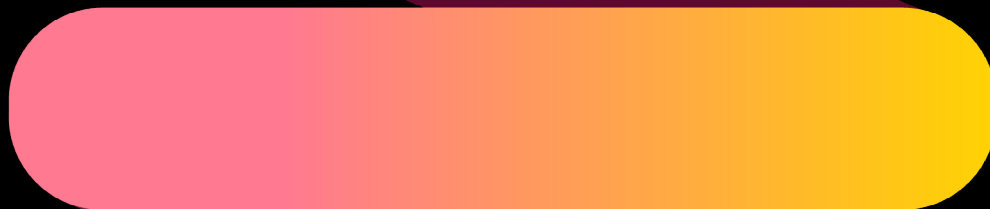


Writing with Clarity:
**Data Insights Into
Enterprise Content**

AN ACROLINX REPORT ON TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICES



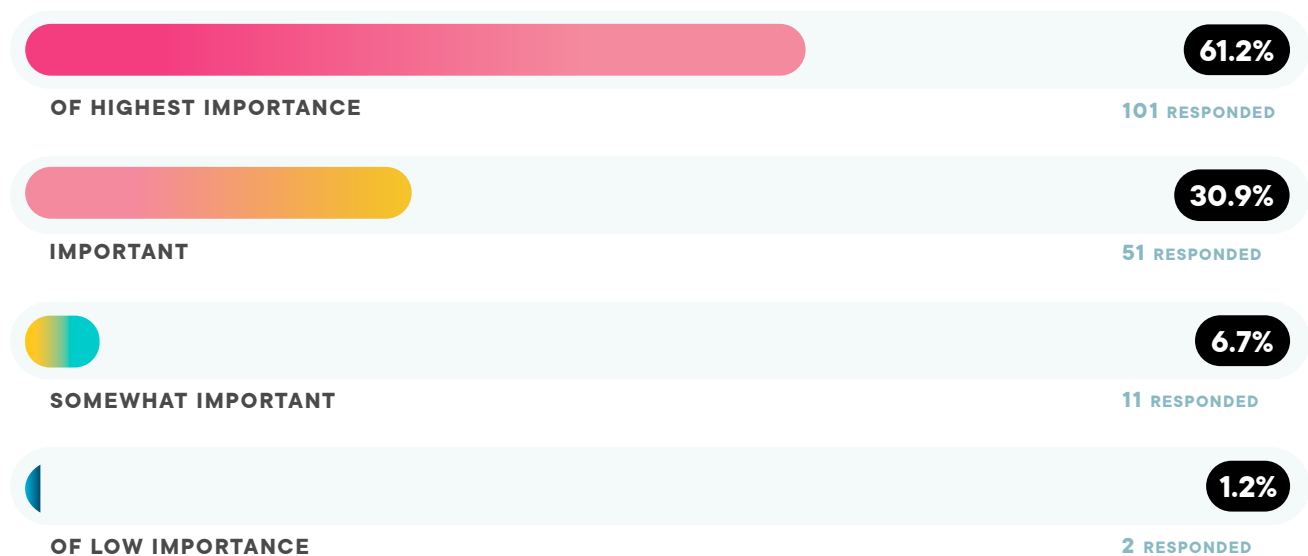
What's the most important writing quality?

Transparent communication is free of ambiguity. And it's important in a global workforce where both target markets and internal teams contain people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The importance of clear communication lies in its ability to facilitate information exchange, reduce misunderstandings, maximize inclusion, and improve collaboration across different teams and time zones.

But across global enterprises, cross-cultural teams, or teams involving interdisciplinary subject matter experts, writing clear content is easier said than done. Especially when we rely not only on people, but generative AI, to write on behalf of the enterprise.

We set out to find out in this report how our Fortune 500 customers prioritize clarity, rank it in comparison to other writing qualities, and practice clarity in their writing. **Our survey was taken by 165 respondents from a mixture of Acrolinx Fortune 500 customers and other companies, including Amazon, Roche, Intralox, NXP Semiconductors, AT&T, Cisco, Ford, Philips, Humana, Siemens Energy, and ServiceNow.** This report covers best practices supported by research on readability and plain language, consistent use of terminology, sentence structure, and comprehension.

We asked these companies how important clarity is to their enterprise. 61.2% of respondents said it was the most important factor, with another 30.9% saying it's still considered important. Only 6.7% said clarity is only somewhat important.



