

Communicator

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators
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Simplify your user interface images

How to enrich your wellbeing in the workplace

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Information 4.0 — the future?
What tools will be needed?



Unlock the business value of your content

Bernard Aschwanden helps you move from unstructured to Structured FrameMaker with a free whitepaper and hands-on activities (download via a link at the end of the article).

When a business decides to write content using Adobe FrameMaker it does so, in part, to free writers from many of the difficulties associated with other software. Issues may include:

- Working with large content volumes
- Managing complex numbering
- Meeting online or print design and layout requirements
- Publishing to Responsive HTML5 (plus apps, ebooks, and PDF), or
- Other reasons to retire just a word processor and use a professional communications tool!

We'll explore a few ideas here, and when you are ready to go further you can download our PDF whitepaper for free. It includes a hands-on project to teach you (for free) how to get started!

XML and structured content

Extensible Markup Language (XML) is a vendor-neutral, open format managed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). Like HTML, there are tags enclosed in angle brackets (such as for bold) and the basics are relatively easy to learn.

Unlike HTML (which is used for online display of content using a fixed set of tags) which, by and large, has no meaning beyond format, XML is for describing information in a semantic and meaningful way. XML uses an extensible set of tags which define a logical structure.

Benefits of Structured FrameMaker

XML can be complex and may not always look like what you would prefer. FrameMaker uses an author-centric structured environment that allows you to create valid XML content. You can create, edit, and publish complex content with rich format and layout options. Authors can create PDF and online formats with all the same functions they expect from their software. Structured FrameMaker content gives you the comfort of an authoring tool with a powerful visual interface, and lets you enjoy the benefits of a structured workflow.

Migrating from unstructured FrameMaker to Structured FrameMaker

Traditional unstructured content is based on paragraph, character, table, and other formats stored in catalogs. Content in a structured workflow is managed and formatted based on the context of use. That is, a paragraph might be in a bullet list, then moved to a numbered list and automatically reformatted. Or a topic nested two levels deep with related indents could be moved in its entirety up one level and all subordinate content immediately reformatted as well!

While the author experience in a structured environment changes, the capabilities of the software remain the same. Authors can often be up and running in a completely new workflow within days; much faster than they might be if switching between tools completely. Additionally, templates can keep the look and feel they had before the migration, ensuring content retains the look and feel that authors expect.

As a bonus, authors no longer need to think about content format. Structure provides a consistent, repeatable, and automated format to any document. Structured workflows completely automate all formatting!

XML implementation options

You can even work with one or more workflows. Not everyone wants to use structured content at every step of the process. Some people want to use FrameMaker as a publishing tool. Others want to integrate FrameMaker with a component content management system. Whatever workflow you want to use, FrameMaker supports it.

Working in a supported structured authoring environment

Unstructured FrameMaker just needs a high quality template and you can start to author. You define paragraph, character, page, table, and other properties, test the template, train authors, and let them write. However, in a structured authoring environment additional files are required.

If you don't plan to import or export XML you can still use Structured

FrameMaker. This provides a formal guided authoring environment, dynamic formatting, and other benefits without immediately working with XML. It's a good way to start structured authoring and develop standards beyond a company style guide.

Hands-on development

There are several things that need to be done to work with Structured FrameMaker. Like building a template, most of it is only done once.

To get you started, Publishing Smarter has created hands-on instructions to walk you through things step-by-step and created supporting videos (links below!). You build an EDD (although, technically, FrameMaker already has several to pick from) and learn about structure from behind the scenes. While you can build an EDD for any structure, our topic-like DITA template allows content to later be placed directly into the DITA templates included with FrameMaker. There you can see how much further a structured environment can take you.

Our goals are to give you a solid start when it comes to structure, and to show you where you can go with structure.

Next steps

Download a detailed 60 page PDF of the full whitepaper from Adobe. It explores XML and structured content, the benefits of moving to Structured FrameMaker, and considerations when working in a structured workspace. This is supported with step-by-step hands-on exercises, with demo videos, all to help you migrate a project from unstructured to structured content. Publishing Smarter has even created 'how-to' videos to get you started! www.youtube.com/user/publishingsmarter

Scan the QR code to download the paper or visit adobe.ly/2DdySI 



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