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# MadWorld 2016: He said, She said

Thoughts on the MadWorld 2016 Technical Communication Conference and ideas for MadWorld 2017, by [Nita Beck](#) and [Patrick Calnan](#).

*DISCLAIMER: Neither Nita Beck nor Patrick Calnan are employees of MadCap Software but both have attended past MadWorld conferences.*

## Background

The MadWorld 2016 Technical Communication Conference took place in San Diego, California from April 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and included presentations by industry experts and skilled technical communicators. The 2016 edition of the conference is the fourth in the annual series organised by MadCap Software to educate and inform technical communicators who use Flare, Mimic, Lingo, and other MadCap applications.

The following are the combined impressions of Nita Beck and Patrick Calnan, experienced technical communicators, who evaluated whether the investment for technical communicators to attend MadWorld 2017 is worthwhile.



**Anthony Olivier, CEO of MadCap Software, speaks during the keynote presentation**

## Keynote session and announcement

MadCap uses the conference keynote to set a fun and exciting mood. This year, they cranked the amp up to 11 by announcing the impending arrival of MadCap Central, a new documentation workflow tool.

**He said:** Central certainly looks impressive and my only regret is that my current job is not as well suited to using it as my previous one. I am the only writer where I currently work and so project management is relatively straightforward as I do not have to share tasks or duties with other writers. If you are part of a team of writers, however, it certainly looks like Central will be the answer to many problems.

**She said:** I'm salivating over Central! It's exciting to see MadCap addressing workflow for documentation professionals. As a business owner and contractor, I know I'll use many of Central's features constantly. I'm especially interested in the task manager and its association with calendaring functions, particularly support for start dates not just end dates. This will really help my clients, subcontractors, and me to manage our work calendar, and I like that Central will consolidate the project management tasks I usually do using multiple tools. Central looks like it might just be my Holy Grail app for technical documentation project management.

## Presentations

The core element of any technical conference is the content of the presentations and seminars.

**She said:** Sadly, I couldn't attend all the sessions I wanted to simply because there were so many that were interesting and relevant. I missed seeing Chris Steele's well-attended "Employing UX Concepts" session, but I did attend his excellent "Translation Workshop" session. I also stayed the extra day for the Advanced Workshop on Wednesday (April 13<sup>th</sup>) and it was definitely worth my while (despite the technical glitches of the opening presentation). I do wish that MadCap would go back to organising sessions along skill-level lines (*for example, Beginner versus Advanced*). Some sessions weren't as relevant to my work as I thought they'd be because although they appeared to be targeted at advanced users, they seemed more for beginners. The closing session by MadCappers Eric Shipman and Mike Hamilton on strategies for recovering when things go wrong with a Flare project was excellent!

**He said:** This conference was the biggest portion of my professional development budget for this year and I was very keen on taking advantage of as many quality presentations as I could. I was not disappointed as my personal favourites this year were Matthew Ellison's "Introducing

CSS Flexbox Layout", Paul Pehrson's "Extending Flare with Web Programming", and Scott DeLoach's "Extending HTML5 Targets with jQuery." There were many excellent sessions at the conference but I learned the most from those three as they had the biggest "bang for the buck".

## Speakers

Content is always important but the most interesting content may not be communicated well if the speaker is not equal to the task.

**He said:** The roster of speakers that MadWorld draws has always impressed me (with the exception of when they let me get up on stage) and this year's conference continued that trend. The "conference regulars" such as Neil Perlin, Denise Kadilak, Ellis Pratt, and the aforementioned Paul Pehrson were all their usual excellent selves. However, I was also very impressed by some of the newer faces such as Jessica Kreger, who gave an excellent talk on setting up your Flare projects for localisation.

**She said:** Scott DeLoach deserves the Golden Propeller Beanie Award as best-of-show conference recognition! His presentations always push the Flare community to greater knowledge and improved skills, especially web design skills including responsive content. Denise Kadilak was dynamic and informative, newbie conference speaker Kate Schneider (one of MadCap's technical writers) was well prepared and well received, and Chris Steele was relaxed and unhurried, like a gifted college professor.

## Hospitality Suite

From the first MadWorld, MadCap Software has captured hearts by stationing their support staff in a dedicated room—the Hospitality Suite—where attendees can access free face-to-face technical support.

**She said:** I liked that there was more room this year to sit down to talk and network with fellow attendees. There was a patio just outside the glass doors where one could enjoy the California sunlight. The access to

the technical support team is always a great thing, and I was pleased that this year MadCap provided the Flare User Groups with their own table. My only complaint would be that this year's Hospitality Suite was a little off the beaten track, so it seemed that it was a little bit harder to find.

**He said:** Everyone loves the Hospitality Suite as there is no better way to get help with technical issues than by cornering a support technician (sometimes two!) and showing them your problems directly. I did not have the opportunity to tap the MadCap support staff myself this year but every time that I walked into the Hospitality Suite, it was always very busy.

### Venue

MadWorld 2016 took place at the Hilton San Diego Resort and Spa.

**He said:** Frankly, one conference room looks like another so it's difficult to distinguish between venues. I thought the Hilton San Diego was a good choice as size was definitely not an issue and the supporting amenities (such as access to food, washrooms, and other facilities) were very good. The evening events at poolside offered picturesque surroundings, and the hotel staff members were supportive and welcoming.

**She said:** The facility was certainly attractive and the accommodations were very comfortable. The pool area and nearby Mission Bay beach were fun for the social events in the evening.

But if I have to compare it to last year's setting—the Catamaran Resort, I'd have to say that I liked the Catamaran a little better. I'm happy that MadWorld has continued to grow, necessitating larger venues, but the beach frontage on Mission Bay at the Catamaran for MadWorld 2015 was gorgeous, plus we were only steps from the ocean. Sadly, I didn't get to see the ocean in 2016.

### Recommendations

Registration for MadWorld 2017 will begin around the time this article is published so what did the 2016 conference indicate about the benefits of attending next year's conference?

**She said:** If you're working with Flare, Doc-To-Help, or any other MadCap product, you absolutely have to get to MadWorld! As far as I'm concerned, no other technical communication conference compares to MadWorld when it comes to Flare-specific learning. MadWorld gets you to a depth of knowledge that you won't find elsewhere, and I like that it's a global conference with representation from all over the world and not just North America. The presenters and subject matter experts are very accessible and have a generous attitude for sharing their knowledge. If you're not working with MadCap products, you might be better off attending a more general technical communication conference, but if you are, MadWorld is the place to be.

**He said:** MadCap has put together some excellent conferences in the past

that have provided a lot of valuable content and access to very talented speakers. This year's conference built on that success and was even better than previous editions as the quality of presentations continued to improve and the wealth of information was tremendous. You can gain a lot of insight within a very short time so in my opinion, attending MadWorld 2017 can be a tremendous (and cost-effective) boost to your technical communication career. **C**

**DIARY DATE**  
**MadWorld 2017**  
**2-5 April 2017**

San Diego, California, USA  
[www.madworldconference.com](http://www.madworldconference.com)



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