Now that we've established how important clarity is to enterprises, let's dive into the survey results. Later, we'll explore the role of AI-powered content governance, and how some of the most valuable brand's use Acrolinx to achieve writing clarity and efficiency, while reducing the risks of unclear content, at scale.

What's clarity and why it matters

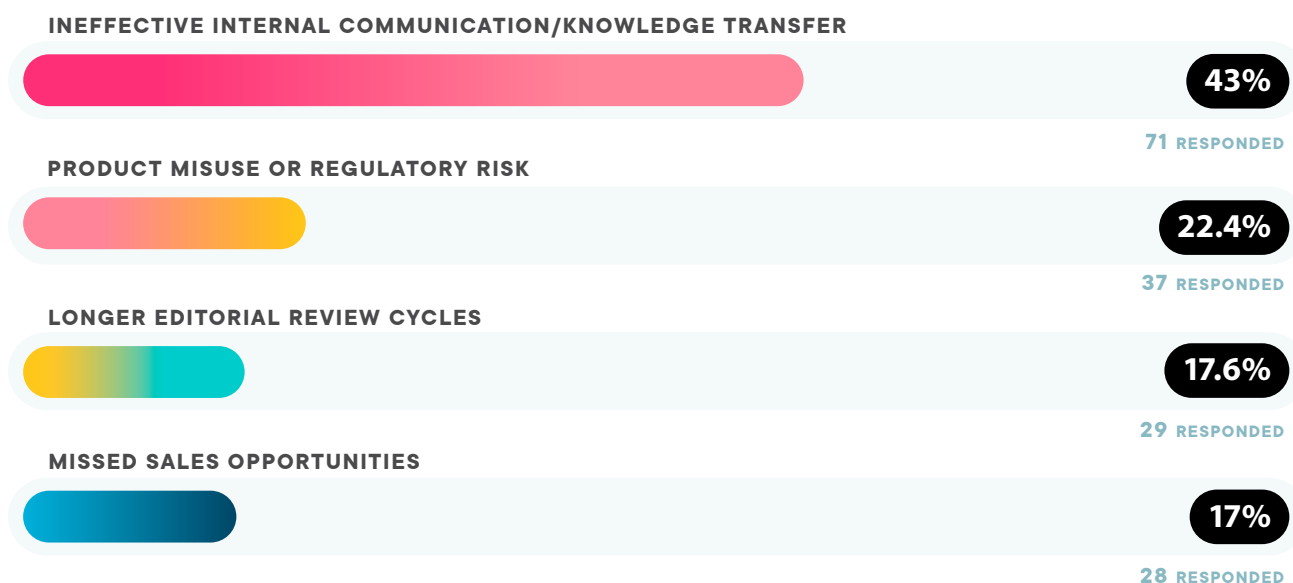
Writing with clarity is vital for reader comprehension. Yet it's arguably the most challenging aspect of writing. How do you compress complex ideas or instructions into a few simple sentences? Or how do you avoid confusing readers by writing in the passive voice? And nowadays, you have to add generative AI into the mix too. Meaning there's even more content than ever that needs to prioritize clarity.

If conciseness is the ratio of ideas to words, **clarity is the degree to which your readers understand your words and ideas.**

In a business context, writing with clarity has many benefits:

- Customer experience is better thanks to easy-to-understand writing.
- Translation and localization are easier and cheaper as source content is straightforward.
- The principles of plain language writing are more likely to be upheld as clear writing doesn't assume all people have the same literacy levels, any prior knowledge on the topic, and makes information accessible to neurodiverse readers.

In your experience, what negative consequences can unclear or ambiguous content have for your enterprise?



When writing isn't clear, it's detrimental to your business. The negative consequences most cited were ineffective knowledge transfer (43%), and product misuse or regulatory risk (22.4%).

So we know clarity is critical, but how do you do it? **Well, start off by:**

1. Eliminating unnecessary words wherever and whenever possible.
2. Learn to write using active sentences and avoid the passive voice.
3. Get to the point and get there quickly.
4. Prioritize using verbs instead of adjectives.
5. And most importantly, don't be afraid to be direct — your readers will thank you for it.

After all, the more direct and to the point you are, the more time you're saving them.

The next step is to think about how this translates into writing guidelines for your company, so your writers know what writing with clarity means in action.

We asked survey participants what strategies they use to keep content clear and concise. 74.5% said they use a corporate style guide. Regular content audits are deemed as important (46.7%) as is a centralized content management system (42.4%). As some of the survey respondents included Acrolinx customers, we found that Acrolinx was a solution for 26.7% of participants. Only 31.5% rely on free tools to check for clarity and readability.

