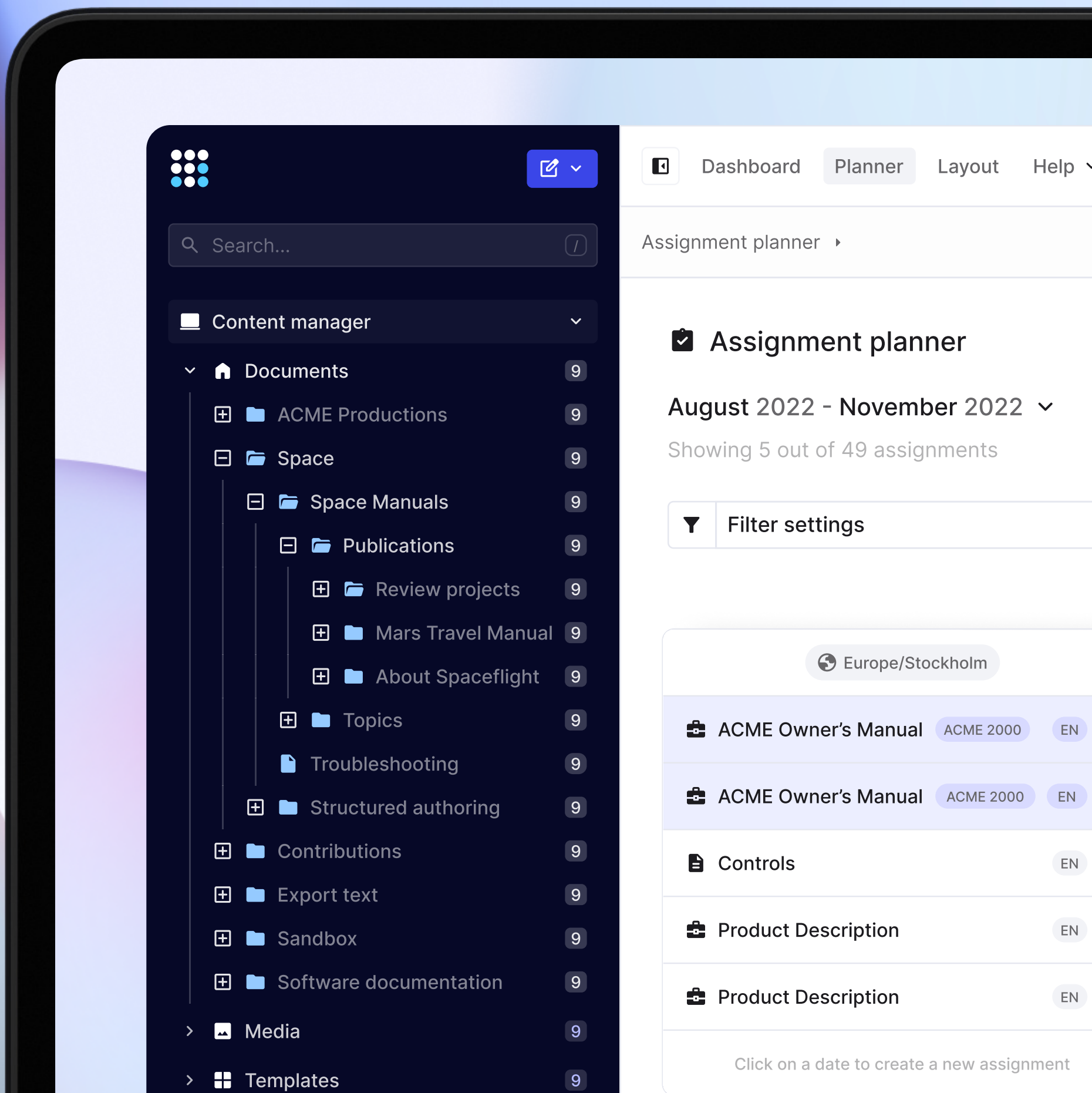paligo

2024

White Papers

Technical documentation in the cloud
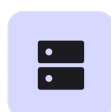
Why you need a
component content
management system

The Problem

Companies seek to make their documentation more efficient through single-sourcing and reuse.
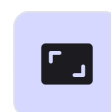
But many single sourcing projects fail due to the steep learning curves and costs of implementation of traditional systems.

The Research

Cloud-based solutions enable collaboration, efficiency and profitability by 21% and up.

Using modern web technology all but eliminates the costs of implementation, and increases usability and thereby user acceptance.

