



ISOdx, a division of Cranel, Inc.

Columbus, OH

<http://www.isodxsolutions.com>

ISOdx Uses MadCap Flare and Analyzer to Deliver Award-Winning Software Documentation

INDUSTRY

- Software

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David Seman | ISOdx

Goals:

- Create award-winning documentation to match award-winning software
- Tap content contributors who use Microsoft Word
- Integrate with Web-based software
- Increase project efficiency

Solutions:

- MadCap Flare native XML content authoring tool with full Unicode Support
- MadCap Analyzer for reporting and proactively suggesting documentation improvements

Benefits:

- Winner of STC awards: WMS-STC 2007-08; NEO-STC 2008-09
- Ability to meet three-month production deadline
- Web-based software integration via standards-compliant XML
- Elimination of time-consuming manual processes through Flare and Analyzer



7777 Fay Avenue
La Jolla, CA 92037

Tel: +1.858.320.0387
Fax: +1.858.320.0338

www.madcapsoftware.com
info@madcapsoftware.com

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ISOdx, a leading innovator of IT service and support software, understands that state-of-the-art software and documentation go hand-in-hand in creating a superior customer experience.

In January 2007, ISOdx was preparing for a major new Web-based version of its software, which automatically detects changes in the IT environment, eliminating the hours it once took IT professionals to manually identify these changes. The company saw the new ISOdx software release as an opportunity to upgrade its user manuals and online Help system.

The challenge was completing all-new print and online documentation by the April 2007 due date. Using MadCap Flare, ISOdx technical writer, Ellen Hayes, was able to complete two user manuals, an online installation guide, and several marketing pieces by the deadline. One of the manuals, the "ISOdx Product Documentation Set," received a merit award in the Effective Communication Competition 2007-08, sponsored by the West Michigan Shores chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (WMS-STC).

More recently, in November 2008, the "ISOdx User's Guide Help," received a merit award in the Northeast Ohio Society for Technical Communication (NEO STC) Online Publication Competition.

"We already had award-winning software for customers in the service and support market, and we wanted award-winning documentation to go with it," said Dave Seman, ISOdx manager of business and channel operations. "MadCap Flare allowed us to meet that goal, and now in sales calls, we promote our user manuals and online Help along with our software. It's a big competitive differentiator for us."

Needed: Web-Centric Documentation

Prior to Ms. Hayes coming onboard, ISOdx had begun working with a traditional proprietary authoring tool, but with little success. Therefore, one of her top priorities was to choose

the best tool for the new ISOdx documentation for online and print. After downloading trial packages of various authoring tools, Hayes recommended MadCap Flare.

With its native XML architecture, Flare has provided two important advantages over older proprietary authoring products. First Flare readily integrates with the ISOdx software, which is delivered both as a managed service and as licensed software that runs locally. Equally important for ISOdx, Flare creates XML-based, W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) standard-compliant Help.

A third, important advantage of Flare is its ability to directly import existing content from Microsoft Word into Flare.

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Ellen Hayes | ISOdx

"Our company uses Word as a universal tool for gathering and correcting our product documentation," Ms. Hayes explains. "With Flare, I can simply import the Word content, and it comes across with the formatting preserved. Also, a Flare build just takes 5-10 minutes—much less than the 30 minutes that some older tools required. It has allowed me to create and update our documentation quickly, both in PDF versions for print and the Web."

Flare and Analyzer Speed Content Publishing

"Using Flare, Ellen, who had just joined our company, was able to learn our software and develop a complete set of print

documentation and online Help within just a few months,” said Mr. Seman. “It was a testament, not only to Ellen’s talent, but the short learning curve of MadCap’s software.”

ISOdx also purchased the MadCap Software support package, says Ms. Hayes, adding, “That was the best thing for me. I’ve even sent files to MadCap support so they can troubleshoot them. I have used Flare in more ways than I ever expected, and the support team is always right there to help me.”

In mid-2008, ISOdx added MadCap Analyzer, which proactively identifies ways to improve the ISOdx documentation, and eliminates unused topics and images that load down the system.

“For example,” says Ms. Hayes, “Our user’s manual has 265 pages with tons of links and 115 figures. I used to manually get rid of unused topics whenever we changed topic titles, and working with Word, that happened a lot. Now Analyzer now automates the process, saving me time and limiting the demands on our system.”

ISOdx also upgraded to Flare 4.0 in September 2008, which Ms. Hayes values for its enhanced graphics and Global Project Linking for enabling developers to reuse files and project elements.

We have turned to Flare for each of our software releases, and each new version of Flare brings greater functionality and ease of use.”

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Flare also generated the content in Word files, so Intentional Design’s customer could easily mark it up. At times, content was published in Word for the customer to revise two or three times a day, enabling a highly collaborative and efficient process of review.

Ms. Hayes notes, “We have turned to Flare for each of our software releases, and each new version of Flare brings greater functionality and ease of use.”