THINKING WINDOWS

Pty Ltd Huntingdale, Australia

Thinking Windows Delivers Mobile Web Help in Less Than 30 Days with MadCap Flare

INDUSTRY

• Software

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> Stephen Tearle | **Thinking Windows**

Goals:

- Use single-sourcing to publish Help in multiple formats quickly and consistently

- Extend Web Help to mobile users in the field

- Minimize document duplication for customers

- Use video to demonstrate software features

Solutions:

- MadCap Flare native XML content authoring software

- MadCap Mimic for software simulation movies

Benefits:

- Mobile version of Web Help delivered in under 30 days

- Best-in-class documentation that reflects state-of-the-art software

- Field operators can access Web Help from their GPS devices

- Single-sourcing eliminates redundancy for Thinking Windows and customers

- Software simulation movies provide intuitive, visual understanding of product features

Thinking Windows Delivers Mobile Web Help in Less Than 30 Days with MadCap Flare

In the complex and heavily regulated water industry, Thinking Windows recognizes that great superior online Help translates into a superior customer experience. It is the leading provider of billing software solutions for Australian water authorities–from recording meter readings to billing, customer relationship management, analysis and reporting. That is why the company relies on MadCap Flare and MadCap Mimic to deliver online Help and documentation that is as world-class as its software.

Recently Thinking Windows expanded Web Help to mobile users in conjunction with the launch of its new AquIre application, which runs on a GPS-based mobile device from Trimble Navigation Limited. AquIre obtains extremely accurate global positioning system coordinates for water meters installed on properties. Data obtained by AquIre is then sent back to Thinking Windows' core billing application, AquaRate.

"The timing could not have been better. Just as we were readying the production release of AquIre, MadCap launched Flare 6.0 with its new mobile functionality," said Stephen Tearle, director of Thinking Windows. "We have long recognized the importance of delivering online documentation to an increasingly mobile workforce. With Flare 6.0, for the first time there is a technical communication product on the market for device-agnostic, single-source publishing to handheld and mobile devices, as well as print, desktops, and the Web."

Mr. Tearle added, "Our first customer for AquIre is impressed with the output. Now instead of carrying around instructional cards, the field operators have easy Web access to the information they need."

Mobile Output: No Customization Needed

Originally, Thinking Windows planned to use Flare to publish a small printed Help card for the field operators using AquIre. However, as Flare 6.0 launched, Heather Winch, head of Thinking Windows' technical writing department, saw an opportunity to create a more interactive experience with mobile

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Web Help. After downloading Flare 6.0, it took only two weeks to produce an initial version of the mobile Web Help for AquIre, and the final version was completed less than two weeks later–well in time for the production release of AquIre.

"Because we already had produced our online Help in Flare, it was just a matter of pulling the information the operators on the ground needed into the mobile Help guide," Heather Winch explained. "Also, Flare mobile output is platform-independent, so we didn't have to customize anything for the Trimble GPS device. We just put the mobile Help on there, and it worked immediately."

Reusability Leads to Leaps in Quality and Efficiency

The mobile Web Help is the latest of many benefits Thinking Windows has seen from Flare.

Mr. Tearle says, "My staff has embraced the single-source publishing regime, and it is paying substantial dividends. Just as our .Net programmers are busy creating reusable class code, our documenters are creating reusable topics. We see no difference in technique and application. So Flare has truly

made a big difference to our documentation production. The quality has jumped dramatically, and the reuse of topics is proving the efficiency is there to be had."

Videos Show the Finer Points

Thinking Windows also is taking advantage of MadCap Mimic for creating software simulation movies.

"We've used Mimic to create videos showing how to use our software, and we see a great opportunity to use it with our release notes for new software versions," Ms. Winch explains. "Sometimes our releases have so many small changes to the screens, Mimic would make it easier to see what is new."

Cutting Customers' Redundant Efforts

In the last year, Thinking Windows has begun evangelizing the benefits customers could gain by adopting Flare's single-source publishing for themselves. The Australia water companies are government owned and operated, and they are required by the Essential Services Commission to produce site-specific written procedures that explain how they are using Thinking Windows billing software. Today, nearly all of these customers cut and paste Thinking Windows Help into their documentation.

"Our clients are duplicating a lot of information, and whenever we change our software, they have to update their documentation," Mr. Tearle explains. "For our last user conference, Heather showed how, by adopting Flare, they could integrate their written procedures with our Help to streamline their manuals. It got their attention when we presented a customer's nineteen-page document and cut it down to three pages, just by replacing content with hyperlinks back to our online Help."

Already one early adopter has purchased Flare and is expected to demonstrate the benefits of integrating its documentation with Thinking Windows' online Help at the next user conference in August 2010.

"We are currently working to give our software a new look and feel that is Windows 7-compliant," Mr. Tearle notes. "When we do, all of our documentation and screens will change, and this will make our clients' information obsolete–except for the customer that has adopted Flare. This user's documentation will link automatically to our updated Help. When our other clients see how easy it is, we think they'll want to adopt it, too."