The Solution

A cloud-based authoring and publishing platform to reuse and singlesource documentation with a clear focus on usability and user acceptance greatly improves the chance of realizing the return of investment and actually achieving the increase in efficiency.

The challenges of
complex documentation
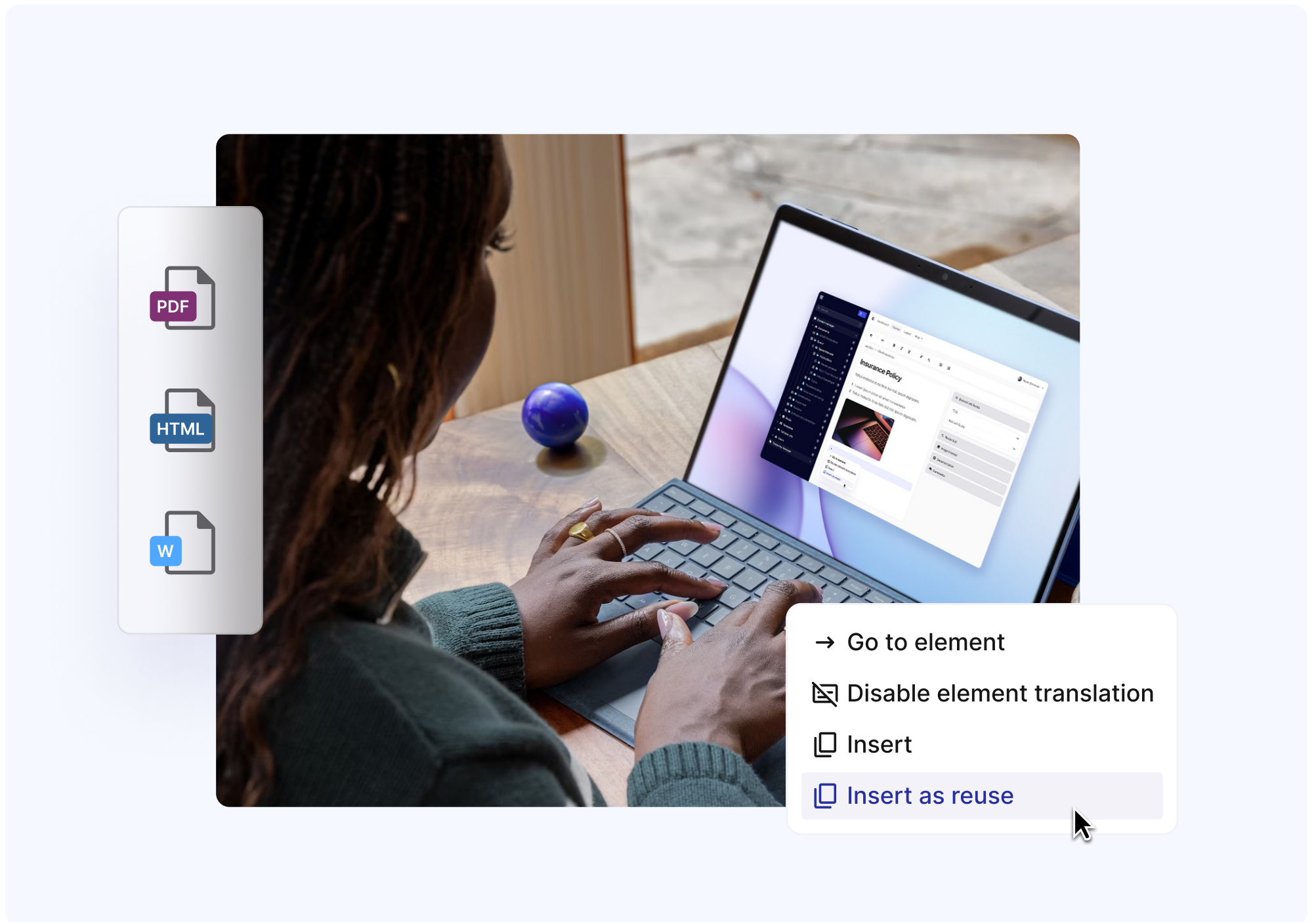
If you are a technical documentation manager, or otherwise responsible for the documentation at your organization, you probably already know the challenges of "complex documentation". Most people when thinking about the documentation for a product, would think of it as one document or possibly one set of documents. But for most real technical documentation that is greatly over-simplified.

Most technical documentation usually has a number of different "facets" that make managing documentation complex, such as:

- Many document versions

- Many product versions

- Many product variants (models and sub models)

- Many output formats (printed manuals, web help, support knowledge bases, mobile, etc)

- Translation into many languages

A lot of the content for this documentation will quite often be similar or the same for many of the variants. Trying to achieve reuse and efficiently manage all this content and variants is very difficult in traditional tools like word processors or document design tools.