What strategies do you use to maintain clear and concise content?

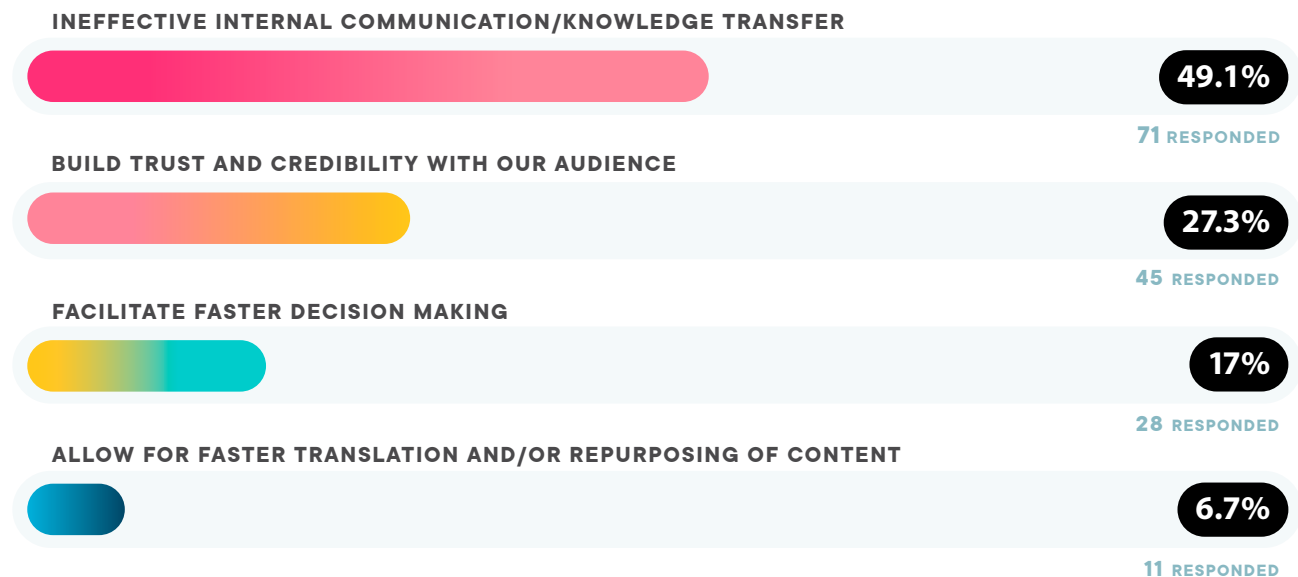


But what are we aiming to achieve when we talk about clarity? There are different qualities that make language easy to read and understand, which we'll cover in more detail.

The qualities of clear writing

We asked why companies prioritize qualities of clear writing like readability, plain language, and [terminology management](#). 49.1% said that comprehension and knowledge retention was their first priority, followed by trust and credibility (27.3%). The lesser cited reasons for prioritizing clarity were faster decision making (17%) and faster translation or content reuse (6.7%). With that in mind, let's dive deeper into the qualities of clear writing.

Why do you prioritize clarity in your content?



Readability

When the GDPR was enforced in Europe, it legally required that companies use “clear and plain language” to improve privacy policies’ readability. However, recent follow up research suggests that there was no improvement in overall readability of cloud computing privacy policies post-GDPR. In fact, with the introduction of more legal language, readability on a whole actually decreased!

([Gao et al, 2023](#))

Readability is the cornerstone for inclusivity and comprehension. It's defined as the measure of ease of difficulty with which a text can be read and understood by a reader who is reading for a specific purpose ([Pikulski, 2020](#)). So if we think about that from an enterprise content perspective, every piece of content has a job to do, and readability measures if it's doing the job it's intended to do.





Plain language

According to the [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#), the definition of plain language is “writing that is clear, concise, well organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience.”

Research findings show that the use of plain language significantly improves understanding and the retention of information, emphasizing the importance of clarity in writing. This is especially important for non-native speakers of your business language.

Plain language plays an important role in improving the accessibility of online content and the user experience.

It helps users understand what they’re supposed to do on your site and how they can accomplish their goals. Without it, prospects and customers feel confused, frustrated, and even angry, which has dire consequences for your business.

At Acrolinx, we’ve even heard our customers saying that readability improves their conversion rates. Clear communication acts as a bridge, connecting your enterprise both internally, and to your audience.

