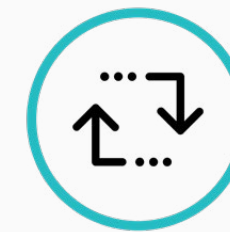madcap® software

84.51°

84.51° Replaces Traditional LMS with MadCap Flare and MadCap Central to Power Stratum Learning Center

LMS Replaced with Agile Delivery of How-To Guides, Training Content and More

🌐 www.8451.com

📍 Cincinnati, OH

INDUSTRY   Shopper Data Analytics

Retail analytics provider 84.51°, a subsidiary of Kroger—the second-largest general retailer and the seventeenth largest company in the United States, creates the Stratum Learning Center, a modern website powered by MadCap Flare that combines how-to guides, documentation, multimedia tutorials, and training.

84.51°, brings together customer data, predictive analytics, and marketing strategy to drive sales growth and customer loyalty for Kroger and more than 300 consumer-packagedgoods (CPG) companies in the United States. In support of these businesses, 84.51° has analyzed some 60 million households, resulting in more than 10 petabytes of data and 1 billion personalized offers delivered in the last year alone.

At the heart of the 84.51° portfolio is Stratum, a breakthrough analytics solution that combines rich insights into customer behavior with retail performance measures. Fueled by data on in-store and online transactions from one out of every two households in the U.S., Stratum is used to draw conclusions that reflect consumer behavior nationally.

To help its clients use the 100-plus reports available with Stratum, 84.51° provides the Stratum Learning Center, a modern website powered by MadCap Flare that combines how-to guides, documentation, multimedia tutorials, and training.

GOALS

- Create a unified Learning Center for the new Stratum product that brings together online guides, self-guided tutorials, videos, e-learning, and other resources
- Keep pace with an agile development team, making additions and updates to the Help content for 100-plus reports (and counting)
- Create a modern, intuitive web experience for clients and internal users
- Reuse content and templates across multiple products and Learning Centers

SOLUTIONS

- MadCap Flare for advanced single-sourcing and multi-channel content authoring
- MadCap Central to facilitate collaboration

BENEFITS

- **Unified Learning Center** — Based on MadCap Flare, the Learning Center integrate articles, documentation, and videos, plus online courses for clients—replacing an existing LMS system
- **Agile Delivery** — Topic-based authoring, single-source publishing, snippets and variables in MadCap Flare plus MadCap Central for SME content review enable 84.51° to make weekly documentation updates for the 100-plus Stratum reports
- **Modern Web Experience** — Micro Content, responsive design, side-navigation, and customization of the MadCap Flare-based Learning Center create an intuitive experience for users
- **Seamless Learning Experience** — Integration of MadCap Flare-based content and WalkMe lets users go from articles to guided tours within the Stratum product via a single click

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Documenting a New CPG Analytics Business

When 84.51° started building Stratum, the team knew that it would present a number of challenges and changes to their current ways of working; "Gone are the traditional two full days of on-site training," recalled Casey Schroeder, lead content strategist at 84.51°. "The way we get Help has evolved substantially in recent years, and it was important that we develop a better way of helping our clients by providing online Help that's available 24/7."

The education team at 84.51° recognized that the ability to reuse content would be critical for keeping pace with the large number of reports available to users of Stratum. The product has hundreds of measures, such as: How many stores sell a specific product? How many households purchased it? How often is the product repeat-purchased? Many measures are used across all the reports in Stratum, while other measures only appear in some reports.

"We needed a way to document each report and each measure in each report, ensuring that our definitions are the same across the board," Schroeder explained. "MadCap Flare, with its topic-based authoring and single-source publishing, was a natural choice."

Launching the Learning Center

After scoping out the design of the Learning Center, the education team took roughly three months to create the content and complete an internal soft launch and then an additional three months to complete the formal launch. In addition to topic-based authoring, the 84.51° content strategists used a snippet for every calculation and every definition in Stratum, as well as variables for the measure names, report names, and other values to ensure a very high level of consistency across the Stratum Learning Center.

> Our design team assisted with what the Learning Center would look like, but using MadCap Flare, I was able to develop the code, scripting, stylesheets, and content.
>
> **CASEY SCHROEDER**
> Senior Technical Writer and Content Strategies | 84.51°

"Our design team created mockups and helped us establish the look and feel of the Learning Center. Then in MadCap Flare, I was able to develop the code, scripting, stylesheets, and content," Schroeder noted. "Then we brought on two additional content strategists, and together we were able to get the rest of the content created and out the door. Flare made it possible because we could use shared sentences and definitions across our content. Snippets and snippet conditions were lifesavers for us."