In this white paper, we'll examine why selecting a cloud-based platform for structured technical documentation is the best solution for these challenges.

Background

Content reuse and single-sourcing has been a holy grail for a long time, with initially SGML and eventually XML being the main formats used to achieve it. But still the techniques used were mainly long monolithic documents where you applied filtering to create variants, and while reuse could be achieved to some extent, reusing content with this method alone created a complexity in itself.
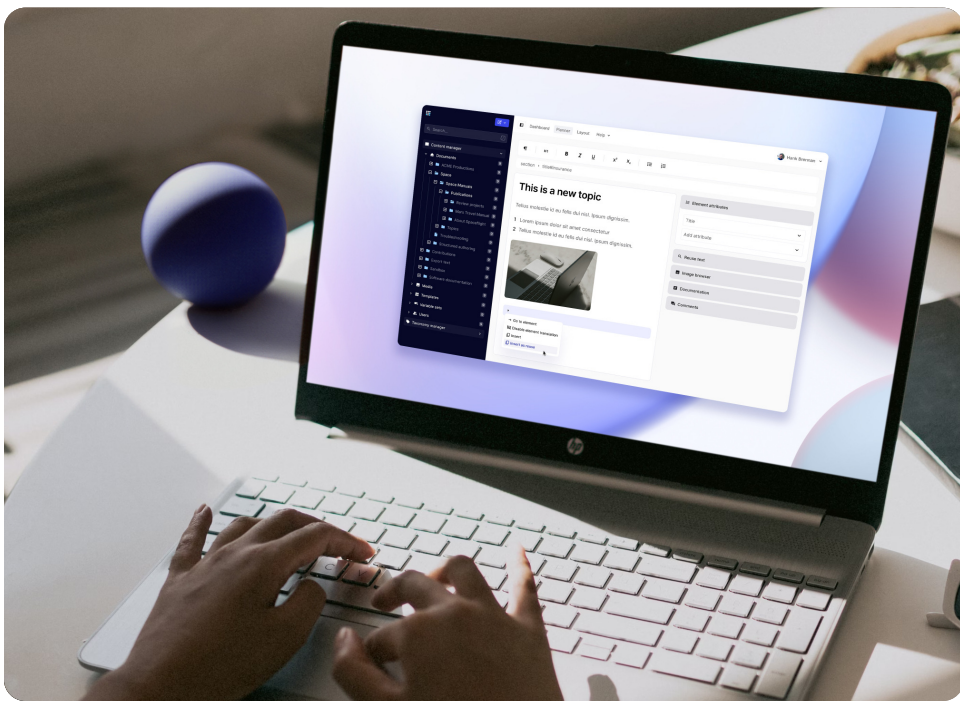

Topic-based authoring

Along came "topic-based authoring" - a technique to break down content into small building blocks, where you reuse each block in different combinations to output specific variants (for different products, different audiences, different platforms, etc).

With this technique you reduced the need to always filter content, and could instead combine it with simply reusing the topics (building blocks) where they were applicable. Topic-based authoring has changed single-sourcing and reuse to make it much more efficient. But with the breaking down of documentation into topics, the granularity of the documentation made it even more important to have a good way to manage all that content.

