



# Augmented reality is here!

Where are next-gen  
technical communicators?



**A** car required complex repair procedure. With the help of an application, a technician executed the repair efficiently, eliminating unnecessary vehicle disassembly. He could see the repair location, tools, and parts to be repaired in the real world with augmented information through his goggles. The app helped the technician do away with the need to transfer information from online/print, and facilitated interactive and context-specific instructions

Augmented Reality (AR) has arrived! And it is changing the world of technical communication.

As per an independent survey, the AR market is expected to cross \$200 million users and hit \$100 billion by 2020. Acquisition of AR software by tech giants is a clear sign that industry leaders are seeing the game-changing competencies that AR can produce.

With the AR vertical growing, there is an increasing requirement for standard design and service operations documents. However, there is a dearth in standardization processes, impacting documentation. This gap presents an opportunity for technical communication. Content required for augmentation is a crucial part of the AR solution. With smart devices outselling computers, this is a big prospect for technical communicators.

Instead of the conventional print and online formats, AR demands rich media content that can be published on smart devices. It calls for a different skillset and mindset.

**Technical communicators' ability with visual design and textual simplicity makes them crucial to the AR-based app development process.**

## How to deliver smart content?

AR demands diverse abilities with visual thinking centered on execution rather than conceptual description. This implies minimal non-visual information. In AR, we perform the task together with the user. So, we need to take into account not only the user's position, time, and issues, but also ways in which the user can interact with AR. Dedicated authoring tools are required to work in a three-dimensional view and align with real data.

A new authoring tool is not the only need; a new approach towards technical documentation is required: in AR, we do not explain but show. Due to the changes in the types of content and the manner we create it, we need to construct 3D and voice overlay. The users have to be led to the exact location and provided context-sensitive content.

Though the format of content for help documentation is different for desktop and mobile, the nature of documents is the same. Both formats need brief or more-detailed guides for end users and embedded help in the user interface.

The focus should be on building knowledge base and methodology to support AR in the same nourishing way as any other technical documentation deliverable. As with any technology launch or an invention process, we must get acquainted with the documentation landscape. We should install a trial package or subscribe a hosted service for AR projects.

Technical writers are best suited for handling the documents created by app developers and testers. Some technical writers are well-versed in designing. These designing skills can also aid them in creating highly effective and usable smart documentation. If they do not make use of this golden chance to deliver smart content, then someone, less qualified or capable, will.

## A quick look at AR

AR refers to the expansion of our perception of reality with information created by a computer. Basically, it uses the real world as the base and imposes digitally-generated info onto it to provide real-time view. It is usually captured by a smart device camera.

Major parts of AR:

- Hardware/Software and content required for supporting AR
- Sensors that show reality and user interface like camera or 3D sensors
- Applications to superimpose captured content with additional information
- Voice recognition or motion or wearable devices to interact with augmented content
- AR content - Three-dimensional prototype/ visual guidance/voice overlay

## The 'reality' check

Legacy systems are struggling to distribute and optimize content to smart devices in a handy layout that the customer anticipates. There is a need for a platform that enables mobile content management. The interface should provide an efficient publishing process for creating and publishing rich media content from any source, for example, web or smart devices supporting iOS and Android.

Documentation can be channelized through Cloud and accessed from smart devices. The time-saving alternative (single-source documentation) is to use content authoring tools that feature mobile publishing. AR authoring tools are only in the early stages of development and the market for these tools is limited. It's safe to say that these tools will evolve based on users' requirements and advice from experts.

There are various reasons to branch into smart documentation, some of them being new and creative prospects, and measurable and lucrative work. Apart from offering imaginative and appealing methods to engage with customers, it also gives life to your information.

Transferring contextual digital info into the work atmosphere has noticeable benefits for productivity and quality. As AR tools grow, the nature of content will evolve as well and we will proceed to a future that unites the digital and physical realities. Augmenting the physical reality with contextual info will change how people perceive human cognition.

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