Following the initial launch, the writing team soon realized that clients needed to understand more than how to use the reports and measures in Stratum, leading them to add a new Insights and Interpretation section to each report guide.

"Using topic-based authoring and snippets, we were able to put together new Report Setup and Insights and Interpretation sections for all of the reports within a month after the launch," Schroeder explains. "Flare made that process much faster than we could have hoped."
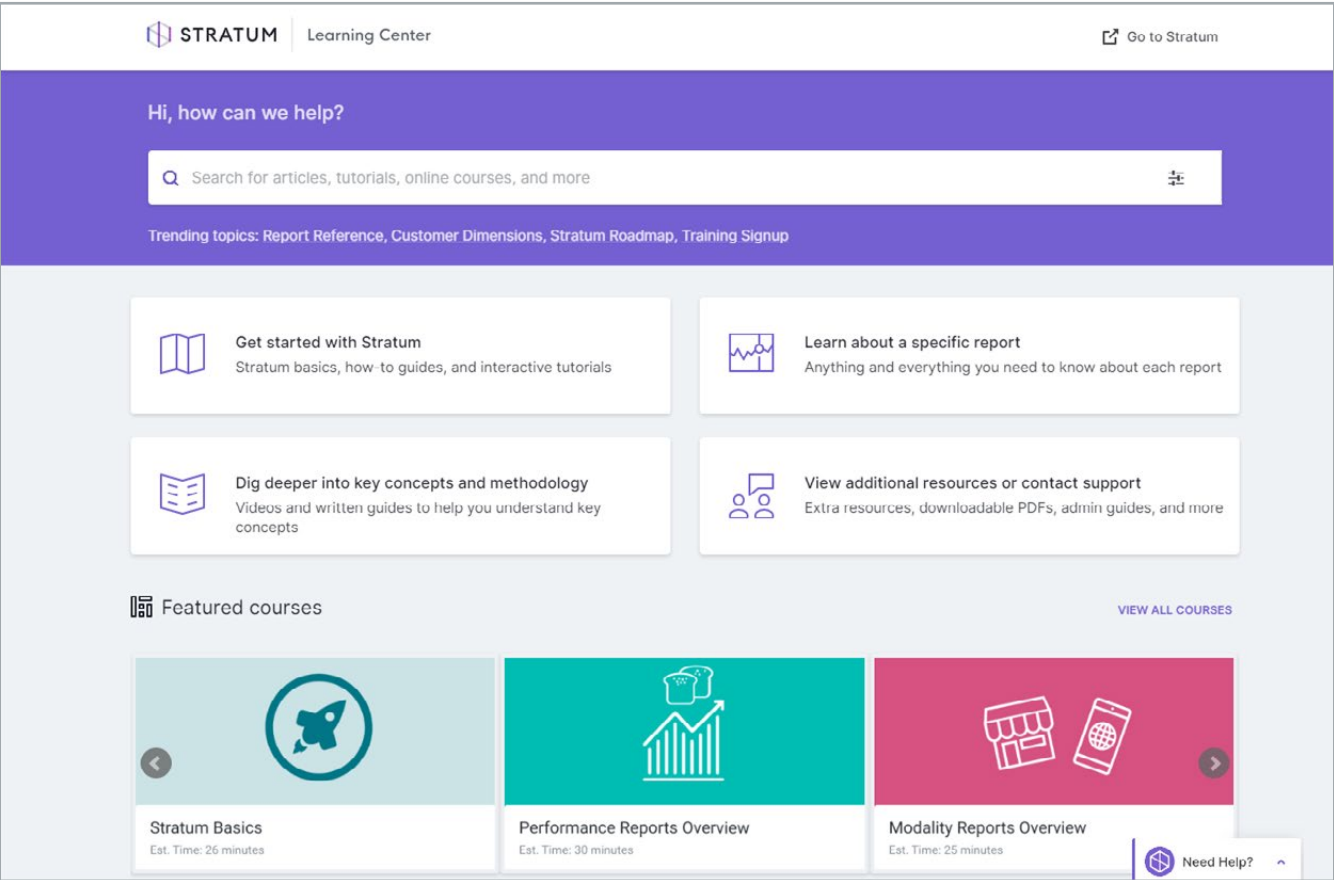
The Stratum Learning Center is a responsive, HTML5-based website with a home page that provides release notes, links to e-learning, tips and tricks, and a "Getting Started with Stratum" section, which is highly popular with new users.

