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Linthicum, MD

Basys Modernizes, Streamlines Web-based Content Delivery Using MadCap Flare

INDUSTRY

• Benefit Administration Software

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Adrienne Pugh | **basys, inc.**

Goals:

• Deliver superior Web-based documentation

• Increase project efficiency and quality control

• Ensure integration with Microsoft .NET and Visual Studio

Solutions:

• MadCap Flare native XML content authoring tool based on .NET and Visual Studio

Benefits:

• Increase customer satisfaction with look-and-feel and navigation of Flare-based Web content

• Cut time for documentation updates from hours to minute

• Facilitate quality control by automatically repeating a change throughout a Flare project

• Support integration through same development enviroment used for basys applications

madcap software

7777 Fay Avenue
La Jolla, CA 92037

Tel: +1.858.320.0387
Fax: +1.858.320.0338

www.madcapsoftware.com
info@madcapsoftware.com

Basys Modernizes, Streamlines Web-based Content Delivery Using MadCap Flare

For 30 years, basys has been a leading provider of software and services for administering more than 1,500 different benefit plans in the United States and Canada. More than two years ago the company made a strategic decision to rewrite its Unix-based software as Web-based applications using Microsoft .NET and Visual Studio. With the move to Web-based software, basys wanted to modernize its documentation, as well–delivering it as Web content.

Since implementing MadCap's flagship content authoring software, basys has been able to migrate from PDF documentation files to a Web-based content delivery model. Using features in Flare, such as single-sourcing, reusable snippets, and conditional tags, basys also has significantly cut the time for maintaining its documentation–completing some updates in minutes that once took hours. Flare replaces the Adobe RoboHelp content authoring tool.

"When we began rewriting our software as Web-based applications, we wanted an authoring product that was optimized for the Web and could provide true single-sourcing. That product was Flare," said Adrienne Pugh, technical writer for basys. "We have been using Flare since April 2006, and it is one of the best decisions we've made. We haven't looked back since.

Proprietary Software No Longer An Option

As basys was jumping into a new world with its software and documentation, the company determined that it was time to look at a new authoring solution.

At the same time, basys saw it as an opportunity to improve the efficiency and quality of its documentation. Due to RoboHelp's lack of robust single sourcing, basys had to maintain some 10 projects and hundreds of in-line styles, and each change had to be made manually in every place it occurred. Not only was this time consuming for basys' technical writers, it also demanded close scrutiny by quality control (QC) team members to ensure consistency.

The company reviewed a number of products, but most were based on older proprietary architectures.

By contrast, Ms. Pugh noted, "We were attracted by MadCap Flare's standards-based, native XML architecture. We also liked the fact that Flare is based on .NET and Visual Studio, providing a lot of potential for seamless integration with our software."

Flare Improves Quality and Efficiency

Since implementing Flare, Basys has taken advantage of several features to enhance and streamline its content delivery. With Flare's single-source functionality, basys only needs to maintain a few projects. Conditional tags combined with single-sourcing allow basys to control what documentation users can see based on their profile–for example whether the person is an administrator, an employer, or a member. One of the most popular features is the ability to create reusable snippets, and today they appear in every topic within basys' documentation. Now when there is a word change, it can be made automatically throughout the Flare project.

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"We love the snippets in Flare. It's one of the things that has transformed our lives," said Ms. Pugh. "Now when we have an update, we just go to the source, make the change, and the change appears everywhere. It just takes a few seconds. It's so much more efficient, and there is a lot more control."

"Our QA people say it has affected their process as well," Ms. Pugh added. "Before, they had to review every topic and hope that a function or field was described the same way.

Knowing that we use snippets, they say they no longer have to eyeball every instance where a change occurs. It adds a whole new level of certainty."

MadCap service and support have also helped to facilitate the technical writing team's efforts. Technical writers at basys rarely have to call MadCap support though. By turning to the active online MadCap user community and forums, basys technical writers and developers typically get their questions answered within 30 minutes.

The internal efficiencies have been matched by the rich, user-friendly experience for the company's customers using basys' Web Help. Customers report that the Web-based content is much more intuitive and more in line with what they are used to seeing with other Web-based applications. The use of drop

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down text and expanding text allows users to read only what they want to–and to access it faster. The "favorites" feature allows coworkers to save frequently visited help topics, so they can find what they need without searching.

"Our documentation has become such an asset that our sales team pitches it to prospects, almost treating it like another application," Ms. Pugh observes. "Flare makes our technical writing team feel like rock stars."