



A Case Study in Technical
Communication Best Practices



COMPANY WEBSITE
www.henkemfg.com

LOCATION
Leavenworth, Kansas

INDUSTRY
Manufacturing



Leading Manufacturer of Snow Management Solutions Delivers Superior Product Manuals Faster by Replacing Microsoft® Word with MadCap Flare

GOALS

- Replace Microsoft Word with modern software designed specifically for creating and publishing digital books.
- Support Henke's product and sales teams with timely delivery of new and updated product manuals.
- Provide customers with intuitive, easy-to-follow manuals for their specific product configurations.
- Increase content quality and consistency while improving the efficiency of delivering 500-plus product manuals as digital books.

SOLUTIONS

- MadCap Flare native XML single-source, multi-channel content authoring software
- MadCap Contributor for reviewing and contributing content to Flare projects
- MadCap Analyzer for analyzing Flare content and recommending improvement

BENEFITS

- **Efficiency** — Flare's topic-based single-source publishing enables content reuse and streamlines the delivery of product manual PDFs.
- **Quality** — Single-source publishing in MadCap Flare ensures consistency across different manuals. MadCap Analyzer identifies issues in Flare-based content and recommends improvements.
- **Easy Customization** — Conditional tags and tables of contents in Flare enable Henke to customize different versions of product manuals with minimal effort.

Founded in 1916, Henke Manufacturing has evolved to become an industry leader in designing and building a full line of first quality, commercial duty snow management equipment and allied products. Its industrial-grade snowplows and spreaders, hitches, attachments and accessories are now the solutions of choice for the snow management challenges faced by city, county, and state governmental agencies, as well as the surface maintenance operations of commercial and industrial facilities.

Today, Henke's customers extend across Canada and the United States. To support their use of its sophisticated, industrial-grade equipment, Henke provides several product manuals and technical publications, which are delivered as digital and printed books using the PDF file format. By replacing Microsoft Word with MadCap Flare for topic-based, single-source publishing, the company has significantly streamlined the production of these books.



Wanted: Single-Source Approach to Documentation

Previously, Henke relied on Microsoft Word to create and publish its product manuals. However, having to manually cut and paste each individual piece of documentation was extremely time-intensive, particularly when working to make sure that the table of contents (TOC) and formatting were automated and correct. Additionally, it was difficult to track and maintain content in multiple places.



With FrameMaker, we could barely get one book through the system, and the output looked worse than the version in Microsoft Word. I felt like I had to be a programmer just to get the software to format our documents properly.

T.J. COYLE

Technical Writer II and Environmental Compliance Officer | Henke Manufacturing

"When we updated passages in Microsoft Word in one book, we had to look through each of the other documents to see if that passage was also there or if it needed to be updated," recalls T.J. Coyle, technical writer and environmental compliance officer at Henke. "It was super inefficient having to update and publish each document individually to the most current formatting practices, and it became a can of worms. We needed to change that."

As Henke's documentation needs grew with the company's growing business and product lines, Coyle began searching for a better solution to manage content, track information, and easily update documentation across multiple platforms. She first selected Adobe FrameMaker but quickly found that the tool required too much time and customization to process documents.

"With FrameMaker, we could barely get one book through the system, and the output looked worse than the version in Microsoft Word," Coyle explained "I felt like I had to be a programmer just to get the software to format our documents properly."



Print Product Manual, Created with MadCap Flare

Moving to a Modern Authoring Solution

Continuing the search for a modern authoring solution, Coyle found MadCap Flare and was instantly

attracted to its comprehensive functionality, flexibility and openness.

“Flare seemed to have all the answers I was looking for in a publishing tool,” Coyle noted. “It had a supportive shell to build on; it was intuitive with an easy drag-and-drop interface that drastically reduced the learning curve, and it was affordable. Also, it wouldn’t trap my documentation in a proprietary language or database that would make it difficult to transfer to somewhere else.”

Based on her evaluation, Coyle decided to use MadCap Flare along with two fully integrated products, MadCap Analyzer and MadCap Contributor, to modernize the production of Henke’s digital books. To further take advantage of MadCap Flare’s comprehensive capabilities, Coyle also completed the MadCap Advanced Developer (MAD) Certification.

“Flare has removed the need for editing the format 99% of the time. Before Flare, I was only able to do the most crucial work. I can do so much more now.”