Consistent use of terminology

Terminology deals with the communication of ideas that constitute a specific area of knowledge. Terminology management is the process of identifying, storing, and managing company, customer, or product terminology that needs to be reused or translated in a specific way. It allows you to achieve effective and accurate translations by organizing these terms with a clear set of rules for their usage.

Consistent use of terminology in global enterprises allows you to create a shared language framework that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries.

It matters so that:

- Everyone understands the same message, no matter where they’re from, or what language they speak first.
- There’s no confusion about whether two or more words refer to the same thing.
- Translators and localization teams can do their job more effectively.
- Your writing aligns with regulatory requirements.
- Every content asset aligns with your brand and delivers a consistent customer experience.

Consistent terminology not only promotes clarity and understanding within organizations but also streamlines communication processes, enhances collaboration, and allows for faster communication and decision-making.

Challenges in keeping terms consistent

While this report doesn't dive into the challenges and benefits of terminology management, we can say that terminology management looks different depending on the enterprise. Company size and industry, product complexity, and the level of detail can mean that an enterprise might have a few dozen product-specific terms, to potentially thousands of terms for complex products in large, technical industries. And managing those terms can be difficult because:

- Different languages can have different meanings for similar words.
- People might interpret the same term in different ways.
- New industry terms pop up all the time.
- New product or brand-specific words are created with new product development.

Research shows that there are three main types of terminology issues that appear mostly in technical content ([K. J. Dunne, 2007](#)):

1. **Incorrect terminology**

For example, when the wrong terms are used for designating a given concept.

2. **Inconsistent terminology**

For example, when different terms are used to refer to the same concept.

3. **Ambiguous terminology**

For example, when one and the same term is used for more than one concept.

A German terminology survey reinforced this data, showing that inconsistency is by far the most frequently encountered error ([Schmid & Straub, 2010](#)). From a separate [Localization Industry Standards Association Survey](#), 82% of respondents use technology to manage their terminology. Priorities for upgrading terminology management technology include:

1. Increased consistency and quality of content.
2. Increased productivity and reduced duplication and waste of effort, reducing costs.
3. Increased integration with content authoring, content management, and translation tools.
4. Improved ability to deliver glossaries and other information to customers and vendors.

These results reinforce the idea that consistent use of terminology contributes to clarity, and that technology has a role to play in keeping terminology management efficient.

Sentence length and structured content

Studies have shown the impact of sentence length on comprehension. Keeping sentences concise, like clear bullet points in a presentation, minimizes the cognitive load for readers. Research by [Kadayat and Eika \(2020\)](#) concludes that highest comprehension and lowest workload with sentences consisting of 16-20 words. They suggest that web content should strive for a sentence length of 16-20 words to maximize readability. Not only that, it's also the most accessible sentence length for people who use screen-readers.

This data is supported by the [American Press Institute report](#) that found a correlation between shorter sentences and improved reading comprehension. For sentences that were:

- 8 words or less, readers understood 100 percent of the information.
- 14 words long, readers understood 90 percent of the information.
- 43 words or longer, comprehension dropped to less than 10 percent.

Structured content is content that has been broken down into its simplest, usable form ([Technically Write IT, 2023](#)). Companies in different industries, such as manufacturing and life sciences use structured content authoring to shorten the time to publication, improve its quality, reduce the cost of creating it, and provide a consistent experience for consumers.