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Today, the 84.51° content strategists have a weekly release cycle for updating the Learning Center for Stratum and its 100-plus reports.

Collaboration via MadCap Central

To facilitate subject matter expert (SME) reviews of Learning Center content, the 84.51° team takes advantage of MadCap Central. This enables the SMEs to see each other's comments and annotations in real time and react to them with updates, corrections or suggestions. Additionally, it's much easier to track and review feedback in MadCap Central rather than relying on a Word document that's easily lost or forgotten.

> Now our SMEs say, 'Don't send us Word documents or PDFs. Just put it in Central, and then we'll look at it.
>
> **CASEY SCHROEDER**
> Senior Technical Writer and Content Strategies | 84.51°

"MadCap Central is a good collaboration tool, but I wasn't expecting it to grow on our SMEs as much as it has," Schroeder notes. "Now they say, 'Don't send Word documents or PDFs. Just put it in Central, and then we'll look at it.'"

Providing Guidance on the Web and In-App

Today, 84.51° clients can learn how to use Stratum by going to the Stratum Learning Center, a responsive HTML5-based website with a home page that provides release notes, links to e-learning, tips and tricks, and a "Getting Started with Stratum" section, which is highly popular with new users. Essentially, it acts as an extension of the Stratum product with a similar design and the same domain. Additionally, Help content is embedded into the Stratum product to help users navigate the processes of using the reports.

"With MadCap Flare, we've created this Learning Center that clients can go to whenever they need help," Schroeder notes. "Our thought is that you can view both of them side-by-side or on

different monitors, so whatever you want to do, you can basically work through this Learning Center or get things piecemeal as you need them while using the product."

Significantly, the Stratum Learning Center is integrated with WalkMe, which helps navigate users through the steps of using software. Because MadCap Flare is based on industry-standard XML, the integration simply required the addition of a script to each Flare-based page in the Learning Center.

> If I'm in our Flare-based Learning Center, and I click on the "Show Me" button in a how-to article, it actually takes me back to the product and launches an interactive walk-through powered by WalkMe.
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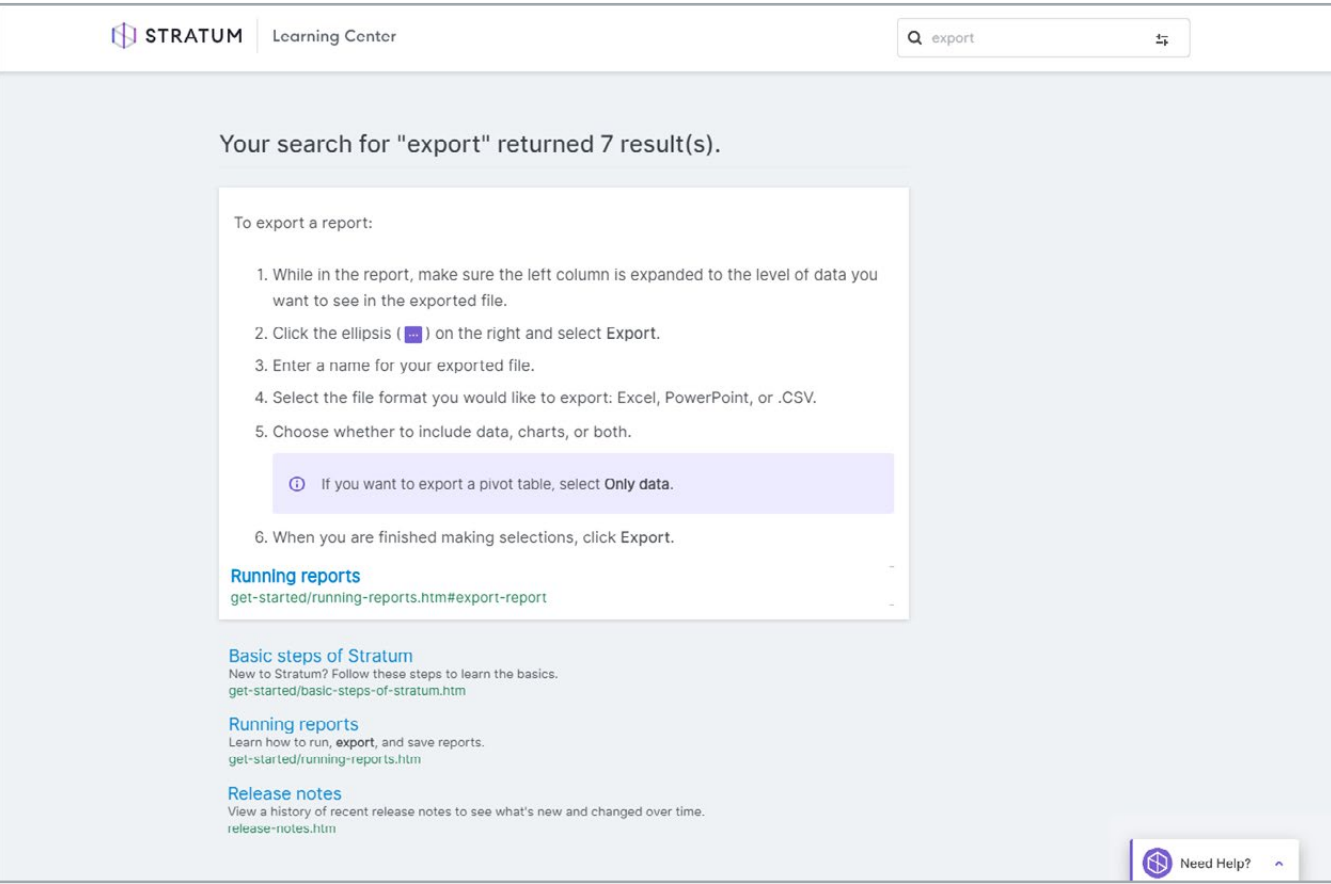
The technical writing team uses Flare's new micro content functionality to control search results and help users find the information they need quickly and efficiently.

