

FDM Software

Software company streamlines publishing and extends content to multiple communication channels with Adobe® Technical Communication Suite 2 software

FDM Software

www.fdmsoft.com



Industry

Technology

Challenges

- Deliver multiple forms of documentation with limited resources
- Leverage content across multiple delivery channels and products
- Eliminate content silos
- Improve content accuracy

Solution

- Integrated publishing

FDM Software is using Adobe Technical Communication Suite to generate everything from user documentation to online training and a new searchable knowledge base.

Results

- Reduced the publishing cycle from days to hours
- Saved hours reconciling changes among documents
- Began project for single-sourcing content for help and other purposes
- Discovered existing content that can be leveraged for new services such as online training
- Reduced review cycle time and effort
- Leveraged resources for new value-added communications projects

Systems At A Glance

- Adobe Technical Communication Suite 2. Components used include:
 - Adobe RoboHelp
 - Adobe FrameMaker
 - Adobe Captivate®
 - Adobe Acrobat® 9 Pro Extended

When efficiency counts

FDM Software develops records management and computer-aided dispatch software for the public safety industry that is used by fire departments and emergency response teams across North America. To support its customers, FDM must produce a range of technical documentation—software installation guides, operation and maintenance manuals, documentation for administrators, release notes, and troubleshooting documents.

The responsibility for creating all of this documentation falls to a small Technical Communications team. As a small company, FDM must work efficiently with limited resources. Adobe FrameMaker® and Adobe RoboHelp® software—two components of Adobe Technical Communication Suite 2—are key to FDM's ability to keep pace with the company's many technical publishing demands.

“With our previous cumbersome process, it took days to create a final product. The team would have to repeatedly re-create content due to editorial errors or changes from engineering staff, and then generate the build all over again,” explains Leslie Vice, marketing communications specialist. “Now that we are using Adobe FrameMaker together with RoboHelp, we can actually keep up.”

Reducing the publishing cycle from days to hours

The previous method of producing documentation involved creating the content in FrameMaker and saving it as XML. To generate help files, a custom XSL transformation was run against the content to generate CHM files. The process was time-consuming, and any error or inconsistency in the content would result in a failed build. The Technical Communications team would have to go into the XML file and manually edit whatever made the XSL transformation fail. Sometimes the change would be as small as removing a set of quotation marks from a heading. Finding all the glitches required multiple rounds of editing.

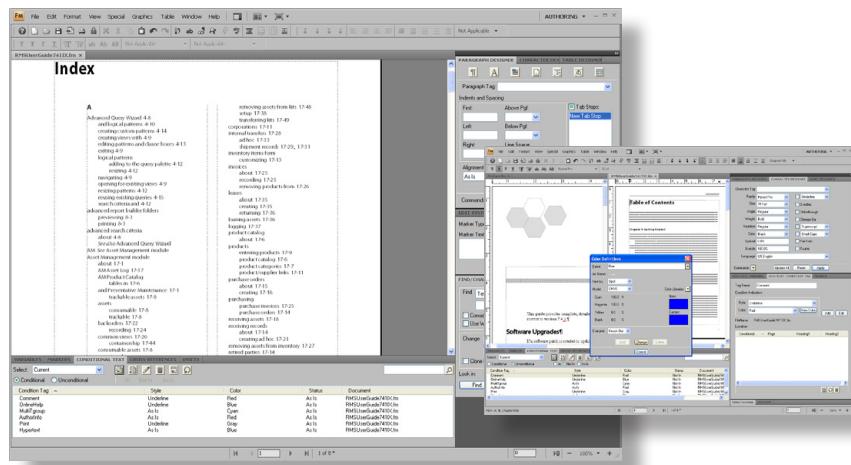
Now, FDM's Technical Communications team uses the structured publishing workflow in Adobe FrameMaker to create and generate documentation, and then pulls the content into RoboHelp to generate help files. This process has greatly reduced the time it takes to complete a publishing cycle—from days to hours.

Importing a FrameMaker document into RoboHelp and then creating a help file is a simple, flawless process. It has not only increased the team's productivity, but has also improved content accuracy and eliminated formatting and style inconsistencies. Renewed efficiency is also enabling FDM to free up time that can be focused toward delivering new types of online learning programs and providing more robust interactive help files that are intuitive for users. For instance, the company is in the process of building eLearning programs using Adobe Captivate screen capturing software to extend training programs and facilitate the delivery of interactive help files.

“The combination of FrameMaker and RoboHelp frees up the team's time,” says Vice. “Rather than spending days tweaking the content to work with the XSL script, we can redirect time to work on value-added authoring activities, which include using RoboHelp to create a knowledge base for our customer support staff and single-sourcing content to create training material.”



FDM Software uses components in Adobe Technical Communication Suite 2 to produce a range of technical documentation. Adobe FrameMaker is used to create and generate documentation, and then the Technical Communications team pulls the content into RoboHelp to generate help files. This process has greatly reduced the time it takes the company to complete a publishing cycle—going from days to hours.



"Adobe Technical Communication Suite 2 is having a major positive impact on our ability to leverage and repurpose information. We are increasing productivity and content accuracy, quickly moving toward a single-source content model across document types, and extending services to other communication products."

Leslie Vice,
Marketing communications specialist,
FDM Software

For More Information

www.adobe.com/products/technicalcommunicationsuite/

Value-added technical publishing

With an efficient publishing model in place, FDM now has begun leveraging other components of Adobe Technical Communication Suite 2 for several value added technical publishing projects. Adobe Technical Communication Suite is used to streamline review cycles, save FDM time and money in producing online help, and create a new knowledge base application for single-sourcing content for the company's help system.

The integration among Adobe Technical Communication Suite applications is a significant time-saver. With Adobe Technical Communication Suite, FDM can send highly technical documents in Adobe PDF for review and allow subject-matter experts to comment on the documents using Adobe Reader®. By using PDF, FDM can avoid exporting content from one application to another, as well as manually entering changes. Now, comments accepted in Adobe Reader can be imported directly into FrameMaker, saving hours that were previously spent recording changes among documents.

Delivering services in new ways

FDM is further leveraging the integration among the applications of Adobe Technical Communication Suite to reduce customer training costs. Rather than having instructors travel to each client site for in-person training, FDM is working to deliver a mixed model that incorporates online training modules created using Adobe Technical Communication Suite. Clients appreciate the on-demand model, which allows them to quickly train new staff without waiting for a trainer to become available.

"I was surprised to see how much good training material we had, but because it was siloed in another area, I had no idea that it existed. Our Client Services and Training departments are in the process of pulling it into Adobe Captivate to create high-quality, on-demand training," Vice says. "It will give us a major return on investment on our existing content."

FDM is also using RoboHelp to create a new knowledge base, now in the prototype stages, that will replace the custom database software currently in use. Today, when clients call the customer support department to pose a question, staff search through any available materials, copy the answer into an e-mail, and send it to customer. Once it is up and running, the new searchable knowledge base based on RoboHelp will move customers to a more efficient, self-serve help model.

"Adobe Technical Communication Suite 2 is having a major positive impact on our ability to leverage and repurpose information," says Vice. "We are increasing productivity and content accuracy, quickly moving toward a single-source content model across document types, and extending services to other communication products. And as for the team, they don't want to use anything else."



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