



acrolinx case study

How Acrolinx AI Helps Siemens Power Generation Services Create Customer-Oriented Manuals



THE PROBLEM

Technical writers in Siemens' Power Generation Services division need to make sure that their documentation meets high quality requirements, enabling the customer to install Siemens turbosets. The biggest difficulty has been achieving consistency in terms of terminology and style in the extensive manuals, often comprising thousands of pages. To meet this challenge, Siemens was searching for a linguistic tool that could help establish a terminology and introduce a controlled company language.



THE SOLUTION

Siemens implemented the Acrolinx content creation platform because of its AI-based analysis, easy-to-follow guidance, and integrations for multiple authoring environments. Today, Acrolinx helps technical writers create customer-oriented content and, thus, paves the way for a successful digitalization process. Acrolinx Scores and Analytics show that content quality and consistency have improved measurably since writers started optimizing their content with Acrolinx.



In the Power Generation Services division at Siemens, no two orders are the same: Siemens manufactures plant components according to individual buyer requirements. Accordingly, each documentation is customer-specific. In order to complete comprehensive manuals, which can be thousands of pages long, under tight deadlines, the technical writers at Siemens must rely on high standardization and reusability of text modules. But that's not the only challenge.

Michael Straeter, Project Lead Technical Communication in the Power Generation Services division at Siemens, describes a paradigm shift in their technical documentation. In the past, Siemens would write manuals for its own employees who would build the power plants on-site for the customer. Today, Siemens delivers the components and plans the power plant as well as its parts. Additionally, Siemens is involved in engineering the help systems and providing customer support.

Documentation Has to Meet High Quality Requirements

With this new situation, requirements for technical documentation have increased significantly. “Today, manuals also serve as contract bid documents,” Straeter explains. “Therefore, we have to make sure that our information is well-structured and meets legal requirements regarding warranty, liability, and damages.” Ambiguous component names, or assembly processes that don’t work as described in the manual, can cause costly delays on a construction site.

To increase the quality of manuals, the Technical Writers in Berlin and Mülheim, Germany, started to revise and unify their content for Siemens’ turbo-set power plants. After analyzing key processes, they started looking for tools to support their collaborative efforts. “From the very beginning, we knew that we wouldn’t get far without linguistic software,” Straeter recalls. “After all, we had to turn masses of internal information, written by engineers for engineers, into customer-oriented documentation.”

Acrolinx as a Flexible Solution for Complex Tasks

Siemens focused on three main tasks: Creating a consistent terminology, introducing a controlled language, and evolving the area of information architecture. The company chose the Acrolinx platform, convinced by its artificial intelligence. “We need a tool that is capable of prestructuring content. Our long-term goal is to use AI to turn the big data that we receive from within the company into intelligible information,” Straeter explains. “There aren’t many tools out there that have the potential to do this. That’s why the decision for Acrolinx was easy.”

“Of course, we’re also thinking from a business perspective,” he adds. “Acrolinx offers integrations for all the applications we use for technical documentation. That way, Acrolinx doesn’t tie us to a certain software environment. That’s a big advantage for a company like Siemens that works with a widely diversified IT ecosystem.”

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Project Lead Technical
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Straeter highlights the excellent cooperation with the Acrolinx team. “Appointments with Acrolinx are something I always look forward to. The people at Acrolinx have an incredibly professional, tangible, and helpful approach. It’s a pleasure to work with them.”

Positive Feedback From Writers

Acrolinx was introduced at Siemens in 2015, in combination with a new authoring system, which was populated with a revised core inventory of the documentation. Ever since, technical writers are using Acrolinx within the system to check new content. Besides maintaining consistency, goals also include making sure that content is appropriate for audiences outside of Europe. For this, Acrolinx supports writers with custom guidance and specific writing guides.

“With the authoring system, we now have everything in one general pool, which the writers in Berlin and Mülheim perceive as positive,” Straeter explains. In this context, the personal and easy-to-follow guidance of Acrolinx proves to be a big advantage. “If someone tells me, ‘This sentence is too long’, or ‘You’re using too many prepositions here’, then that’s a real help.” Straeter also points out that Acrolinx has raised awareness for terminology – and that issues can now be addressed much easier.

