Amoeboids

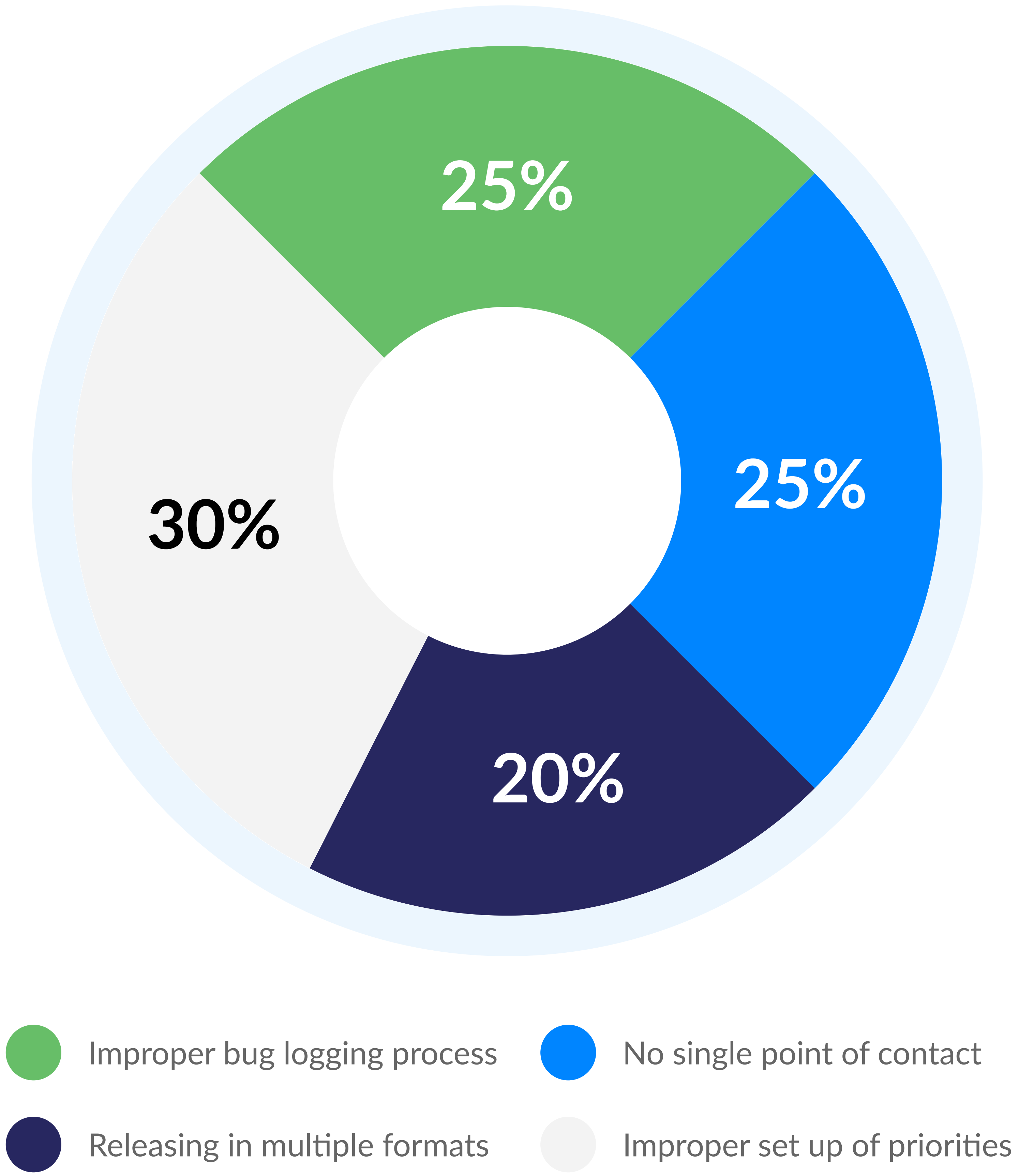
Pulse Survey

Getting release management right

The name says it all

For managers who have been working on projects for months, planning a release might feel like executing the entire project all over again. From the amount of documentation to listing the updates (and their advantages) and converting the compilation into release notes of various forms, there are so many steps involved that even a seasoned manager might commit mistakes. That's why this handy checklist, based on a global survey of over 300 project managers and technical writers, lists out how to get releases right.