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Streamlined Delivery via Single-Source Publishing

Henke now relies on MadCap Flare to provide customers with PDF-based digital books that support their use of the company’s products. Using MadCap Flare’s topic-based, single-source publishing capabilities, Coyle has streamlined the development and delivery of this content, drastically reducing project time.

“I was able to see the full strength and power of Flare’s single-source publishing functionality when I used it to produce documentation for our modular truck wing product, which has 31 product manuals,” Coyle observes. “With Flare I can easily mass produce documentation for the same parts in many different configurations of the product, meeting customers’ needs faster with a more superior product.”

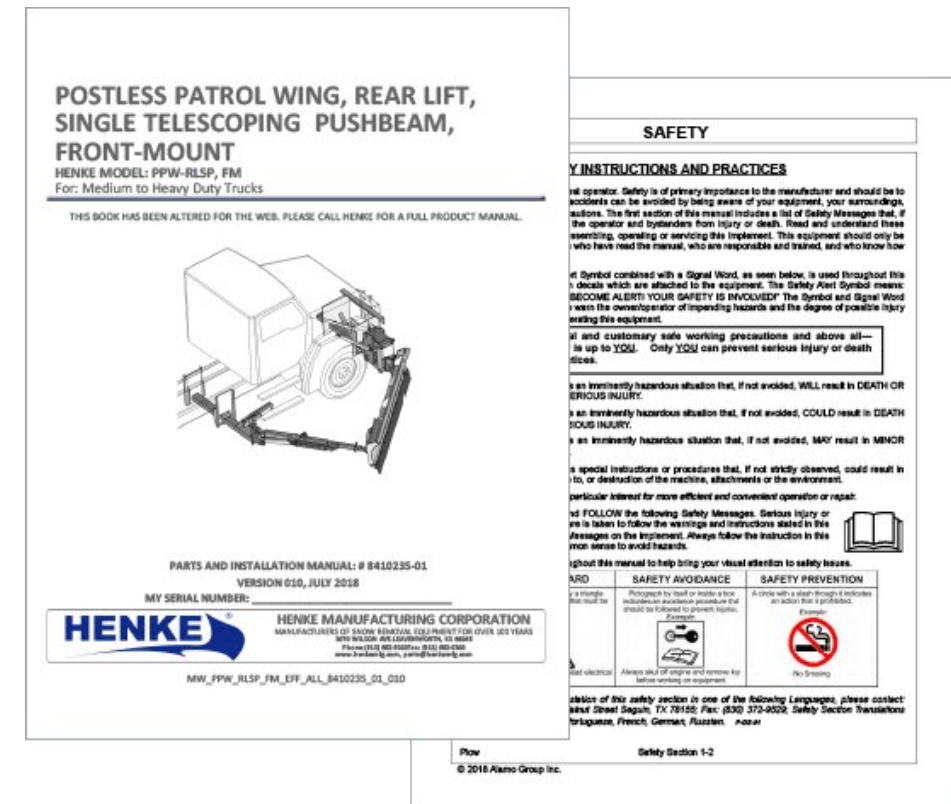
As a result of speeding the publishing process, Coyle can now keep pace with product updates as they come in.

“The biggest benefit is the amount of time saved; the process is so much faster now,” Coyle says.

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Coyle also takes advantage of two other products that are fully integrated with MadCap Flare: MadCap Analyzer helps to ensure quality by finding issues in Flare-based documentation and suggesting corrections. Meanwhile MadCap Contributor facilitates collaboration by making it easy for Henke subject matter experts (SMEs) to add and edit content.

“The biggest help of Contributor is that I can have someone else create content, and I can then simply accept, reorganize and add my Flare formatting to it,” Coyle notes.



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“Flare’s TOCs and global project linking features have been huge time-savers. I no longer have to update tables of contents or worry about inconsistent formatting in documents, and I can single-source common content across several projects without any rewriting.”