Compiling lots of topics, images, variables and reusable text, as well as links and relations between them, requires a clever system to keep track of it all.
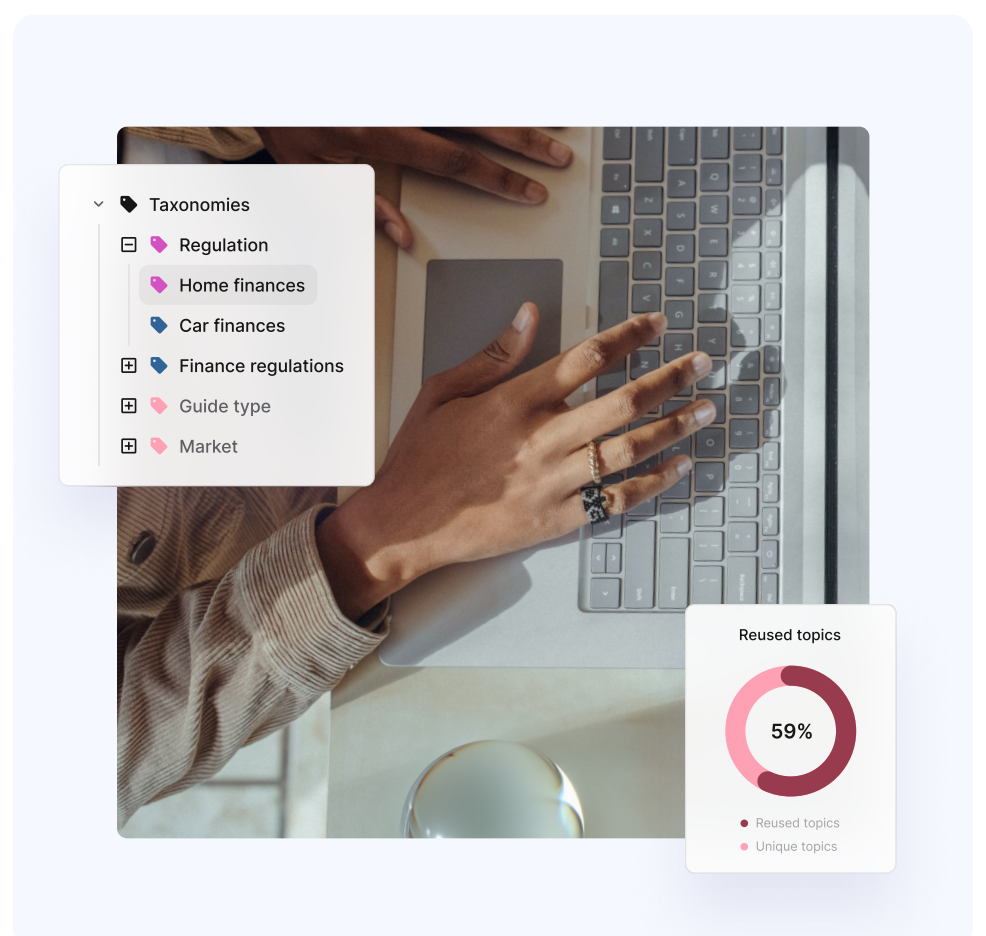
What is a CCMS?

CCMS is short for Component Content Management System. A common misconception is to confuse CCMS with other types of CMS systems, such as Web CMS or DMS (Document Management Systems).

A Component Content Management System manages content at a much more granular level (components) rather than at the document level. Each component represents a single topic or asset (for example an image, table, product description, a procedure). The system also needs to manage all the relationships between the topics or assets.

CCMS systems make it possible to handle the challenges of managing complex content in an efficient manner. While this type of system is a good solution for this task, typically many of them have so far been expensive, had a very high learning curve, and they have required lots of time, effort and money to prepare, install, and deploy.
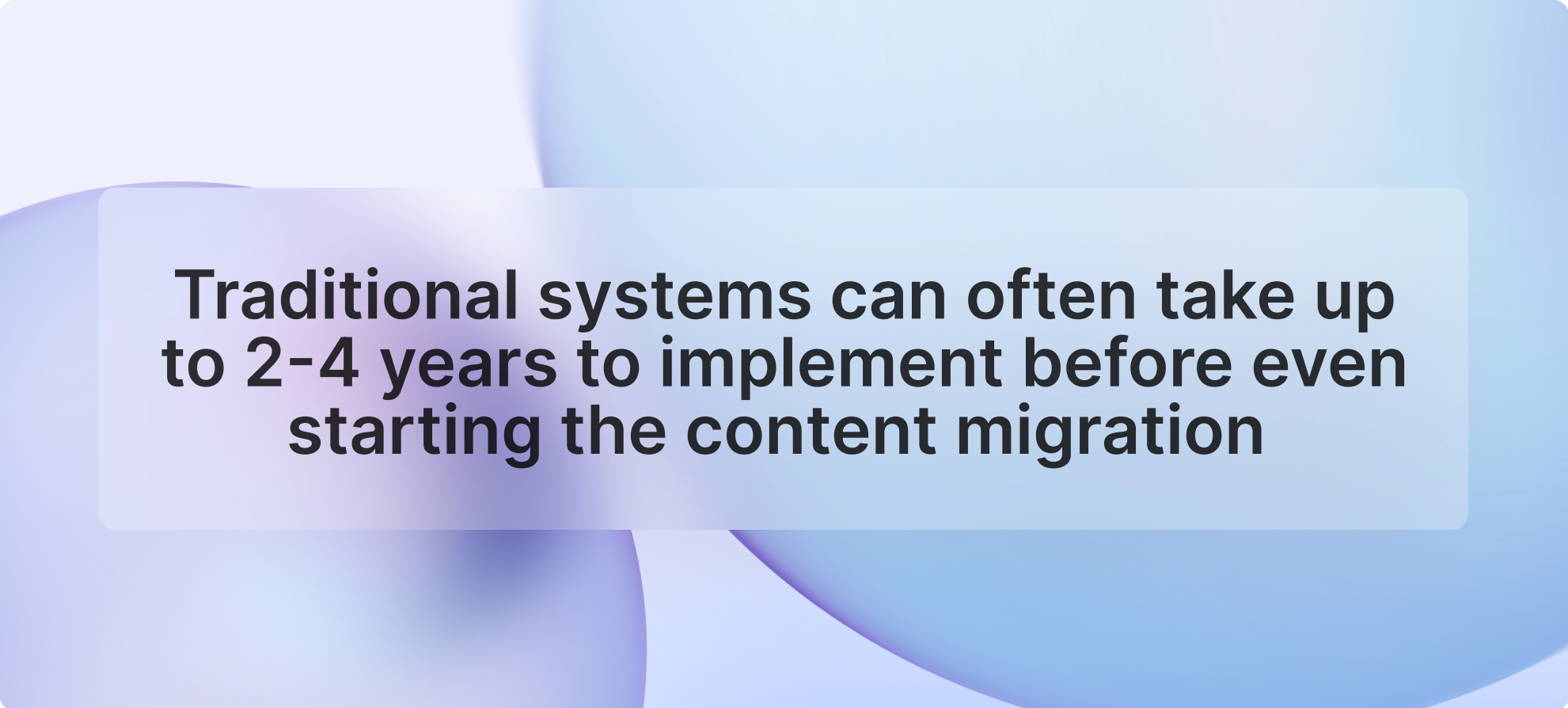
Challenges with Traditional CCMS Systems

