



FOX Racing Shox

Watsonville, CA

<http://www.foxracingshox.com>

FOX Racing Shox Modernizes Online User Manuals and Service Website Using MadCap Flare

INDUSTRY

- Manufacturing

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Daniel Green | FOX Racing Shox

Goals:

- Modernize Web-based documentation for current and future needs
- Create a consistent user experience
- Increase project efficiency
- Facilitate Asian and other double-byte character set language localization

Solutions:

- MadCap Flare native XML content authoring tool with full Unicode Support

Benefits:

- Master page created with Flare streamlines content development, fosters greater consistency
- Easier localization process, and expansion of languages supported from 6 to 7
- Flexibility to choose between visual editor and XML source editor helps efficiency
- Native XML content is future-proof

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For more than three decades, FOX Racing Shox has been designing and manufacturing high-performance racing suspension systems for sports vehicles. FOX products are now used worldwide in mountain bikes, all-terrain vehicles, off-road and motocross motorcycles, and snowmobiles.

In early 2007, the Bicycle Division decided it was time to modernize its online owner manual and online service Web site—making it as state-of-the-art as the products they support. The division now uses Flare to deliver its browser-based bike owner’s manual in seven different languages, as well as power its online service site—providing a consistent look and feel for retail customers, dealers, and direct distributors.

“We’re recognized worldwide for our state-of-the-art suspension systems, and we needed to move our online content from the 1990s into the new millennium,” said Daniel Green, technical communications manager for the FOX Racing Shox Bicycle Division.

“MadCap Flare is based on a native XML architecture that will take us beyond our current needs and ensure that our content won’t get antiquated, Green explained. “Flare also provides full Unicode support for double-byte character set languages, which is a top priority in serving our growing base of customers in Asia, for example.

Needed: A Standardized Approach

For years, the Bicycle Division used RoboHelp to create its online documentation. The more-proprietary authoring tool required a great deal of specialized coding and did not offer the same level of content reusability potential inherent with XML-based applications. Moreover, it lacked full Unicode support for double-byte character languages, adding complexity and therefore increased cost to the translation process.

When Green joined FOX Racing Shox in January 2007, he saw an opportunity to take a fresh approach to delivering online

documentation. He formerly had authored content using the Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) of which XML is a subset. As a result, Green was attracted to the XML Editor in MadCap Flare, which provided the option to either work completely in a non-programming visual interface or to view and edit the underlying XML.

“MadCap Flare is very easy to use, and I really like the multiplicity of choice for how I author and update the content,” Green observes. “I can go into the WYSIWYG editor for a quick review. Then, if I want to take advantage of the elegance of XML, I just use the source editor to go into the markup language itself. I find that pretty liberating.”

In early 2007, FOX Racing Shox began producing online documentation for its 2008 product models. Green imported the legacy RoboHelp source files into Flare, which executed an error-free conversion of the older files. Flare automatically removed Kado tags and other proprietary XML markup, which facilitated translation from English to the other five languages supported: French, German, Italian, Spanish and Japanese.

With development of the 2009 bike owner’s manual and online service in 2008, Fox Racing Shox has been able to add simplified Chinese to its localized owner’s manuals for the first time. Green also has created a master style sheet, significantly simplifying the process of developing and updating content.

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“Developing the content used to be a long process,” said Green. “Everything in the .HTMs is structured and formatted more globally when we do a build using the Flare master page, which

can use markup snippets linked from within the master page file. Our owner's manuals and online service website get a very consistent look and feel, and that is a great thing."

The Bicycle Division's success has gained awareness among other business groups within FOX Racing Shox. Recently, the Power Sports Division requested assistance getting its legacy content online. Because Flare supports importing from Microsoft Word, Green was able to launch the project quickly. Green noted, "They simply sent me their PDF and Word files, and I imported them directly into Flare. I had their legacy content online within a day."

Despite all the current success, Green continually looks beyond to the future, observing, "One of the great things about the structured authoring in Flare is that it enforces consistency, and in the long run, that opens the door to greater ubiquity. Having that increased potential for future value immediately enhances the value of the content we're delivering today."

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