Typical challenges of a release

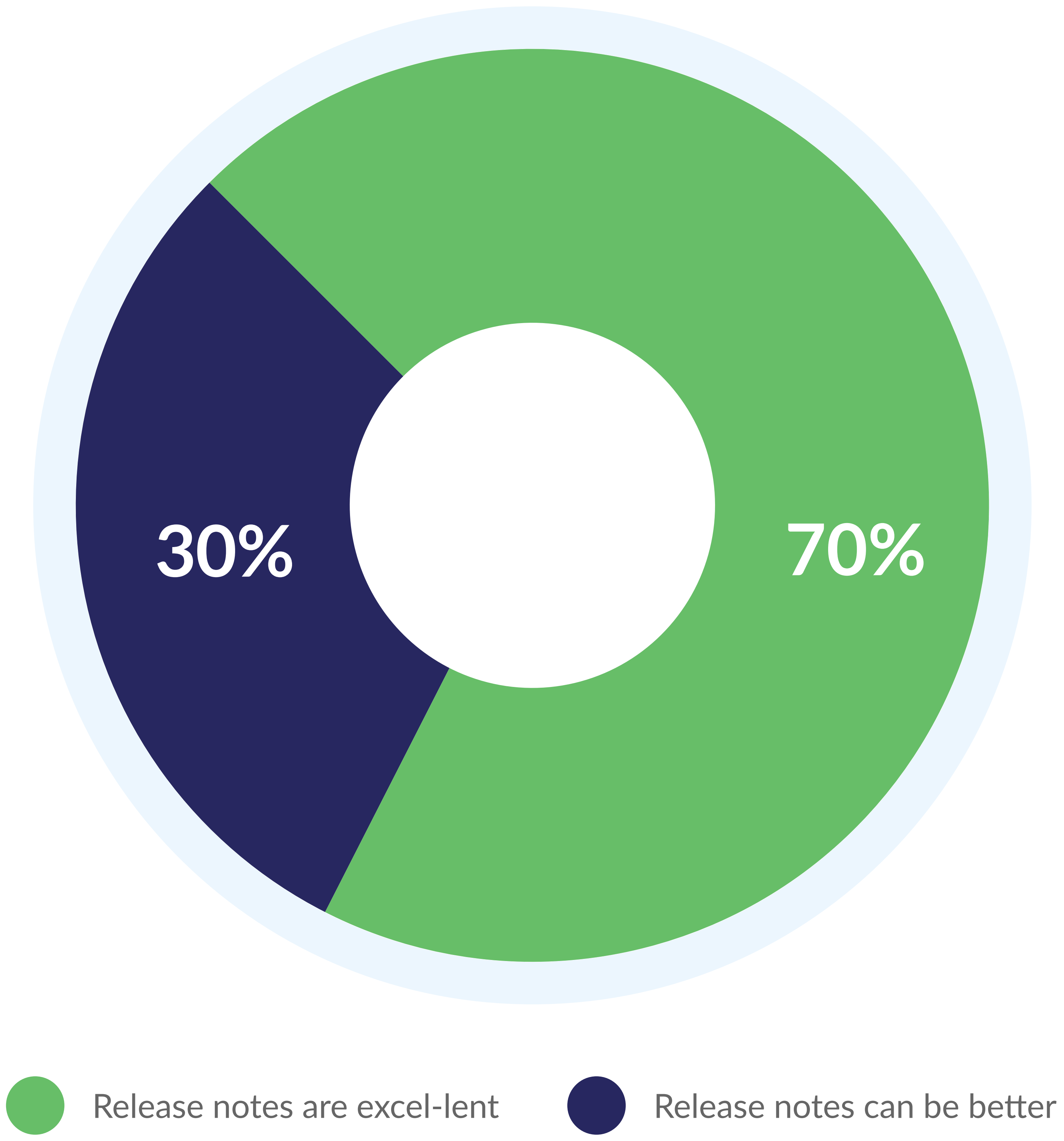


Of the 320 respondents, the major issues faced were distributed closely in terms pf percentage – indicating how common certain issues are. While improper bug logging process was cited by 25% as a major challenge, not having a single point of contact or reference was the main issue for another 25% of managers. Planning releases in multiple formats was the main Achilles heel for 20%, but the highest among all was the improper setup of priorities which lead to confusion, with 30% of managers choosing it as their major concern during releases.

Key factors to focus

Stressing on the quality of the release notes that accompany each software update and release is an important factor. 70% of managers out of the 320 surveyed believe their release notes are excellent, but 30% believe their notes can be better.

The importance of effective product release notes in re-engaging users can't be highlighted enough. The notes also let customers know that the team is fixing bugs and shipping features. It is very important that organizations have a systematic process, a good format, and trained resources to ensure the quality of the notes is of a high standard.



Quality of Release Notes

Reading release notes that accompany the application updates and releases before they are sent out is essential to ensure the integrity of the communication. Out of the 320 respondents surveyed, 57% said they read notes of every release and update, but the remaining 43% refer to them only to get specific information.