User Acceptance

Perhaps the number one obstacle to CCMS implementation projects is user acceptance. If the chosen solution does not achieve a relatively high level of user acceptance, it doesn't matter what the system is supposed to be able to do. It will just be theoretical if the users are not on board.

Many traditional CCMS systems have very long development cycles, as they are generally installed on site, and development needs to consider compatibility with lots of legacy systems, among other things. As a general rule, this also means problems with usability are resolved slowly if at all. It is therefore quite common that user acceptance is very low for these systems.

Implementation Costs

Another big problem with many of the traditional CCMS systems is the cost and time required for implementation. The majority of these systems are installed on-premises and are very complex to prepare for, install, and deploy.

Traditional systems can often take up to 2-4 years to implement before even starting the content migration

It is not unusual for an implementation project for such a system to run for 2-4 years before the users could actually start producing documentation. At that point, all the initial good intentions of making a careful and well-structured migration of legacy content - the part that should get the most attention - may often be thrown out due to pressure from management, and you end up with a system that doesn't give you the benefits sought.

# Cost of Maintenance and Support Consulting

Apart from the costs associated with the implementation of traditional CCMS systems, it does not end there. There is typically a constant need for configuration and customization, as well as the need to apply upgrades for each customer. All of this requires consulting, often on-site, incurring additional consulting costs.

The Solution

The Next Generation of Technical Documentation

So XML, single-sourcing, and topic-based authoring are all good tools to solve the challenges with complex technical documentation. But many traditional tools are expensive, slow to implement, and with low user acceptance. Technical documentation has not seen a lot of innovation for many years.

