WRITEC
communication engineering & technical writing

Desenzano del Garda, Italy

INDUSTRY

• Technical Communications

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Irene Mazzi | **Technical Writer and Interaction Designer, Writec**

Goals:

• Replace Adobe RoboHelp and FrameMaker with a single product to streamline the process of creating and publishing online Help and documentation.

• Create modern online Help that creates an intuitive experience across all the computers and mobile devices users rely on.

• Facilitate the translation of online Help and documentation from Italian into six different languages.

Solutions :

• MadCap Flare native XML single-source, multi-channel content authoring software

• MadCap Analyzer for analyzing and identifying improvements to documentation

• MadCap Lingo translation management tool

Benefits:

• Efficiency: Flare's topic-based single-source, multi-channel publishing streamlines delivery of online and print documentation. Conditional tags, variables, snippets and global project linking facilitate content reuse.

• Quality Assurance: MadCap Analyzer identifies issues and recommends corrections to MadCap Flare-based content, helping to maximize content quality.

• Translation: Integration between MadCap Flare and MadCap Lingo facilitates the delivery of online Help and print documentation in seven languages.

• Intuitive User Experience: Responsive design and HTML5 output supported by Flare provide a modern, intuitive Web experience for desktop and mobile users.

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Writec Relies on the MadPak Professional Suite to Deliver Award-Winning Online Help and Documentation in Multiple Languages for Global Companies

Since 1999, Italy-based Writec has been dedicated to providing technical communications services for global businesses in the software, electronics and mechanics industries. Today, companies, such as ABB, Tetra Pak, Gavazzi Automation, SAME DEUTZ-FAHR, and Pirelli Tyre depend on Writec to build instructions and online Help, translate documentation, and guide them through the process of developing or transitioning to new technical communications systems.

To help business modernize their online Help and documentation, Writec relies on MadCap Software's technical communication suite. Building on its success in delivering solutions based on the suite, Writec has been a MadCap partner and distributor since 2013, and user since the beginning.

The Need to Address Multiple Channels

For years, Writec used Adobe RoboHelp to support its technical communications consulting and training services because that was the software used by its clients.

"The majority of people at the time used RoboHelp; we felt the features being provided were a bit outdated," said Writec Owner, Content Strategist and Help System Designer Vilma Zamboli. "At the moment, there wasn't a better way to use software more powerfully."

Notably, if customers wanted print documentation in addition to online Help, they first needed to publish their online content in RoboHelp and then import it into FrameMaker for the print version. As Writec and its clients faced a rapidly growing demand for technical communications, the company began seeking an authoring tool that would streamline the process of content delivery through single-source, multi-channel publishing.

After evaluating the leading tools in the market, Writec identified MadCap's MadPak Suite as the clear solution of choice for evolving its technical communications services. Of particular interest in the suite were three fully integrated products: MadCap Flare for topic-based multi-channel publishing, MadCap Analyzer for analyzing and improving content, and MadCap Lingo for translation.

Streamlining Content Development and Delivery

Today Writec takes advantage of several MadCap Flare features to streamline the processes around creating and publishing online help content for desktop and mobile, folded instructions sheets, and video instructions for complex machines, electronic devices, and software systems.

Cascading style sheets (CCS) enable Writec to ensure consistency of content as the company creates and updates topics in MadCap Flare. Meanwhile, snippets, variables and conditional tags allow authors to create content once and customize it for different products, audiences, and print and online channels.

"We have been able gain tremendous efficiency through the use of conditional tags to create different Flare targets and generate variations of the same content," said Writec Technical Writer and Interaction Designer Irene Mazzi. "We can condition everything now and can easily output the same content to HTML5, PDF and Microsoft Word files."

Another MadCap Flare feature that Writec employs is global project linking (GPL). Through this functionality, teams working on different projects can simply link to a repository of shared files—such as master page layouts and style sheets—to add them to their Flare projects, ensuring consistency and eliminating redundant efforts.

"Flare's global project linking is one of the best in allowing authors to reuse files and elements across multiple projects," Ms. Zamboli noted. "With GPL, we can import content based on conditions and topics. In this way we can develop a sort of component content management system (CCMS) from which we can originate different deliverables."

Responsive Online Help With HTML5

Initially Writec used MadCap Flare to create different versions of WebHelp for various formats, including desktops and tablets. However, following the 2014 launch of MadCap Flare 10, the company began taking advantage of the new product version's support for HTML5 output and responsive design.

Now HTML5 content generated with MadCap Flare can automatically adjust to the user's format, from desktop, to mobile or tablet. The responsive HTML5 output enhances the overall user experience, and at the same time, Writec and its clients no longer need to build a special mobile version of their output.

"The HTML5 responsive design feature in Flare is fantastic," said Ms. Zamboli. "The current online Help we're working on delivers a properly proportioned view whether it's on a 10-inch tablet screen and a 22-inch monitor."

Ensuring Content Quality

Once the Writec team builds content using MadCap Flare, the company's writers then use MadCap Analyzer to assure quality and to quickly find critical issues before migrating the content into Word and other tools.

"We had an issue with broken links and inline formatting tied to HTML span tags," Ms. Mazzi recalled. "We wanted to remove online formatting and delete the open and closed span, MadCap Analyzer has helped us solve these challenges of cleaning up the content."

Expanding into Different Languages with MadCap Lingo

Writec supports a growing number of customers around the world. Today, the company takes advantage of the tight integration between MadCap Flare and MadCap Lingo translation management software to deliver its documentation projects in various languages. In addition to Italian, these include, for example), English (UK and American), French, Spanish, German, Russian, Chinese and Danish.

"I really like the opportunity MadCap Lingo gives to select one target inside a huge Flare project," said Writec Translation Manager Chiara Ziliani. "If I have to translate one target, I can just select that target, and it will give me all the topics and files I need. I don't have to search single files manually."

Ms. Ziliani added, "Thanks to MadCap Lingo, I can now use all files, such as topics, variables, cascading style sheets (CSS) and snippets, without creating any filters to read them. I can translate any parts I need without viewing scripts. MadCap Lingo makes it easy to rebuild Flare projects into the translation."

STC Best-of-Show 2014 Award-Winning Project with Flare

One particularly complex project that Writec worked on turned into a Best-of-Show Award using MadCap Flare. Customer Gavazzi Automation wanted to design, write and illustrate five-folded instruction sheets for the company's compact energy meter product. The project covered five outputs: folded sheet, PDF in the A4 page format, Microsoft Word, and HTML5, translated into six languages.

Writec relied on MadCap Flare to build the project from the bottom-up, topic-by-topic. The firm then used MadCap Lingo to help create the language translations. The resulting project was awarded the STC Best of Show 2014 Award in Columbus, Ohio in June 2015.

"We started with the folded format, but we also needed to deliver draft versions to companies. It was more difficult to prepare the instruction sheet than the actual content," Ms. Zamboli recalled. "Flare made it easy to design the sheet in a fixed layout and not the automatic layout that we use normally. We used Flare for everything, from defining the frame for each block text, to image groups, and figure numbering."

Looking Ahead: More Interactive Online Experiences

Looking ahead, Writec aims to create a more interactive and visual Help website.

"We plan to make use of the new features of Flare 11 to further enhance our online Help, such as adding new videos into the Help," Ms. Mazzi notes. "We are also looking at MadCap Mimic to prepare video tutorials."

Ms. Zamboli adds, "We're excited to start using other features in the MadPak suite, which really seem to complement our goals for evolving our services."

Writec's STC Best-of-Show 2014 Award-Winning Project created using MadCap Flare