documentation for Developers (LFC112)*
2) Documentation analysis
3) Recommendations
4) Open issues for community to address

Expert Support, Inc. ©2023 All rights reserved.

Lessons learned so far

- Nobody wants a report card
  - Analysis phase originally named "documentation assessment"
    - Measures existing documentation against a reasonable rubric
  - Goal: Identify doc work priorities (what tech writers need)
  - Result: Alienated key contributors and maintainers,
    not the best first impression

Improving the process

For example:

- ➔ Recast *assessment* as *analysis*
- ➔ Identify and complete a quick win (submit a PR, close an issue)
  - ◆ Which task? Choose wisely!
    - Relatively easy to complete
    - Noncontroversial
    - High impact
- ➔ Establish early credibility with team

More improvements

- ➔ Analysis scope extended to include common needs
  - ◆ Propose user role definitions (and tasks each role performs)
  - ◆ Propose documentation reorganization
    - ● Common open-source theme:
      Good content, but disorganized
    - ● New documentation org sets context for simpler issues
- ➔ Open issues in GitHub (or equivalent)
  - ◆ Bite-sized tech writing assignments (roles and tasks defined)
  - ◆ Mentor tech writer contributors (builds portfolios for junior writers)
  - ◆ Contributions become less intimidating for newbies

Expert Support, Inc. ©2023 All rights reserved.

Looking ahead

- ➔ Multiple new projects to start
- ➔ Expand training, support implementation
- ➔ Build documentation contributor community

https://expertsupport.com/bigger-idea-much-bigger/

Expert Support, Inc. ©2023 All rights reserved.

Q & A (and all the links)

CNCF docs:	https://github.com/cncf/techdocs/tree/main
Methods & reports:	https://github.com/cncf/techdocs/tree/main/assessments/
Training:	https://training.linuxfoundation.org/
	https://training.linuxfoundation.org/training/open-source-technical-documentation-essentials-lfc111/ https://training.linuxfoundation.org/training/creating-effective-documentation-for-developers-lfc112/
CNCF:	https://cncf.io/
Linux Foundation:	https://linuxfoundation.org/
Expert Support:	https://expertsupport.com
Me:	https://www.linkedin.com/in/psgustafson/

Expert Support, Inc. ©2023 All rights reserved.