Quanos

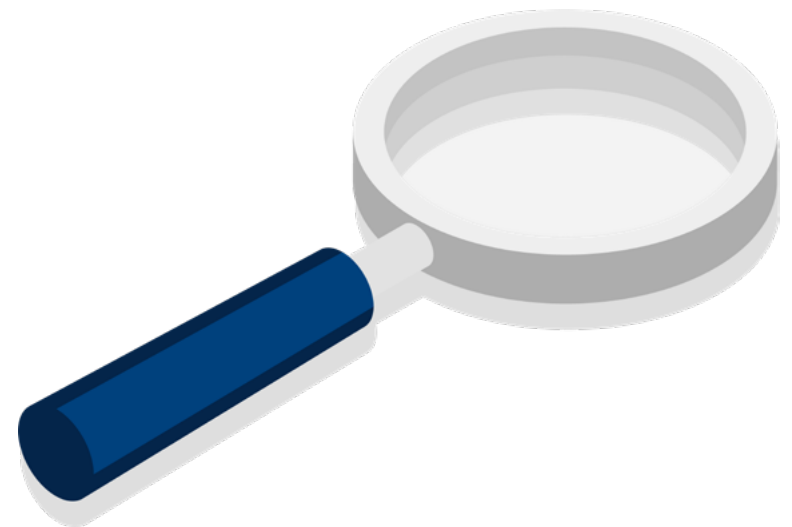# Practical Guide:
How to Create a User-Friendly
Operating Manual

Make your operating manual a success with these practical tips

OPERATING MANUAL

Content

Introduction:

Make your operating manual a success with these practical tips

How can you create a user-friendly operating manual that meets more than just legal requirements? A document that provides customers and technicians with valuable information about your product in every situation, presented in an understandable and visually appealing way? We answer these questions in this practical guide.

Find out

- ✔ which standards are relevant when writing operating manuals

- ✔ which content is important

- ✔ how to structure a manual well

- ✔ what you should pay attention to during the writing process

- ✔ how to provide real, informative added value with graphics

- ✔ how a Content Management System provides you with efficient support when carrying out all these tasks

Sebastian Schiller, Software Trainer at Quanos, shares his expertise with you in this practical guide. He is all too familiar with the challenges that technical writers face when creating operating manuals, and he worked in this profession himself for many years. Today, he supports our customers with the introduction of the SCHEMA ST4 Content Management System. The software makes it easier to write and design instructions and ensures efficient processes in technical writing.

The benchmark: standard 82079-1 in its currently valid version

Depending on the product type and country, legal regulations set certain requirements for technical documents. The Machinery Directive is relevant for plant and machine construction, but this will be replaced by the Machinery Regulation from 2027. The Low Voltage Directive applies to household and office appliances and consumer electronics, among other things. Specific requirements must also be taken into account for medical devices, software, toys, and aerospace and defense systems.

The IEC/IEEE 82079-1 standard specifies cross-industry standards for the structure, content, and design of user information. It applies to product instruction manuals and is the most important standard for technical writing.

This means that when you create an operating manual, both product-specific regulations and the generally applicable standard 82079-1, which provides detailed specifications for the design of the document, must be observed.

Tip: Make use of your colleagues' expertise!
Who is responsible for compliance with standards in your company? In machine construction, this task is usually down to the design department. Ask your colleagues which standards you need to take into account when creating an operating manual.

A bit about vocabulary

Operating, user, or instruction manual? Handbook, user information, or user documentation? Perhaps you have also pondered which one is correct. The answer is not clear, as the terms are often used interchangeably— even standards and directives use the terms differently. For example, standard 82079-1 refers to **information for use and instructions for use**, whereas the Machinery Directive refers **to operating manual.** The user manual, on the other hand, is dedicated—in the literal sense—exclusively to the use of a product, without going into installation and assembly.

In this practical guide, we prefer to reference the operating manual as the part of the technical documentation that is published externally, in line with the Machinery Directive. It helps users and technicians to use a product safely and effectively.