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User manual template for software

Home Software Development Did Lincoln say that we hate all software at least some of the time and we hate some software all of the time? He would have. Thank goodness we can't hate all of it all of the time because, after we stumble on the right combination of clicks and keystrokes, most of it does magical things. Too bad the path to these results can often involve cursing and pulling our hair — especially when the code is homegrown.Even if we hate the experience of using major products, apps and websites, the software development ecology is often unfair to the custom projects that handle special tasks for enterprises. After all, there are hundreds if not thousands of developers working on the major software and services consumers depend in their daily lives. There are entire teams devoted to the credit card billing section alone and entire buildings of workers devoted to solving how to get people click 1 percent more often. But it's hard not to judge the smaller in-house projects by the standards set by these brigades of programmers.Many enterprises have a handful of developers, or just one beleaguered soul, working part time on a software project while juggling several others at the same time. The company's end-users, fresh from clicking on a major retail website or crafting a bit of wit for social media, switch tabs and expect the same level of polish from the in-house accounting shim running on their desktop.Developing software is hard, but it's even harder when your customers are down the hall and eat in the same cafeteria. When they hate your code, you feel it deep inside. It's easier to recover emotionally from a bad bug if you don't have someone mentioning it at the company softball game.Here are 11 reasons why users hate your software. Some are simple to fix. Many are just consequences of scale. Bigger teams are able to build simpler products and devote the time to polishing. Skip to content From tech-related aches to finger and nail oh-no's, your complete wrist-to-fingertips help guide. Jonathan KnowlesWe trust our hands to do, well, everything. And the 27 small bones and 28 little muscles they each hold need our protection: "Women are diagnosed with conditions like tendinitis or carpal tunnel syndrome more often than men," possibly due to hormonal fluctuations, says Rachel S. Rohde, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at Beaumont Health System in Royal Oak, Michigan. Luckily, there's a lot you can do to keep your nails, fingers, and wrists healthy and happy, so turn the page for all the details. Problem No. 1: Tendinitis The lowdownTendinitis occurs when tendons, which attach muscle to bone, get inflamed or irritated. In the hand, it's especially common at the base of your thumb, a condition called DeQuervain's tendinitis, says Steven Beldner, MD, an assistant professor of orthopedic surgery at the Albert Einstein Medical School in New York City. "We often see this in pregnant or perimenopausal women," he says. "Synovium—the thin soft-tissue layer that covers and lubricates your tendons—has estrogen receptors in it, so when your hormones fluctuate, it can swell." Repetitive stress injuries from excessive texting can also cause DeQuervain's, informally known as BlackBerry thumb. "Your thumb is the most dexterous part of your hand, so it's more prone to strain," explains Stuart Elkowitz, MD, an orthopedic hand surgeon in Mount Kisco, New York. What it feels likeBurning pain on the thumb side of your wrist that can travel up your forearm and worsens when grasping objects or twisting your wrist. You may also notice swelling and numbness. The RxAbout 90 percent of the time, the problem goes away after a few days of avoiding pain-causing activities, using an over-the-counter splint to stabilize your wrist and tendons, and taking an OTC anti-inflammatory such as Advil. (If you really can't stop texting, limit yourself to yes/no answers!) If you don't get better in a week, your doctor may refer you to a physical therapist or to an orthopedic specialist, who can administer cortisone shots to reduce pain and swelling. Problem No. 2: Carpal tunnel syndrome The lowdownThe carpal tunnel is formed by the bones of your wrist and the transverse carpal ligament. This tunnel protects the median nerve—which supplies feeling and movement to parts of the hand—as well as the flexor tendons, which bend your fingers and thumb. Carpal tunnel syndrome itself occurs when the synovium surrounding the flexor tendons swells, putting pressure on your median nerve. Women are approximately three times more likely than men to develop the condition, Dr. Rohde says, which can frequently occur during pregnancy, perimenopause, and even while using birth control pills. You're also at greater risk if you suffer from a thyroid disorder or diabetes—both conditions that make tendons more susceptible to inflammation. What it feels likeTingling and numbness in your whole hand. "You may notice that you have trouble buttoning your shirt or putting in earrings," Dr. Rohde says. Since many people sleep with their wrists curled, which puts strain on the carpal tunnel, symptoms may worsen at night and even wake you up. The RxCarpal tunnel can usually be detected by a physical physical exam, but your doctor may also want to test your median nerve function (it's done with little needles) to see how much it's being compressed. About 