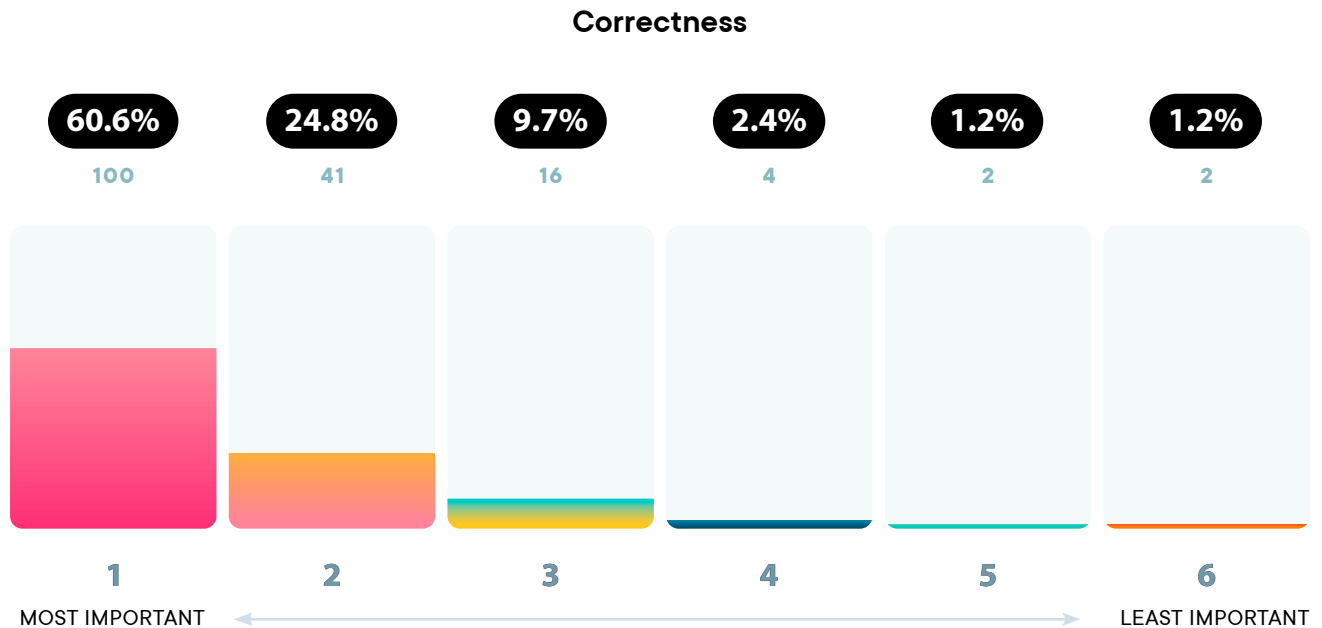


The solution has never been clearer

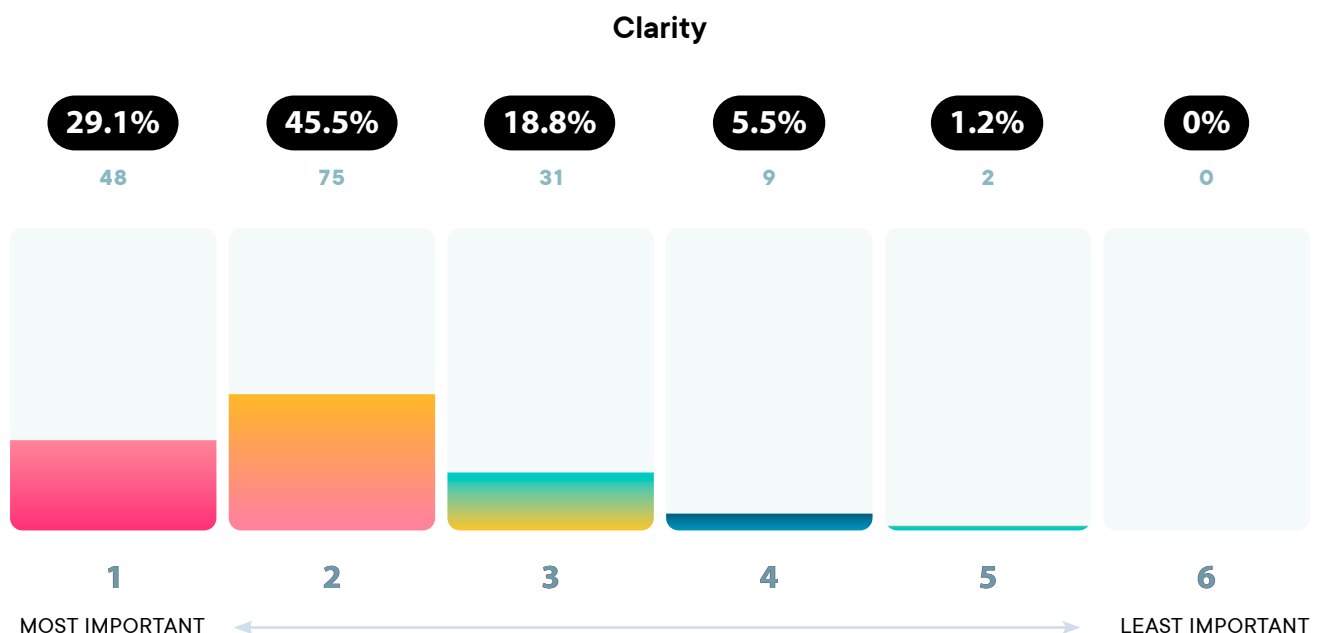
Acrolinx is an AI-powered content governance platform for the enterprise. Our platform captures the way you write about your brand, and makes sure it reflects your style guide.