"If I'm in our Learning Center, and I click on the 'Show Me' button in a how-to article, it actually takes me back to the product and launches an interactive walk-through powered by WalkMe, which walks me through exactly how to do something instead of having to read about it," Schroeder explains.

Modern Web Experience via Micro Content and Video

Micro content has played a big role in helping users to find the information they need about Stratum. Based on analytics about what clients are searching, the education team uses Flare's new micro content functionality to control search results—tailoring, for example, how a measure definition will show at the top above the reports in which it has been used.

> We love the micro content feature in MadCap Flare, and we have created hundreds of specialized micro content pieces in our Learning Center.

CASEY SCHROEDER
Senior Technical Writer and Content Strategies | 84.51°

"We love the micro content feature in MadCap Flare, and we have created hundreds of specialized micro content pieces in our Learning Center," Schroeder says. "For instance, the Kroger calendar is a super-popular request. Using micro content with Flare, we were able to put the calendar in the Learning Center and make it downloadable—right from the search results."

The 84.51° team also enriches users' experiences by integrating videos into some of the Stratum documentation. The short two- to four-minute videos are hosted on Vimeo and then linked to topics on specific concepts in the Learning Center using MadCap Flare.

"We use Flare's micro content feature with the videos, so that if clients search on a concept, the video will come up right in the search results. They don't even have to click into the page," Schroeder notes.

The investments in creating an intuitive experience have been popular with clients. Analysis of usage shows that 84.51° clients who visit the Learning Center, stay there, clicking through multiple pages.

"We looked into the lower search ratio, and what we've found is that clients use the learning paths that we've created for them in the Learning Center using Flare," Schroeder explains. "The clients are actually finding what they need from the side menu and linked or related articles, so they're not resorting to the search bar as often."