That has changed with Paligo - a CCMS for topic-based authoring and single-sourcing built for the cloud using modern web technology. Here are some of the advantages, the key factors that are essential to actually succeeding with a move to single-sourced and efficient technical documentation.
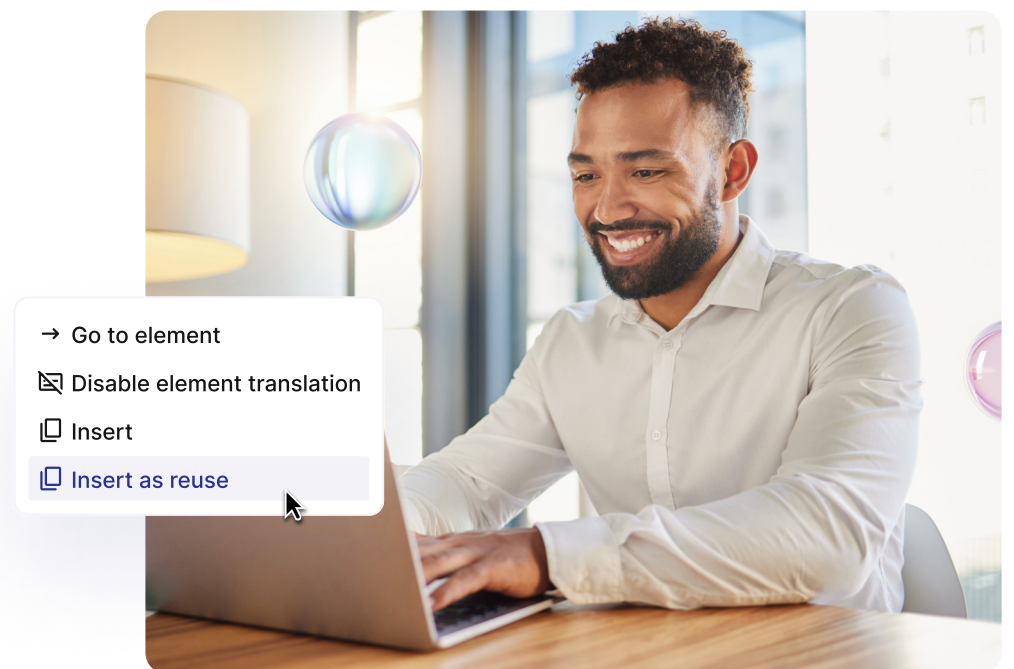

Ease of Use

Paligo was built around a central idea: topic-based authoring and single-sourcing are really quite simple ideas. Users are getting accustomed to the simplicity of working in the cloud in their everyday tasks. It must be possible to achieve powerful technical authoring and content management in a much more user-friendly way using modern web technology, and make the modern user feel at home.

While there are a number of solutions that can achieve reuse, its real power is only realized when the software makes it as easy as possible to accomplish it. Paligo makes this very easy, with features like "Copy and paste as reuse".

> "We've saved many people hours through the easy content reuse."
>
> Sharon Burton - technical writer at pointclickcare
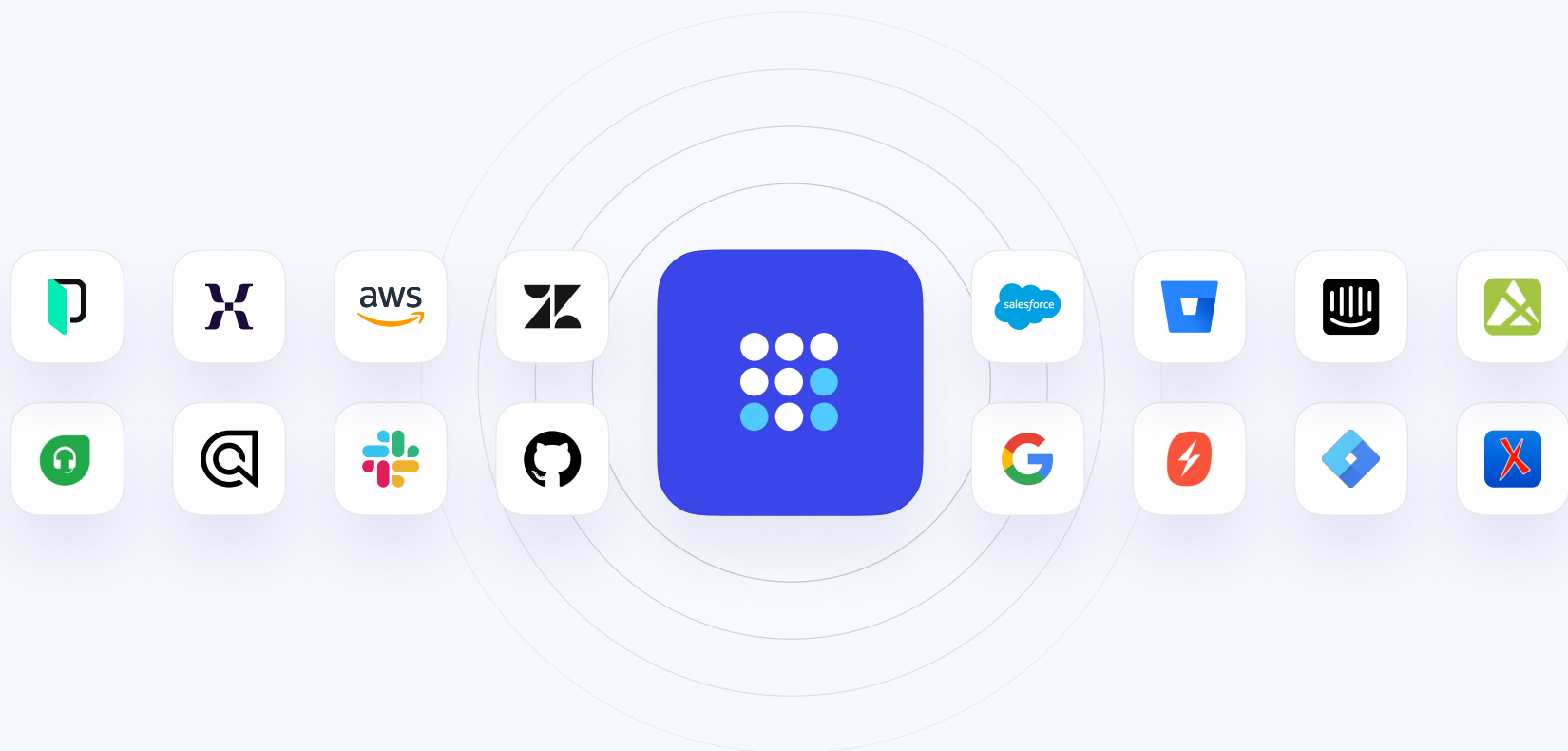
Integrations

