

# Wayfinding in Small Spaces: How to Create Job Aids

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Users reach for job aids for a range of reasons, from recalling the highlights of a task, to finding codes that are used infrequently. The compact size offers safe harbor after working through a detailed user's manual.

Creating a job aid, however, is quite time-consuming. You must select the content, then concisely and elegantly incorporate key tasks and codes. Finally, you need to produce the job aid in a functional format.

The hardest task of all is to sell job aids to management. You need to sell productivity and results, not size. After all, good things come in small packages.

## PEOPLE WANT INFO - FAST

People are used to working fast. They don't want to be slowed down sifting through reams of paper for answers, especially when they're familiar with information, but before they're at the stage of total mastery.

Clues that a job aid is needed:

- Screens are cluttered with open applications
- There are dog-eared sticky notes pinned in cubes or pasted computers, but
- the reference manual is buried on the desk

## CREATING A JOB AID

Consider the content and the format for a good job aid. Here are steps to create an effective job aid.

### Select the Content

Study possible content of job aids:

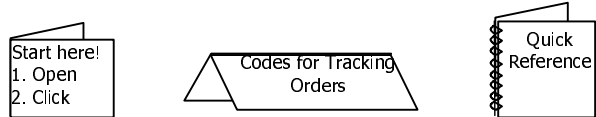
- Gather copies of stickies from users' desktops
- Use the *Getting Started* section of a manual
- Custom-made icons, often hard to decipher
- Make an overview map from table of contents

Review the way the tasks are performed and learned:

- Infrequently performed tasks
- Summary of major steps
- Process overviews
- Codes used in transaction processing
- Keyboard shortcuts

### Select the Format to Produce Job Aid

The form of the job aid needs to fit the function. Common formats fit in a pocket, fold over a keyboard, or are spiral-bound. Here are examples:



**Consider Special Conditions.** Poor lighting, manufacturing, and system use affect the size and shape.

**Develop a prototype.** It's OK if it's not slick at this time. Use simple card stock to a four-color custom job.

**Test.** Test again, and then some more.

**Revise.** When reviewers are satisfied, go to production.

**Sell.** Using a job aid is not self-evident to many users. Build in time to show people how to use the job aid.

## SELLING JOB AIDS TO MANAGEMENT

The greatest difficulty is responding to managers who may say: "Why should we spend all that money for a few pages?" Responses should refer to results:

- Productivity
- Job aids are personal coaches

## REFERENCES

- (1) McCampbell, James, Chicago, IL.
- (2) FrameMaker Quick Reference Guide, 1992.

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