General Tips On Creating Release Notes

☐ **Use naming conventions**: Use a clear and unified naming convention for your release notes e.g. '*Product name – YYYY-MM-DD*'.

☐ **Provide easy access**: Provide a way to access your release notes within your product so users don't need to actively visit your help center to check what has changed.

☐ **Keep it brief**: Try to highlight only the most important changes you've made. When more detail or context is needed, provide a link to your documentation where these details are shared.

☐ **Use templates**: By creating templates with a clear and consistent structure, you can better organize your release notes and make them more readable.

☐ **Keep your user front and center**: Focus your release notes on why these changes bring value to your user and why they matter for how the users engage with the product.

☐ **Tone and voice**: Avoid using any technical jargon or acronyms that users might not understand.

Tips When Writing Release Notes

- ☐ **Start each new page with a summary.** Write a short outline of the most important changes and updates in order of significance, starting with the most impactful changes to the user.
- ☐ **Publish them in a visually appealing way**: More showing, less telling! Make your release notes more engaging and user-friendly with visuals.
  - ☐ **Include media to support your written content.** Add screenshots of your UI, diagrams to illustrate processes, or any other media to support your content.
  - ☐ **Give your content space.** Add line breaks to bigger chunks of content so it can be spaced out on your page. This improves the readability of your release notes.
  - ☐ **Use a heading for each new point.** This will help readers quickly find the content that's interesting to them, as well as improve the overall readability of your release notes.
  - ☐ **Add a table of contents.** Once your content is broken up with headings, use a *Table of Contents* so readers can jump straight to the sections they'd like to read.
- ☐ **Watch your word count!** Your team's release notes should briefly summarize your product's changes so the content doesn't become overwhelming and hard to read.
- ☐ **Your release notes are not the documentation**: Highlight just the major updates in your release notes that have an immediate impact on your users. When you need to provide more detail, link to your documentation with those details instead.

Tips To Share Your Release Notes

In many ways, over-communicating a release can be counter-productive to our goal of great communication, so we should be considerate about when and where we share release notes.

Impact of Your Release

Try to think about the impact of your release to your users and use the A - B - C method.

- [ ] **A releases:** Big features or major changes that will transform how users see and use our product. An *A* release gets the most time and attention when it comes to communication with the goal of making sure every user (and even potential user!) is informed of the news.
- [ ] **B releases:** Standard feature releases that add value and maybe introduce a new use case. The *B* release is medium effort and we typically do some standard communication with our existing user base.
- [ ] **C releases:** These are reserved for minor improvements or bug fixes and usually don't require much effort to communicate. The *C* release territory is where we're wary of over-communicating, so try to focus on sharing the release notes in only the places that it's 100% necessary for our users.

Communicating Your Release Notes

Once we know what type of release it is, we start to gather all the channels and formats for how we should communicate the release:

- ☐ **Share the News Directly in the Product:** Need to get information to the users who need it most? The product is the perfect place. Communicate big updates right in your product – ideally right in the context where the user will understand its value.
- ☐ **Use Your Help Center:** When folks have questions about your product, where do they go? A help center is the perfect place for users to self-serve the help they need and where they'll be glad to hear about new updates and features they can take advantage of.
- ☐ **Use Your Blog or Website:** Every great product deserves a blog! If you have a home for new content, it's a great place to loop in new updates from the product itself.
- ☐ **Send an Email:** Email is still a reliable place where users expect to receive updates from time to time. That said, email is tricky. Over-communicating via email can lead to unsubscribes or a trip to the spam folder, so reserve this tactic only for bigger announcements that deserve to be in your user's inbox.
- ☐ **Involve Your Partners:** Do you sell your products via solution or service partners? Don't leave them out! In most cases, partners want to provide the best service possible to your shared users and need to be in the know when big changes are coming.
- ☐ **Post on Social Media:** Does your product have a voice on Twitter or Linkedin? This is a low-effort way to announce your news in a space where people can easily engage and interact.

Examples And Resources

1Password – An engaging writing style and added media for better context

Asana – Videos to better understand the changes and value

Atlassian – Table of Contents for better navigation

Microsoft – Starts the release notes with customer benefits

Scroll Viewport – A quick summary of changes with a focus on customer use cases

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K15t mission is to help teams share their knowledge freely, simply, and effectively to better educate and enable their users.

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