The platform is configurable for different qualities of content, such as correctness, clarity, consistency, tone, scannability, and inclusive language. We asked how you rank those elements of content in terms of importance, with 1 being of the highest importance and 6 being lowest importance.

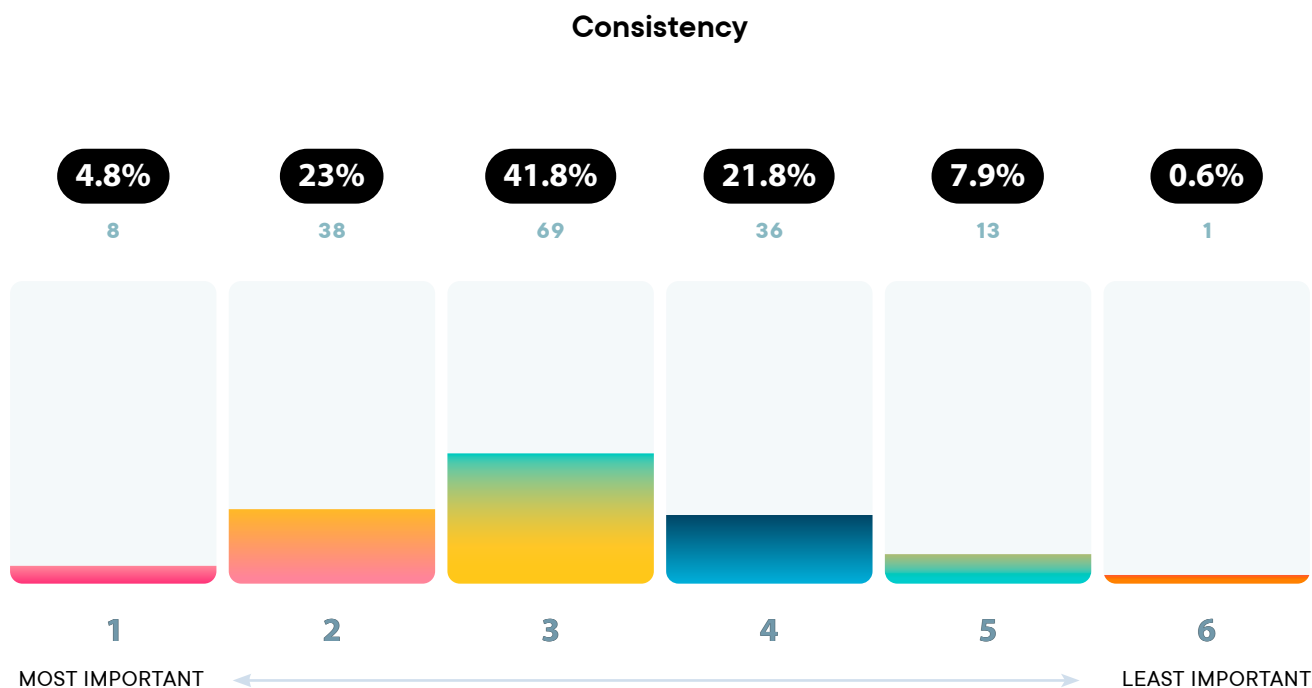
60.6% rank correctness as the most important quality of content:



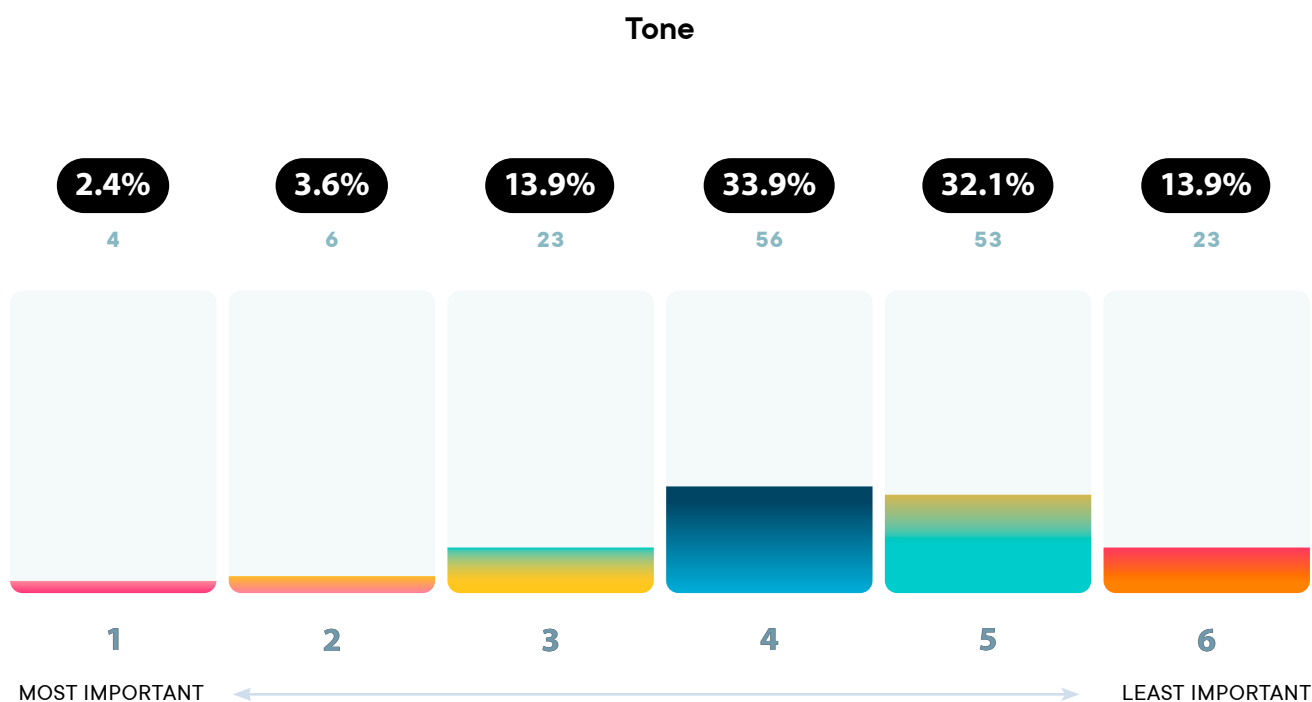
Clarity is the next highest priority in content, with 29.1% reporting that it is of highest importance or very important (45.5%):



Consistency was next in line, with 41.8% saying it's important:

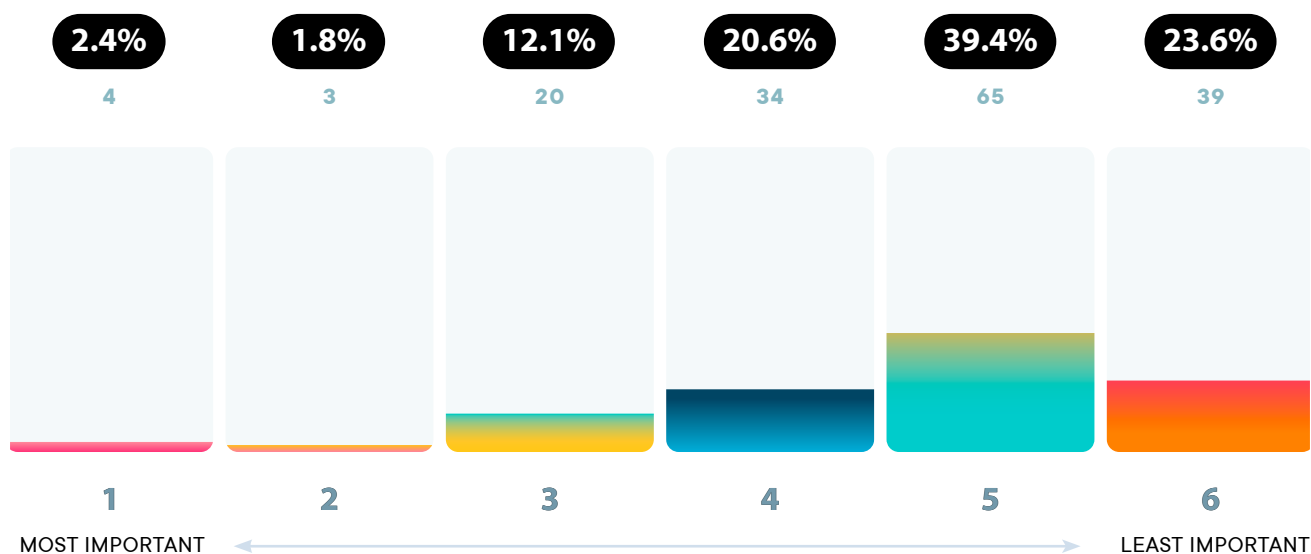


Tone of voice is still considered somewhat important (33.9%) with just under 20% of participants still recognizing its importance:

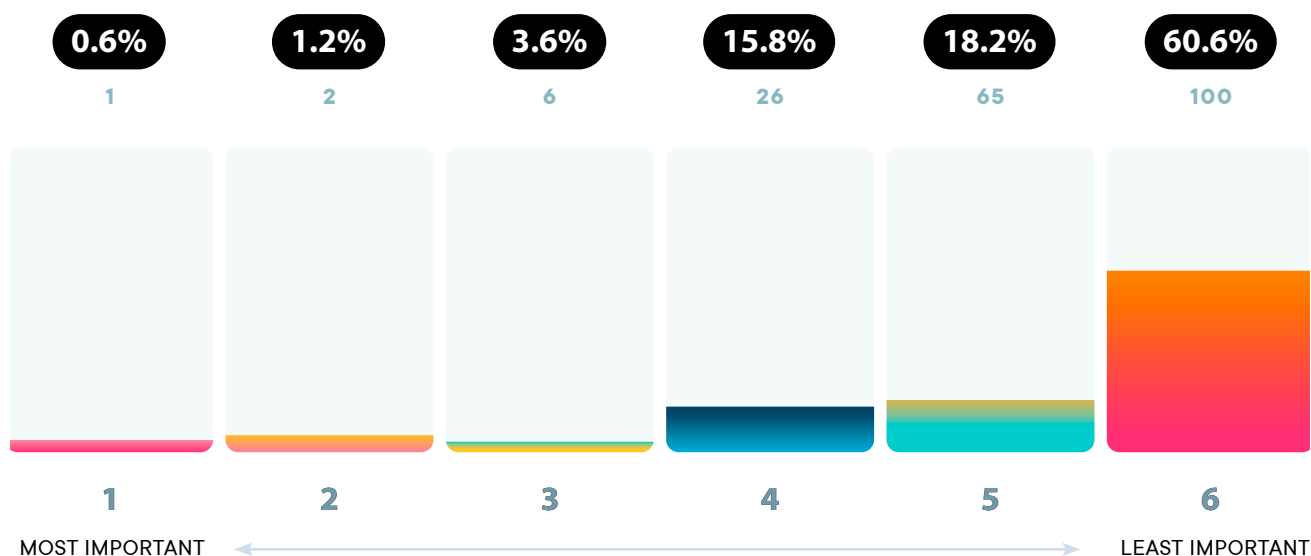


Survey participants considered scannability and inclusive language as the least important qualities of content, with 39.4% saying scannability is “not very important” and 60.6% reporting inclusive language of least importance:

Scannability



Inclusive Language



Meet Acrolinx

Acrolinx helps companies digitize their style guide, so no matter who writes your content, it's aligned with your style guide and compliance guidelines. It also acts as a clarity safeguard for content that's been entirely generated by generative AI. By quality checking both human and AI generated content against your brand standards, you can trust that writing that doesn't meet your expectations won't be published.

Considering that our survey participants were a mixture of Acrolinx Fortune 500 customers and other companies, we're not surprised that when almost 30% already use Acrolinx, 39.4% are totally confident in their ability to write and publish clear content, and 29.1% have a system in place already to do so.

CONFIDENT, I HAVE A STRONG UNDERSTANDING OF CLARITY

39.4%

65 RESPONDED

HIGHLY CONFIDENT, WE HAVE SYSTEMS IN PLACE TO ENSURE CONTENT IS CLEAR AND COMPREHENSIVE

29.1%

48 RESPONDED

SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT BUT OPEN TO IMPROVEMENT

24.2%

40 RESPONDED

NOT VERY CONFIDENT, I NEED MORE GUIDANCE

7.3%

12 RESPONDED

Can you relate to the 24.2% that are still open to improvement or the 7.3% that need more guidance?

LET'S TALK TODAY

so we can help your company meet the clarity standards aligned with your business goals.



Better Content. Faster.

Acrolinx is your enterprise content insurance policy. Our AI-powered content governance software captures and digitizes your style guide to make your writing standards, standard.

Acrolinx governs new and existing content written by people and generative AI. Whether your company has written 100,000 words or 1 billion (like our customer Microsoft), Acrolinx makes sure each one reflects your style guide. Customers enjoy massive efficiency gains without sacrificing standards through AI-powered live writing assistance, automated reviews and quality gates, and analytics comparing content quality with performance.

With an LLM infrastructure anchored in Azure AI, Acrolinx guarantees scale, future-readiness, and uncompromising safety and security. Born out of the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI), AI runs deep in Acrolinx's DNA.