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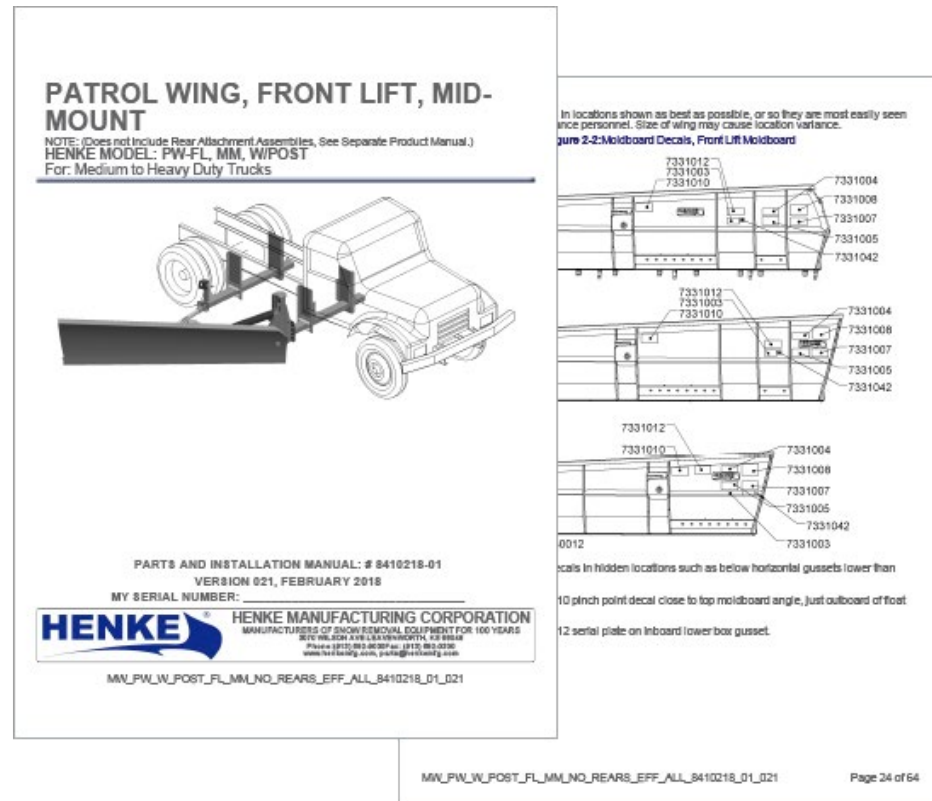
Maximizing Content Reuse

Coyle leverages additional features in MadCap Flare to simplify content reuse for Henke's different product manuals. Among these are conditional text, snippets, tables of contents, and global project linking (GPL), which lets writers link to a library of share common content.

"Flare's TOCs and global project linking features have been huge time-savers," says Coyle. "I no longer have to update tables of contents or worry about inconsistent formatting in documents. With GPL in Flare, I can single-source common content across several projects without any rewriting."

Meanwhile, Coyle relies on a combination of conditional text and snippets to customize content for different versions of the product books.

"Flare's conditions are a huge help, especially since there are so many different pieces of our products that can change out in our manuals, like a different structure, lifting mechanism, or wing," Coyle explains. "Each one of these has a condition tied to it, and I can easily turn it on or off depending on the book that I'm trying to produce."



Print Product Manual, Created with MadCap Flare

Coyle adds, "This is especially important because I don't have to rewrite content, and customers need a book that is clear and correct. Flare's conditions make it really easy to customize and update content. For example, when core changes were recently made to our modular wing product, I updated all 30 books in a couple days. Before Flare, this would have taken at least a month."

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Intuitive, Consistent Documentation for an Enhanced User Experience

In addition to improving efficiency, MadCap Flare has enabled Coyle to create a better user experience for customers by providing better-rounded and up-to-date resources.

"Thanks to Flare, I can focus on the quality of content instead of worrying about updating the same content in separate documents and making sure there are no errors," says Coyle. "As a result, our PDFs are much more intuitive, up-to-date, and modern looking, and the consistency has helped us to better serve our customers' needs."

Additionally, the Flare-based documentation has allowed Coyle to incorporate changes requested by Henke's sales team, a level of support there wasn't time to provide in the past.

“Because Flare lets me easily incorporate the sales team’s requests, they’ve been able to speed up their calls by simply sending an updated product manual to the customer,” Coyle observes. “They no longer have to spend time researching technical data and communicating details to our customers, plus we’re receiving a lot more compliments.”

Coyle adds, “I haven’t even fully utilized Flare’s full potential yet. It’s only going to get better.”



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For more case studies on ways smart companies are increasing productivity, reducing costs, and streamlining content delivery, visit:

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