75 percent of cases can be reversed after six weeks of wrist splints and cortisone shots, research shows; otherwise, you may need surgery. It's done on an outpatient basis under local anesthesia and consists of cutting the carpal ligament to enlarge the carpal tunnel. You may have pain and swelling for two weeks, but then the problem should be gone.Next Page: Osteoarthritis [pagebreak] Problem No. 3: Osteoarthritis The lowdownMore than a quarter of women will develop osteoarthritis—a condition in which the cartilage that covers the bone surfaces at your joints begins to erode—in their hands. "We see it at the base of the thumb and the fingertips as early as your 40s," says Michelle Carlson, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at The Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City. Women are more susceptible to this type of arthritis than men because they have looser joints and ligaments, which allows thumbs to move more and cartilage to wear out faster. Jonathan KnowlesWhat it feels likeAching or pain that worsens after gripping or grasping, also stiffness in the morning or during rainy weather. The RxSee your doctor, who may suggest splints, cortisone shots, anti-inflammatories, and exercises. You'll also have to modify your habits. "Holding free weights at the gym can be irritating, for instance," Dr. Carlson says. "So can activities such as weeding." If none of this helps, talk to your doc about surgery to fuse or remove the painful joint. Problem No. 4: Ganglion cysts The lowdownGanglion cysts are fluid-filled sacs that grow out of a joint—like a balloon on a stalk—either on the top or the underside of your wrist. They represent anywhere from 50 to 70 percent of soft-tissue lumps on the hands and wrist and are three times more common in women than men. It's not really known what causes them, although some may be related to trauma, such as falling on an outstretched hand. What it feels likeUsually they're painless, but occasionally they can put pressure on the nerves that pass through the joint, causing a burning pain. The RxThis harmless cyst may eventually disappear on its own. But if it's painful or the appearance bothers you, then your doctor can remove it through surgery under local anesthesia. "That's the best way to get rid of it, with the lowest chance of recurrence," Dr. Rohde says. © Copyright . All rights reserved. Printed from this link is to an external site that may or may not meet accessibility guidelines. I was doing something routine a couple of days ago — paying some first of the month bills online — and I got stuck. For the life of me, I couldn't remember the name of one of the people I send payments to. All the information is saved in my bank account's settings, but I have to enter the name of the recipient, exactly as it appears in my records, to bring everything else up.That's when it hit me:I need a user manual for my life! I have a password manager, personal information manger, Treo, online todo list, reminder system, Moleskine notebook — but nowhere had I written down the step-by-step instructions for making this payment. Nor, I realized, did I have a record of most of the tasks I do routinely. Instead, I remember the first step (visit a website, call someone, open a program, etc.) and rely on the cues presented. If I can't remember how to do something, I work at it until I figure it out.How much time do you think I've wasted trying to remember simple stuff, like the steps it takes to process photos I've taken to print them out, or how to pay my quarterly tax payments, or how to accept new contributors to the Lifehack.org pool and get them up to speed?What I should have, I realized, is a single place where these processes, from the crucial to the mundane, were recorded. There are a few good reasons to have something like this: To save time: Like I said, I probably waste a couple extra minutes on just about every routine task I perform. While on a day-to-day basis, I probably wouldn't need to check my "user manual", it would be nice to have a single reference I could turn to when I got confused. For inspiration: Writing a task down, step by step, can help identify wasted efforts and shoddy processes. Maybe there's a better way to do task x? Also, for tasks I'm likely to procrastinate on, I'd have a tool to keep me from letting myself get distracted until all the steps were done. For troubleshooting: How many times have you done something "the way you always" do and not gotten the expected result. Having a guide to turn to would help make sure I was walking through all the necessary steps and help me see what I'd missed the first time around. For training: If I ever hired someone to take over part of my work, I'd already have step-by-step tutorials for them to follow. In case something happens to me: If I were injured or even (goodness forbid) killed, how would my family pick up the pieces? I'm the family tech guy — it would be impossible for my loved ones to figure out the assortment of online tools, software, and hardware I use to manage my business and other projects. What would be in it?What would I put in my user manual? Quite a few things come to mind, including: The tools, both online and off, I use to accept, process, and make payments. Banking processes — how I pay bills and receive payments Bookkeeping tools — How I keep track of my accounts How I add clients and advertisers into my system How I log into, create and manage