Towards Customer-Oriented Documentation

An example that illustrates the benefits of Acrolinx guidance are warnings. Siemens has implemented a context-dependent guideline that reminds writers to always use the same phrase when writing a warning message. The Acrolinx Sidebar lists the issues next to the content, which writers can correct with just one click.



Every component carries information, from the moment of birth till its end. We need Acrolinx for the entire life cycle. The platform helps us ensure that every piece of information across the company follows the same standards. When we manage to achieve this, we're ready for digitalization.



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For more complex issues, writers find concrete tips on how they can change the text to meet company-specific requirements. That way, the work of technical writers and translators has become much more efficient. “When comparing the old and the new system, the impact is obvious,” says Straeter. “We write more economically; we write less and we reuse content more often.”

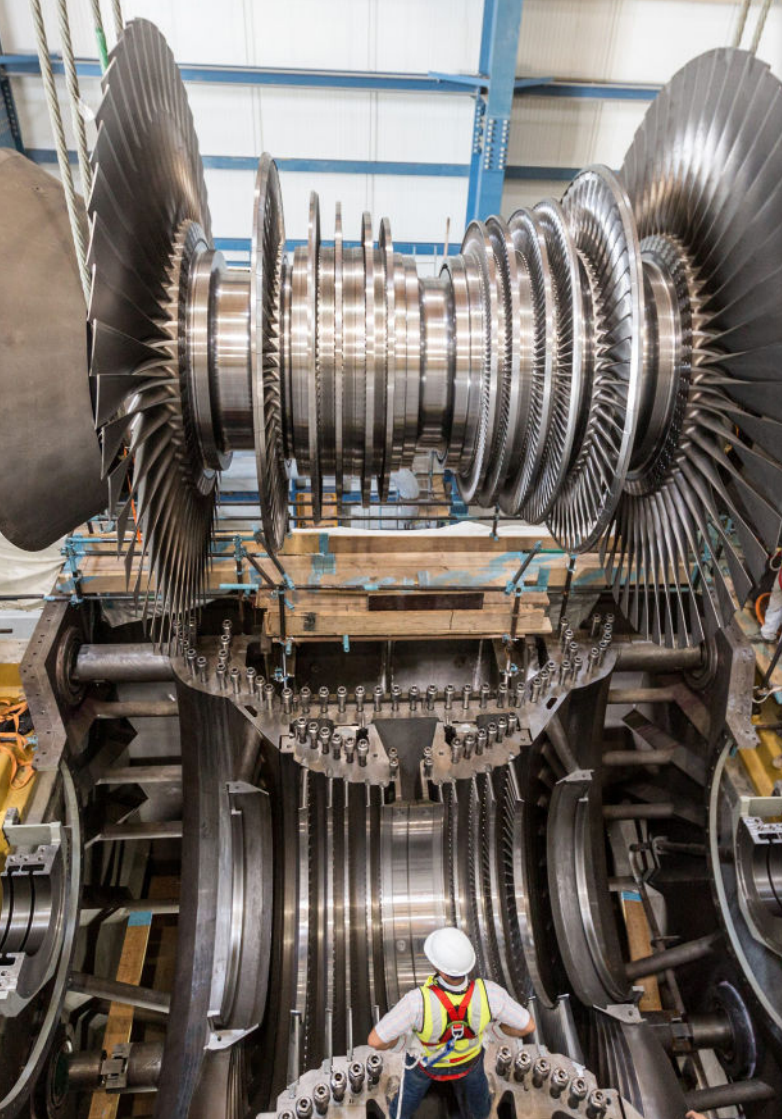
However, the overall objective is and remains to create customer-oriented documentation. If, for example, a work plan contains inconsistent terminology, such as “measurement transducer” and “measurement pick-up”, customers will be confused. By the time it’s clear that these two terms describe the same thing, precious time has been wasted. “In order to avoid such delays on construction sites, we have to be consistent,” says Straeter. “For this, Acrolinx provides excellent tools.”

Quality Becomes Transparent

The Technical Documentation department has a pioneering role when it comes to optimizing content at Siemens. “We take our job very seriously. Together with our suppliers and Siemens’ Global Translation Service, we try to develop and use a clear and comprehensible language,” Straeter explains. “We all have to adapt to a new audience. We have to write manuals for a customer we can’t talk to in person. To be understood, we have to stick to certain rules.”