Modern web technology and the cloud are built for integrations. You see them everywhere, from project management tools to CRM sales platforms. Technical documentation has traditionally lagged behind, locked into silos of traditional installed tools.

With Paligo the entire arena of API-based integrations between tools is opened up. Integrations are added to Paligo continuously, with connections to translation software, help desk software, and more, as well as custom integrations. Integrations open up a whole new world of possibilities, just not achievable with installed software.

With the growing number of integrations, your technical documentation platform will be part of an eco-system and natural work flow in the cloud instead of an isolated silo.

Collaboration

One of the obvious benefits of the cloud, but so important that it's well worth pointing out, is that when working in the cloud, collaboration becomes much easier because you are always "on the same page" as your colleagues. Everyone is up to speed with what everyone else is doing, whether you're in India, Sweden, the US, or anywhere else, and collaboration happens without even thinking about it. The benefits of this are apparent. No duplicate work, speedy response, transparency, distributed tasks, and much more.

Work from Anywhere

The ability to always be connected to your technical authoring platform also makes it available wherever you are. Whether you are traveling, working in another branch office, at a conference, or simply need to work from home, Paligo is always accessible through any web browser.

It also means it's easier to get content approval from e.g a reviewer, such as a Subject Matter Expert. Either way, you just need to log in, and you have all your content there ready for you. This means maximized utilization of your time, as well as avoiding unnecessary delays.

Lower Overall Cost and Reduced Need for Consulting

With a Software as a Service cloud application, updates and maintenance are done in one place, for all users. It should be apparent that this translates to lower cost for the customer. No expensive consultants on-site to troubleshoot or apply updates to the database. It also means less disruptions and a reduced loss of person hours, as problems can generally be resolved much faster.

And as a consequence, the overall pricing of the software itself can also be much lower than for traditional installed systems. There are many other factors that affect the overall pricing as well. As opposed to installed systems, with a cloud-based CCMS you pay for what you need. And needs may change over time.

57%

- Reused texts
- Unique texts

Real XML Content Model

XML is the backbone of single-sourcing. There are tools that offer single-sourcing but are based on HTML or (X   HTML. While this may work to a certain extent, a truly robust single-sourcing solution should be utilizing the full power of XML. Paligo is 100% XML in the back end, based on a modified version of DocBook - a well-established open standard developed for technical documentation.

This means future-proofing as well as extensibility and transformability for any current and future applications. The strict structure of XML and solid validation it provides offers possibilities and a consistency that no other format can provide.

> "It's currently the best web-based
> CCMS out there."
>
> Fabrizio Ferri Benedetti - Ohpen

Efficiency of Working
in the Cloud

A report commissioned by Google showed that organizations using the cloud grow 26% faster and are 21% more profitable than those that do not. This included everything from startups to mature companies. Users are getting more and more accustomed to working in the cloud, and the threshold is generally low.

Mobility, operational efficiency, and easy access to support are some factors that make working in the cloud very appealing to a dramatically growing number of companies.

What about Security?