posts, manage ads and affiliates, and promote all the websites I run or am otherwise involved with Google Adwords and Adsense processes — how I identify keywords, how I set up campaigns, how I add new ads to my sites How I produce a podcast — my local and online workflows for recording, uploading, and distributing my podcasts A network diagram of some sort showing all my contacts and their specific relation to me and my work.Various checklists for things like packing for a business trip and reeading the car for winter. What else? Any other process that I might have to repeat, especially if it's on a semi-regular or less frequent basis. Renewing my car registration Reactivating my health insurance (I teach as a contract employee so I have to reactivate it every time I renew my contract) Putting a new syllabus or online course together Writing an academic paper And so on... Since part of the usefulness of a personal user manual would be the ability to share it with other people, especially if I were incapacitated in some way, using any fancy software tool or online application seems out of the question. The best bet would be to keep a single file in a standard word-processing format (Word .doc, .rtf) on my computer, and an up-to-date hard copy printed out in a binder.Finding information in a paper copy might be a hassle, though — a clear table of contents seems essential, and a clear organizing schema. Pages — at least within a section — should follow templates, with the same kinds of information in the same place on each page. I'm torn between two organizational schemas, though: should it be organized by topic (e.g. paying bills, writing articles, organizing courses, etc.) or by regularity (things I do every day, things I do weekly, things I do monthly, quarterly, annually, etc.)? Maybe both, actually — the point is to be as perfectly useful to someone else as to myself, and who knows how much direction I might be able to give or what conditions it might need to be used under?Putting it togetherI hear you out there, thinking "That sounds like an awful lot of work!" And it does. What I'm thinking, though, is that once a template is created, adding new pages would be pretty easy. And rather than sitting down and figuring everything out, it might be more fruitful to keep the file open and document processes as you perform them in the course of your regular schedule. It might take a few extra minutes per task for a couple of days, but by the end of a week, you'd have most of the tasks you do most often fully documented. Add the monthlies at the end of the month, and add the less regular stuff as it occurs to you, or when you can set aside an hour or two to think about it.Sound crazy? Maybe it is crazy. And yet I can't help but think that so many of the organizations I've worked for — universities, foundations, museums, the military, corporations — have shelves full of such documentation, from Standard Operating Procedures for various tasks to training manuals to grant-writing templates. If you want to make sure that a certain standard is reached every time you do something, you need to figure out and document that standard. I may never open my personal user manual once it's finished — but it will be nice to know that if I'm ever hospitalized, my partner can make sure that the people that need to know, know, and that at least the minimal requirements of my business could be taken care of. It will be nice to know that tasks I do very rarely are documented somewhere, so I don't procrastinate by putting a "figure out how to do x" entry onto my todo list — and then procrastinate that task since I don't remember how to find out how to find out!What about you? What kind of information would you put into your personal user manual? Don't forget: there are two parts to your package. You already go through great lengths to protect one (your penis), but sometimes neglect the second (the nuts). If you want to ensure healthy sperm and a vibrant sex life, start showing your testes some TLC, stat. Here's how. KEEP THEM COOLA laptop on your lap raises your balls' temp, which may harm sperm quality, a Fertility and Sterility study found. Set devices on a table, says MH urology advisor Larry Lipshultz, M.D. HIT THE SACKLess sleep means more stress hormones, which can sap sperm production, says Tobias Kohler, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.S., an associate professor of urology at Southern Illinois University. EYE THEIR SIZEOlder men with a testicular volume of 20 milliliters or more risk heart troubles, a Journal of Sexual Medicine study reports. The authors say blood vessel damage may up testes size. GET A SAFE SNIPA vasectomy won't cause ED, a new study in the Journal of Sexual Medicine found. That is, unless you have sex within 72 hours. The possible pain or bleeding could leave you limp. MOVE YOUR PHONENumerous studies have linked cellphone exposure to decreased sperm count and quality. So keep your phone in your back pocket instead of in the front one, says Dr. Lipshultz. KILL SPIDERSDilated veins in your scrotum, which are similar to spider veins, may cause infertility and testicular shrinkage, says Dr. Kohler. Schedule an appointment with a urologist. This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported onto this page to help users provide their email addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content at piano.io

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