Acrolinx makes it easy to pinpoint poor content quality by providing specific examples and analytics. “We can use Acrolinx to analyze content from our suppliers and tell them: ‘This is your information structure, your terminology, and your style – and that’s how we want your content to look.’ The quality of information becomes more transparent that way.”





Ready for Digitalization

Straeter expects that Acrolinx will eventually be used outside of the Technical Documentation department as well, especially by suppliers. That way, Siemens will be able to create more efficient structures, where the terminology discussion starts in the development process.

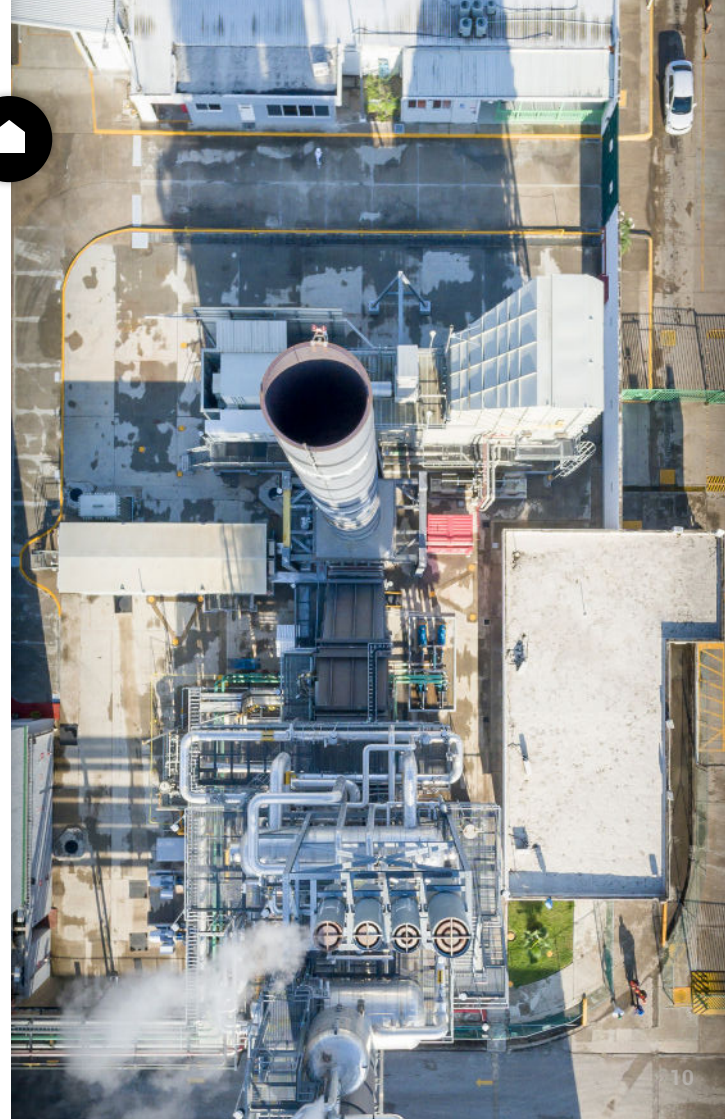
For Straeter, improving internal processes and speaking with one voice are vital conditions for digitalizing the company's documentation. "Every component carries information, from the moment of birth till its end," he explains. "We need Acrolinx for the entire life cycle. The platform helps us ensure that every piece of information across the company follows the same standards. When we manage to achieve this, we're ready for digitalization."

The Company

Siemens AG (Berlin and Munich) is a global technology powerhouse that has stood for engineering excellence, innovation, quality, reliability, and internationality for 170 years. The company is active around the globe, focusing on the areas of electrification, automation, and digitalization.

One of the world's largest producers of energy-efficient, resource-saving technologies, Siemens is a leading supplier of efficient power generation and power transmission solutions and a pioneer in infrastructure solutions as well as automation, drive, and software solutions for industry. The company is also a leading provider of medical imaging equipment – such as computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging systems – and a leader in laboratory diagnostics as well as clinical IT.

In fiscal 2017, which ended on September 30, 2017, Siemens generated revenue of €83.0 billion and net income of €6.2 billion. At the end of September 2017, the company had around 372,000 employees worldwide.



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