Security is often one of the biggest concerns of those who have not already taken the step into the cloud in general. Even for many that may already be using cloud services of some kind. Studies show that over 94% of companies actually already leverage cloud services somewhere in the organization.
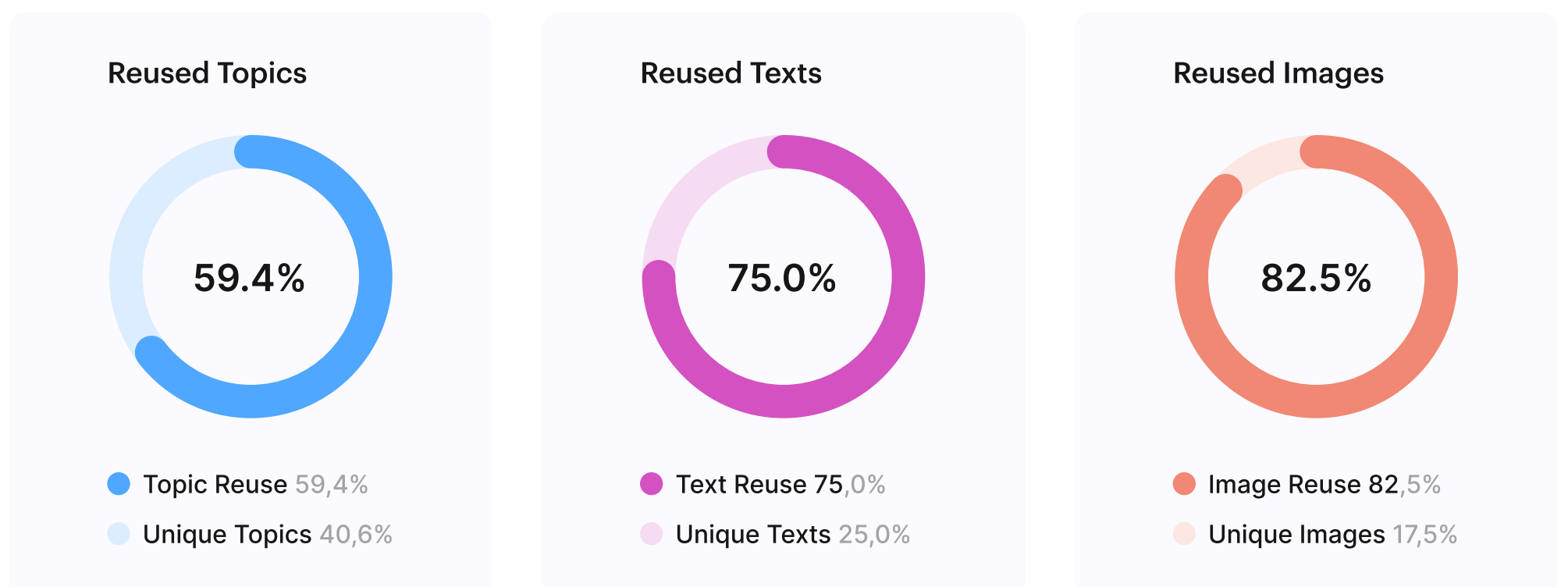

This may come as a surprise to many, but SaaS security is on average much more secure than in-house security. In general, the concern about cloud security does not come from the IT teams in companies, but from the general business user.

Paligo utilizes the most established measures and platforms for security, with hosting on Amazon EC2, complying with the strictest security standards (SOC1, 2, 3/SSAE 16, ISO 9001, ISO 27001, and many more). 256-bit SSL   TSL encryption is used by default and additional levels of security is available on select plans. Backups are made hourly and each backup is stored for a period of 90 days. Should an event occur, recovery can be accomplished quickly due to the level of control provided by this environment.

How much content can you save on content reuse?

After the initial migration of content, Return On Investment can be realized very quickly with an efficient CCMS for technical documentation. Every company will be slightly different, but the following are only some of the very common returns seen when achieving single-sourcing:

30-90%
reuse and consequent savings in updating content

30-50%
less time spent modifying formatting and style templates

20-50%
less time spent reviewing

40-90%
savings on translations

Reused Topics

59.4%

- Topic Reuse 59,4%
- Unique Topics 40,6%

Reused Texts

75.0%

- Text Reuse 75,0%
- Unique Texts 25,0%

Reused Images

82.5%

- Image Reuse 82,5%
- Unique Images 17,5%

Conclusion

Working with your technical documentation in Paligo, you can forget about expensive installations, updates, maintenance consulting and patches. Get all the benefits of single-sourcing, reuse, content management and translation management in the cloud, and get to focusing on the real matter right away - producing quality technical documentation.

Paligo can help you move to the cloud to make content reuse a real pleasure. Take the next steps to start your journey today: https://paligo.net

Translate

Product Description ACME 2000

Europe/Stockholm

Product Description ACME 2000