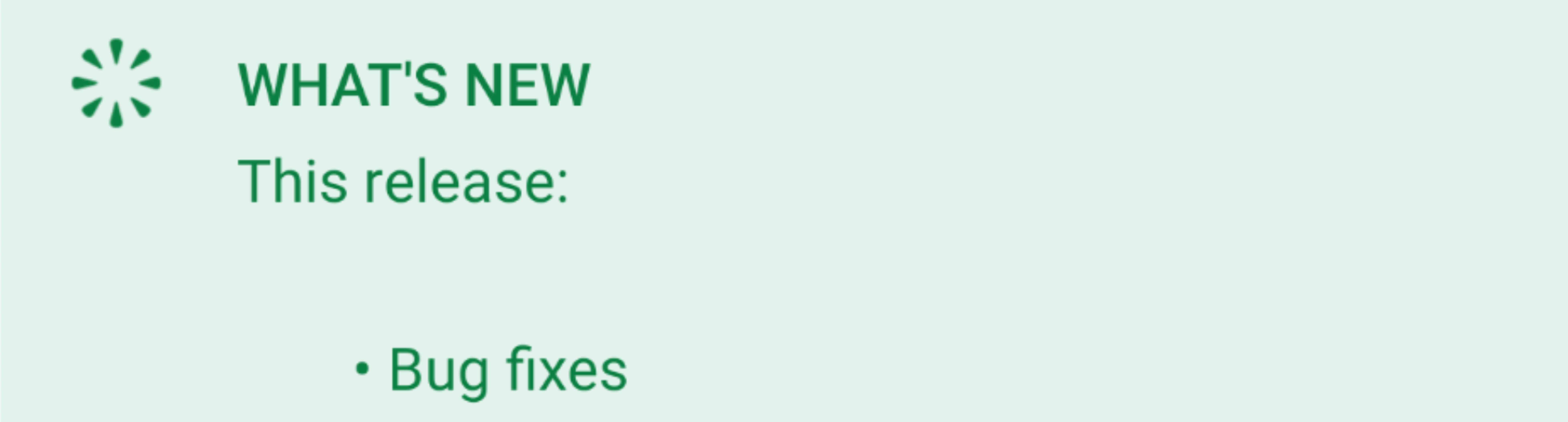
This can be rationalized because of the nature of agile development – which usually means faster and more frequent releases. With more features being released, more bugs being fixed, and more improvements and changes always abound, managers need to keep their users in the loop with well-articulated yet succinct release notes. By directing attention towards what release notes to share with relevant recipients, managers and their organizations can ensure that more users read the release updates regularly.

Keeping it simple

With technology and new features and updates, it's hard to keep it simple sometimes. By going into every detail, managers can ensure that readers of the report get the most important gist, even with the shorter attention span. A well-segmented release notes document should ideally have clear headings and sections. This classification allows its readers to scan through the notes in a few seconds and get the gist of the changes. Having a digital version of the documentation makes it easy for the readers to navigate directly onto the site, without having to download a different document (which may be opened in another app).

Highlighting the USP of the update

Telling the readers upfront about how the update impacts them, is a great way to get the information across. The allure of an update for end customers is what is in it for them, not the technological hurdles crossed during the update. That's why leading with the core value that impacts them the most and then getting into the details of how it works, manages to grab their attention.



Implementing a changelog

An in-app changelog is a great way to make sure that the updates stay relevant and users can easily find them. They provide users a unique destination to visit to when they want to find out about the latest updates. Having a single place showcasing product evolution also indicates the commitment of the organization and the team towards improving it.

Segmenting release notes

The audience profile for any product or solution varies drastically from casual users to power users (or professionals who use the solution for their organization). Not all of them would be interested in knowing the same information from release notes. That's why it makes sense to segment the notes for different users, based on their usage habits, involvement with the product (bug reports, feature suggestions), and usage duration, among other factors. When updates are made very specific and relevant to the users of the app or solution, appreciation for the clarity of release notes is bound to increase.

DOs

The most important function of release notes is to let customers know that something has changed in the product or solution, particularly when that something may affect the way the customer uses it. If enough attention isn't put towards sending the right release notes to the right recipients, one may end up losing out the attention of the user. In due course, it can impact the product usage, experience, and roadmap too.

DON'Ts

One of the biggest 'No's of release notes management process is not reading them. Sadly, about half of the 320 respondents to the survey skim through the report to find the information they need, and the other half relies on their team members to help them with keeping up with the updates.

Being clear about the information provided

While brevity is essential to have the release notes understood in a short span of time by the users, providing a little detail when necessary is important too. The report that mentions “a bug that was causing X feature to lag when Y happened has been fixed" will make the status clear for those who were affected by it, while just mentioning ‘Bug fixed in X feature’ keeps the user in the dark, despite providing all information.

Making the most of automation tools

The issues faced during release notes are common across industries, and automating them can solve almost all of the problems. While there are different apps available for various platforms (including the basic in-built modules), Automated Release Notes for Jira goes one step ahead by letting users set up an instruction to automatically send version release notes upon release (along with other triggers). Its customizable template builder makes use of JQL-like queries to retrieve vital attributes of an issue, including custom fields (if any). These release notes can then be automatically distributed via pre-defined channels.

Rules can be set to trigger the generation of release notes so that relevant people or groups get the information they need in their preferred ways. From emails to the leadership team to pdfs for client reviews, ARN can generate reports based on any rule that is set. Even webhooks are available for integrating with other tools.

Lack of clarity in release notes can lead to delays and repetitive issue reporting, invariably increasing the number of hours spent on a project. A good set of release notes, on the other hand, help in achieving a smooth release cycle. And since users get clear updates about what, how, and when of the product or solution from release notes, projects run efficiently too.

About Us

Platinum Marketplace Partner

We work to make workplaces better

We at Amoeboids want to build a future in which we'd love to work in. We take immense pride in building products that enrich workplace culture, build focus across any department of the organization

THE ROAD SO FAR

1000+

From Fortune 500 companies to startups

75+

From Fortune 500 companies to startups

Amoeboids