N-able Technologies

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N-able Technologies Uses MadCap Flare to Modernize Online Help and Documentation

INDUSTRY

- Network and Systems Management Software

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>
> Patrick Calnan | **N-able Technologies**

Goals:

- Create state-of-the-art Web Help experience to match award-winning Web-based software

- Simplify online Help navigation for users

- Streamline the process of publishing, updating and customizing content

Solutions:

- MadCap Flare native XML multi-channel content authoring software

- MadCap Feedback Server to let customers tag, rate and comment on Help content

Benefits:

- Rich online experience has led to higher customer satisfaction

- Ability to match user interface of N-able software and online Help

- Search engine and indexing make navigating Web Help easy

- Single-sourcing enables the same Flare project to produce first-class online Help and print documentation

- Updates now take one day instead of one week

- Web Help is one-tenth the size of previous solution, reducing hardware demands

- Flare's native XML architecture facilitates customization and translation

N-able Technologies Uses MadCap Flare to Modernize Online Help and Documentation

N-able Technologies® is known for its award-winning remote monitoring and management software for managed service providers and IT departments. The company, dedicated to providing the industry's number one software, also recognizes that the customer experience includes the online Help and print documentation supporting its applications.

Using MadCap Flare for multi-channel content authoring, N-able provides its customers superior Web Help navigation, timelier updates, and enhanced customization—all in a fraction of the time it used to take.

"We implemented MadCap Flare documentation tools two years ago and have since seen tremendous process improvement," said Patrick Calnan, N-able's documentation team leader. "With Flare, our workflow is much easier, and I can spend more time working on content rather than extraneous output tasks. In the past, we could only process one or two updates per week. Now with Flare, we can make those changes in one day, ensuring that our customers have the most up-to-date information available."

Web-based Solutions Need Web-based Content

Before implementing Flare, N-able used a popular authoring tool to create PDF files for print documentation. As such, the documentation team had to use a third-party plug-in to prepare the content for online delivery. The resulting online Help, however, had poor indexing and minimal navigation ability, making it difficult for customers to find the assistance that they needed.

"We provide a Web-based application, so it only makes sense for us to offer Help content that matches the sophistication of our award-winning software," said Calnan. "It was clear that the time had come for us to shift our focus from PDF print files to online Help as our primary delivery format. With Flare, we have a complete authoring solution for delivering best-in-class Web Help, as well as continuing to provide top-quality print documentation—all from the same source files."

The powerful built-in search engine and simplified indexing of the Flare-based Web Help now make it easy for customers to navigate through more than 600 Help topics to quickly reach the information they need.

> "*Flare mobile output is platform-independent, so we didn't have to customize anything for the GPS device. It worked immediately.*"
>
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Customizing the Customer Experience

Flare's native XML architecture was also an important factor for N-able, which has a full staff of XML and Java developers building and maintaining its Web-based software. With N-able's software and Flare both based on XML, it was easy for N-able to take its user interface format and use it as the template for the Web Help providing a consistent look-and-feel for customers.

Flare's XML architecture has also allowed N-able to customize its online Help for customers. For example, one large multinational company required a fourth frame in the Web Help so that it could display its logo across the bottom of the page. Without any major additional steps, an N-able developer wrote the XML code to add the necessary fourth frame in addition to the navigation, table of contents (TOC), and content frames. The same customer also required versions of the Web Help in French, Italian, German and Spanish with the XML-based Flare project easily facilitating the translations and preserving the formatting.

"We might have been able to create our content with other authoring tools, but Flare has allowed us to make our

documentation modern, sophisticated and professional while keeping it easy to use," said Calnan. "Our customers have noticed and appreciate the changes we've made, and their high level of satisfaction has led to our senior management recognizing Flare's value as well."

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Two other benefits of Flare are reusable content and support for cascading style sheets (CSS). The lack of duplication means that Web Help files produced by Flare are just one-tenth the size of N-able's previous online Help files significantly reducing demands on hardware. Additionally, the documentation team is seeing significant efficiencies.

"For example, if I need to modify formatting for our documentation, I can make the font size or color change in the CSS file, and it is instantly reflected in more than 600 topics," Calnan says. "We can also catch and make changes quickly and easily."

Linking Content to Customer Feedback

Recently, N-able implemented MadCap's Feedback Server, which allows Calnan and his documentation team to gather customer input on the Flare-generated Web Help content through its rating and tagging features. Going forward, N-able plans to post knowledge-based articles (KBAs) generated from its support calls as part of the Help content with Flare and then use the Feedback Server to allow customers to tag, rate and comment on those issues.

"Though this project is in its early stages, customers have already given us very positive feedback," Calnan notes. "We look forward to using Flare and Feedback Server in future projects to further extend the dialogue with our customers."