FitnessFirst

Poole, Dorset, England

World's Largest Health and Fitness Club Chain Uses MadCap's Technical Communication and Translation Suite to Create First-Class Online Documentation for Globally Distributed Employees

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Alex Johnson | **Fitness First Group**

Goals:

- Deliver searchable, intuitive online documentation

- Increase customer use of online documentationt

- Streamline the process of creating, publishing and translating content

- Facilitate the ability of other employees to review and contribute to content

Solutions:

- Four products from MadCap MadPak ML suite

- MadCap Flare native XML multi-channel content authoring software

- MadCap Contributor for content review and contribution

- MadCap Lingo Translation Memory Solution (TMS)

- MadCap Analyzer for analyzing documentation

Benefits:

- Context-sensitive Help gives users single-click access to information

- Content reuse with Flare means updates can be published out to customers within minutes

- MadCap Lingo let Fitness First bring translation in-house, cutting costs while offering more translated versions

- Contributor lets employees review and contribute to content in Contributor templates for a consistent look

- Analyzer lets Fitness First cut 1,300 unneeded images from documentation

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Fitness First, the world's largest health and fitness club business, has built its brand by fostering superior customer satisfaction and loyalty among some 1.43 million members at more than 500 clubs around the globe. To support this effort, the company has developed its own Web-based membership management system. Called Members First, it is used by all employees–from the CEO to every receptionist and membership consultant on floor. Today, the XML-based MadPak ML suite enables First Fitness to deliver intuitive Web-based documentation for users of Members First in seven different languages and dialects.

"In the past, our documentation was published in huge, monolithic print documents that were difficult for our employees to navigate," recalls Alex Johnson, Fitness First group IT training lead. "Using MadCap's software, we are now delivering context-sensitive online documentation with a Help button that gives users single-click access to the information they need." He adds, "We're hearing employees tell us that finally they have documentation that is truly useful."

Fitness First relies on four products within MadCap's MadPak ML suite to deliver its Web-based documentation. The MadCap Flare single-source, multi-channel authoring tool is used to develop and publish two online documents: a product user guide and a manual on Fitness First processes and procedures. MadCap Contributor (formerly X-Edit) allows subject matter experts (SMEs) to contribute content in the correct documentation templates. MadCap Analyzer identifies where Fitness First can improve the documentation's quality and efficiency, and the MadCap Lingo Translation Memory Solution (TMS) facilitates localization.

"When we decided to create online documentation, we had a very good idea about what we wanted from an authoring tool, and Flare was the only contender," Alex says. "Then we found additional tools that would help us with MadCap Lingo, Contributor and Analyzer."

MadCap Flare and MadCap Contributor Streamline Publishing

Together, MadCap Flare and Contributor have helped Johnson and the Fitness First team to significantly streamline the publishing process.

The previous print documentation included screenshots that comprised nearly 90 percent of the content. Nearly everything would have to be rewritten whenever there was a new release of Members First, a time-intensive process with significant printing costs. Now with Flare's topic-based approach to content, Fitness First only needs to create or update those topics covering new or enhanced features, and updates typically take just a few minutes to publish to users. Additionally, conditional text and single-source publishing in Flare allow the training team to create country-specific versions of the documentation that take into account such factors as different legal rules and modes of operation–and publish them all from the same Flare documentation project.

"We now do more frequent updates and produce a different version for each country because we can," Alex says. "The content is more relevant, and the documentation is more alive and fresh because it is delivered online."

The training team also has appreciated that no proprietary file formats are involved in Flare. Alex explains, "If needed, developers can help us with the documentation and even extend Flare. For example, we use JQuery to introduce graphical processes into our operations documentation. Flare's openness gives us a lot more possibilities."

MadCap Contributor complements Flare by allowing different employees to comment on content written in Flare, simplifying the review process. Contributor also enables SMEs at Fitness First to contribute content within templates developed by the training team. This facilitates the authoring process while ensuring that the formatting and information links are correct

and consistent. The authoring by SMEs represents a significant change from the past where one single author largely created all the content because sharing one large document and maintaining consistency was extremely difficult.

"SMEs can pop in and out of the documentation task without having to set aside swathes of time, and the content they produce can be integrated much faster," says Alex. "My colleague handles the operations manual, and at times has up to 10 contributing authors using the Contributor template. Even then everything looks consistent, and that's important because we put a priority on standards."
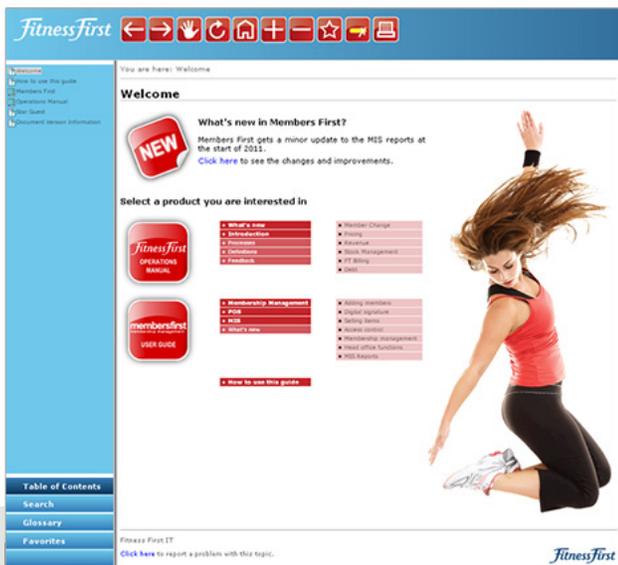
MadCap Lingo Aids Localization

MadCap Lingo has played an equally important role in ensuring quality and consistency across the seven languages and dialects that First Fitness currently supports: UK English, Australian English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Dutch. Prior to implementing MadCap Lingo and Flare, Fitness First either supplied English versions of the print documentation or used an external translation company to provide a one-off translation that there was no chance of re-using. However, the availability of MadCap Lingo made it easy to bring the translation in-house.

Now as documentation is ready, Alex imports it from Flare into MadCap Lingo and then passes it onto the company's translators. The resulting translations are lower cost, more accurate, and more focused, and the product knowledge that is acquired or required when reading and translating the documentation is kept in the business. Moreover, Fitness First

has the flexibility to translate the priority content and get the release out, rather than waiting until all the documentation is complete.

"The process works particularly well in Germany where they make use of translation memory to take advantage of translations they have already done," Alex says. "They send the translation back, and then I do the final build."

Alex adds, "I really appreciate the functionality in MadCap Lingo that produces a translation using existing translated content and then adds in English sections where translations don't already exist. This makes it easy to focus on the new sections that need translation and avoid reworking sections that don't."

MadCap Analyzer Optimizes Members First Documentation

As a finishing procedure, the training team uses MadCap Analyzer to review the documentation and identify issues. For instance, a large documentation project can take hours to publish. Because Fitness First needs to create seven language versions of the documentation, it is important to keep the files as small as possible.

"The first time we used Analyzer we realized that over half the 2,500-plus pictures stored in the documentation were not being used," Alex recalls. "We were able to go in and get rid of some 1,300 pictures, but with Analyzer, we didn't have to flip through each topic to find them. We've also been able to find and fix content that links to nothing or broken links where content no longer exists. It's allowed us to reduce the file size all the while improving the quality of our online documentation, and this makes a huge difference when the project is replicated 16 times for all the combined countries and languages."

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