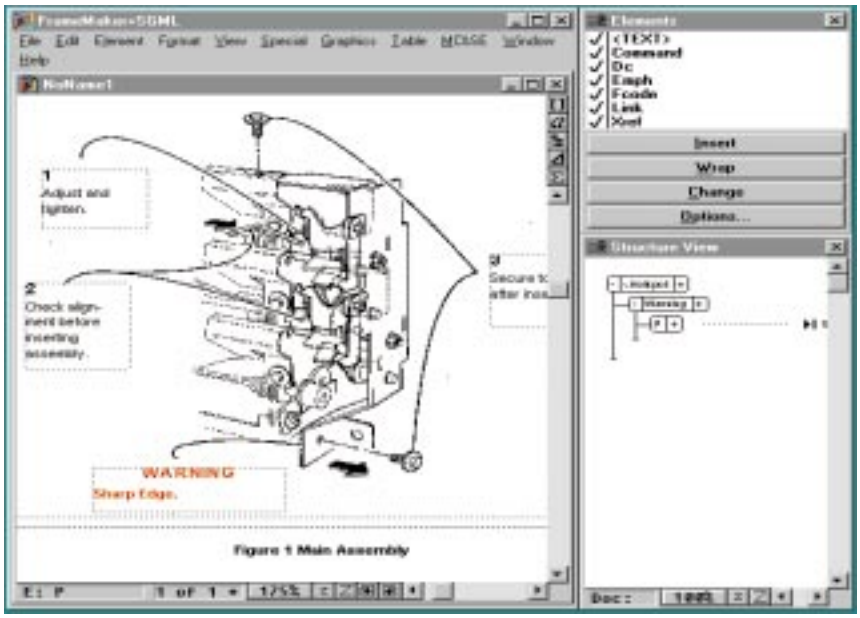
Xerox Corporation

Education Group Shaves 8 to 12 Weeks Off Production of Electronic Documents Using Adobe FrameMaker+SGML

Adobe® FrameMaker®+SGML



The Xerox Multinational Customer and Service Education Group uses Adobe FrameMaker+SGML to produce both hard copy and electronic product documentation quickly and easily.

Key Benefits

- Hard copy and electronic documentation is created in one step, eliminating the eight weeks it previously took to convert a document to SGML.
- Training time was reduced from one week to three days.
- The FrameMaker+SGML user interface is familiar to people who have used Windows® or UNIX,® increasing its acceptance among authors and editors.
- Authors and editors use the same style sheets, which saves time and simplifies administration.
- Comprehensive formatting support in SGML has made it unnecessary to write a separate composition application.

In Webster, New York, the Xerox Multinational Customer and Service Education group produces product documentation for Xerox® products, including fax machines, copiers, and printers. More than 300 authors, writers, and systems personnel create service material, customer documentation, training courses, and, increasingly, electronic documentation.

The group had used proprietary word processing, editing, and composition systems since the mid-1980s. In keeping with Xerox corporate strategy, the group wanted to migrate to a standard platform. "Increasingly, we were producing electronic documentation—for CD-ROMs and the World Wide Web—as well as hard copy," says Mark Harmison, project manager. "About five years ago, we decided to adopt Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) so that a single set of files could be used to generate both printed and electronic documents."

Initially, the group used the Interleaf® and SoftQuad Author/Editor™ applications to create SGML files, but it needed additional software for page composition. Systems personnel developed their own composition software, based on TEX, a public domain tool. "For the past several years, we used this hybrid solution. We acquired technical expertise with SGML and developed clear ideas about our requirements and preferences for a new system," says Harmison.

FrameMaker+SGML Offers WYSIWYG Writing Environment

In December 1995, a committee of writers, editors, and systems people was assembled to evaluate alternatives to facilitate producing hard copy and electronic documents. The committee selected Adobe FrameMaker +SGML software. "The single biggest factor in our decision to use FrameMaker+SGML was its WYSIWYG display," says Harmison. "Authors and editors like to see their hard-copy pages on the screen the way they appear to the eventual end user. The other

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alternative, Author/Editor, did not provide this capability. We also liked the FrameMaker+SGML user interface. It's cleaner, easier to use, and takes advantage of the standard Windows or UNIX interface, unlike the other SGML tools we evaluated."

Xerox also preferred FrameMaker+SGML because it minimized training requirements. It offers virtually identical capabilities on both company platforms, Windows and UNIX, and authors and editors use the same style sheets.

Authoring, Editing, and Composition in One Application

The systems people preferred FrameMaker+SGML software for another reason: its comprehensive support for SGML, which makes it easier to deliver documents in both hard-copy and electronic forms. "FrameMaker+SGML offers real support for SGML—not the cobbled-together support we saw in other packages," says Harmison. "Its formatting capabilities are good enough to produce deliverables, which eliminates the need for us to develop and maintain a separate composition engine to do elegant formatting."

FrameMaker+SGML also facilitates the creation of multi-language documents, such as French and German,in one file. "SGML separates content from format," says Harmison, "which means we can reliably know which bits of a document are translatable."

SGML Simplifies Creation of Callouts for Graphics

Authors save time by using SGML to create and edit the many callouts Xerox includes in its graphics. "SGML offers three advantages for managing graphics," says Harmison. "first, it enables authors to edit the text without going back to the illustrator, thus saving time and money. Second, it makes it easier to translate the document because the text is not embedded in the graphic. And third, it makes electronic documentation more readable and linkable because readers can search for and scale the text in callouts."

FDK Enables Addition of Custom Features

Harmison's group used the Adobe Frame® Developer's Kit (FDK) to add unique features that its proprietary solution had delivered and the group wanted to retain. For example, Xerox's diagnostic procedures are presented as a series of yes/no questions: The appropriate procedure depends on the answer. Xerox's proprietary tool had drawn a vertical line to the left of the "yes" responses to make it easier for readers to follow. "There's no WYSIWYG composition tool on the planet that provides that capability out of the box," says Harmison. "The FDK enabled us to associate 'yes' procedures with a particular SGML tag, and also to generate symbols that indicated the procedure continues on the next page. Because the FDK runs under both the UNIX and Windows operating systems, developers can conveniently use it with their preferred platform."

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> *—Mark Harmison, project manager*

FrameMaker+SGML Speeds Time to Create Documents

Xerox completed its first documents using FrameMaker+SGML during the summer of 1996. "The authors and editors reported they were very happy," says Harmison. "The primary financial benefit is that with SGML we can produce three deliverables—paper, CD-ROM, and Web—without any incremental costs beyond producing paper only. Before we had SGML capabilities, it took two people four to six weeks to convert a document to SGML in preparation to put it on the Web. The added time sometimes discouraged us from producing an electronic version of certain documents. Now, we have one set of files that can be used for both hard-copy and electronic documentation.

"What pleases us most about FrameMaker+SGML is that it makes SGML less scary, which means more people in the company can use it." Harmison believes that training costs have diminished. Employees learn to use FrameMaker+SGML in a three-day, self-paced training course; previously, they attended a one-week, classroom-taught course to learn to use Author/Editor. "We've also cut programming requirements," says Harmison. "We don't have the development and maintenance costs associated with writing a separate composition application. When we do need special features, we can take advantage of the powerful FDK application program interface (API)."

Xerox Corporation Systems At-a-Glance

Software
Adobe FrameMaker+SGML
Oracle® database
Microsoft® Windows 95 and UNIX operating systems

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