Integrated Training

In the past, 84.51° relied on a traditional learning management system (LMS) to provide online courses as a prerequisite to onsite training. However, single sign-on access wasn't an option, and the LMS wasn't integrated into the application, so clients didn't know where to go to access it. As a result, the LMS is strictly used for internal purposes now, and for client courses, the team has
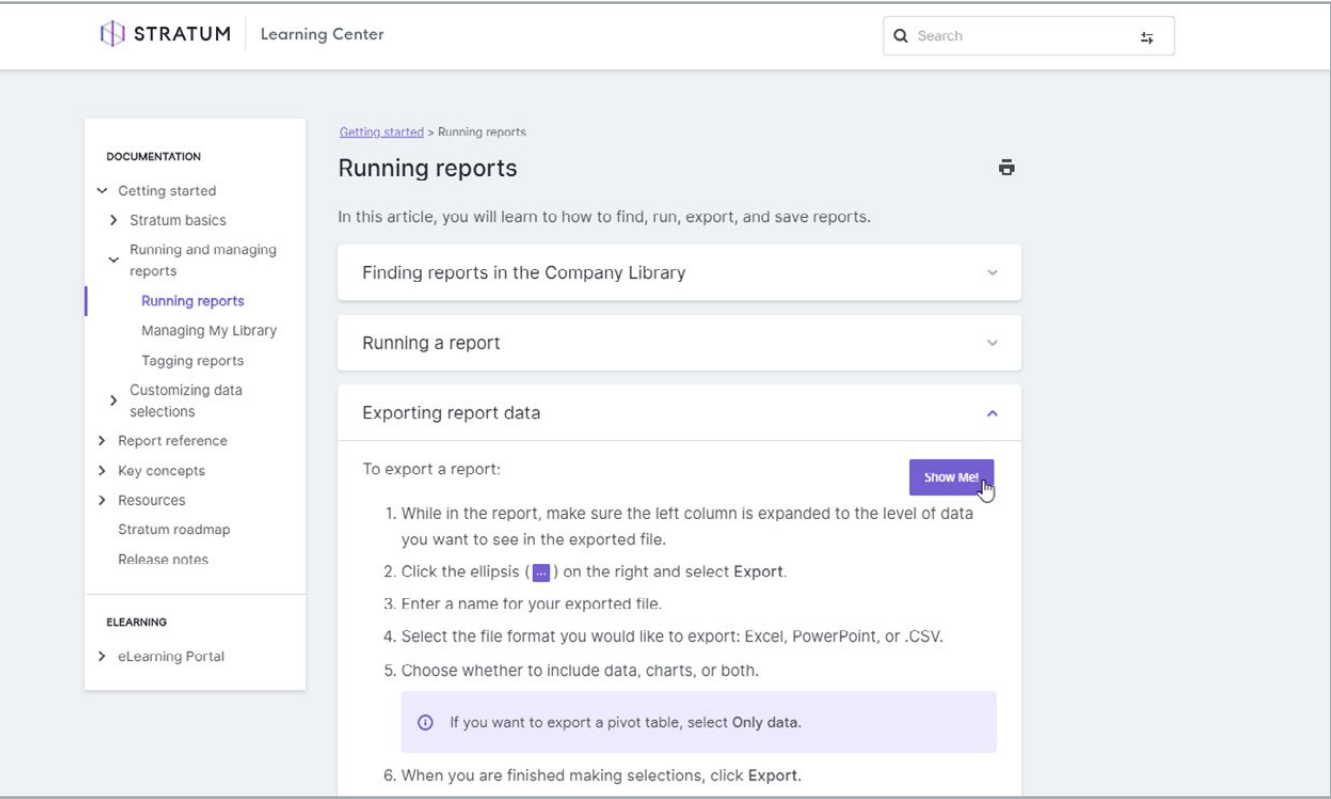
Integration of MadCap Flare-based content and WalkMe lets users go from articles to guided tours within the Stratum product via a single button click.

started replacing the LMS system with MadCap Flare. All Stratum courses can now be accessed directly in the Learning Center.

> ❝ By embedding the courses in Flare, we're making them all accessible from one location; clients don't have to go to an external LMS.
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"This is still in its very early stages, but we now have courses built in Articulate that are hosted in Flare, which you can take right here on our site," Schroeder explains. "By embedding our courses in Flare, we're making them all accessible from one location, and clients don't have to go to an external LMS. We've also embedded our training calendar and signup in Flare."

To help clients get up and running on Stratum, the 84.51° team also provides an onboarding checklist via the WalkMe widget that walks clients through key features and takes them to relevant articles in the Learning Center.

"We've heard great things from our clients and internal teams. We actually found that clients are starting with the onboarding checklist, but when they follow that up with virtual training, it's more low-level than expected because they've already done it all," Schroeder observes. "So, we're pivoting. We've canceled our Stratum Basics training based on this feedback and further enhanced our virtual training offerings to be more in-depth, because the Learning Center has already laid the groundwork and covered the basics."

Adding Learning Centers

Based on the success of the Stratum Learning Center, 84.51° has developed Learning Centers for two other products, Prism and Agatha, using a shared template in MadCap Flare that's managed through global project linking. The Prism product helps clients create coupons and marketing campaigns. Meanwhile, Agatha is an internal data platform used by 84.51° data scientists and engineers.

> ❝ The development team is amazed by what we've been able to do and how fast we've been able to make changes, and it's all possible because of MadCap Flare.
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Looking back, Schroeder recalls, "When we first announced to the development team that we were going to create a reference guide for every report, every concept, there was a bit of laughter and a fair amount of disbelief. Now, they're amazed and excited by what we've been able to do and how fast we've been able to make changes and stay agile, and it's all possible because of MadCap Flare."

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