

IAR Systems streamlines technical publishing.

Global provider of embedded-systems software revamps content management repository using Adobe FrameMaker to gain efficiencies, produce more content faster, and add value to product line.



"Our new structured environment has favorably influenced documentation production methods and quality. Based on our success using FrameMaker, our publishing roadmap looks promising and exciting."

Susanne Dahlén, Head of User Documentation, IAR Systems



SOLUTION

Adobe FrameMaker

RESULTS



STRUCTURED

Converting to structured XML-based authoring enabled extensive scripted reuse, better content management, and automatic updating



ADDED VALUE

Efficient workflow and faster localization improve documentation updating and availability, increasing product value and return on content



QUALITY ASSURANCE

Advanced support for coloring profiles improves quality and accelerates authoring, reviewing, and publishing without risking divergent content



VARIANT MANAGEMENT

Fine-grained conditional text results in documentation that best reflects thousands of possible combinations of product variants

IAR Systems

Established in 1983

Employees: 165

Uppsala, Sweden

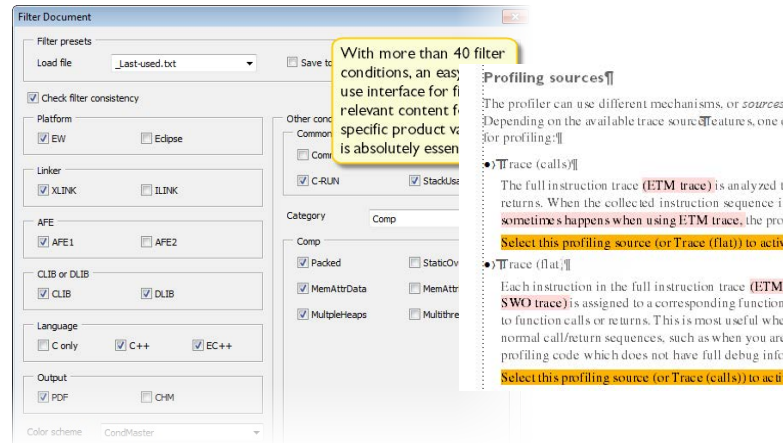
www.iar.com

The Content Era

<http://thecontentera.com>

CHALLENGES

- Deliver up-to-date user documentation more often
- Achieve a higher return on content
- Implement a modern, future-proof technical publishing environment
- Leverage investment in long-standing, high-value production chain



Improving return on content

IAR Systems is the world's leading provider of development tools for embedded systems. The company's software helps more than 46,000 customers worldwide to develop competitive products mainly in the areas of industrial automation, medical devices, consumer electronics, telecommunications, and the automotive industry.

IAR Systems publications are mostly user guides available for about 22 product variants, with approximately 1,500 pages of documentation in each variant. Publications are delivered as CHM and PDF files, using Adobe Acrobat Pro. Some product variants are localized to Japanese.

Recognized as a world leader in its field, IAR Systems must publish the most current, product-specific documentation possible, adding value to its products while improving end-user experiences. Turning to Adobe FrameMaker experts at The Content Era, IAR Systems set out to optimize its workflow and achieve a higher return on its content in three areas: quality, creation, and maintenance. Headed up by Jang F.M. Graat, Chief Technologist at The Content Era, the two teams converted IAR Systems' existing content in unstructured FrameMaker to a structured FrameMaker content repository via a custom plug-in to FrameMaker.

Immediate improvements became evident, enabling IAR Systems to publish better documents more frequently with less work. At the same time, the switch positioned the firm to consider dynamic publishing options that can make documentation easily searchable and more accessible overall.

Driving IAR Systems' move to XML-based authoring was the need for scripted reuse, improved content management, and automatic updating. The enhanced publishing environment provided many advantages, including structure validation, interoperability, ease of localization, and simplified version comparison.

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*Jang F.M. Graat, Chief Technologist,
The Content Era*

The new information structure does not use standardized DITA elements, but instead invokes customized EDD elements based on an information structure with concepts, tasks, and reference information that reflect specific product functionality.

To convert materials to DITA-inspired, structured FrameMaker, Graat dug deep into the ExtendScript capabilities in FrameMaker to build a plug-in that produced a structured, single-source environment in which content exists only in one location and can be reused across many publications. IAR Systems converted thousands of pages of existing documentation to XML. “Using a conversion table and ExtendScripts, our team of three accomplished the conversion with a minimum of hassle and manual work,” says Susanne Dahlén, Head of User Documentation at IAR Systems.

The conversion project did not interrupt IAR Systems’ process of creating, maintaining, or publishing content. The smooth conversion to a structured FrameMaker authoring environment made the most of IAR Systems’ mature publication chain.

“We have been happy users of FrameMaker for 17 years,” says Dahlén. “We started with unstructured and then migrated to XML with FrameMaker with great results. What we really appreciate about FrameMaker is that it can support both unstructured and XML documentation simultaneously, and facilitate a smooth organizational transition from unstructured and XML.”

IAR Systems has stayed with FrameMaker for so long because of existing expertise, a flat learning curve, and the ability to focus on the best ways to modularize content for efficient reuse. In addition, by choosing The Content Era as a technology partner, both teams understood IAR Systems’ extensive need for filter conditions, which FrameMaker has long supported.

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Powerful capabilities, greater efficiencies

Using the new repository supported by the custom plug-in to FrameMaker, newly found efficiencies freed up time so updated documentation is delivered more often than ever before, enhancing the company’s value proposition. “By means of the custom plug-in, modularized content is available as FrameMaker text insets that are updated to reflect the continuous development of our software,” says Dahlén. Documentation for each product variant is managed from dedicated FrameMaker books built on relevant reuse modules.

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

- Adobe FrameMaker
- Adobe Acrobat Pro

The new content repository has extremely powerful filtering mechanisms. Conditional text management, with over 40 conditions in various combinations, was instrumental to the success of using FrameMaker, along with the software's easy-to-use interface. "We have exceptionally detailed control over filter attributes. Instead of spending time determining the relevance of generic content to the product variant and then manually cutting and pasting from common text, we can focus on quality to ensure new features are unique to the product variant," says Dahlén.

Using traditional change bars is not feasible for content used simultaneously in different places. The customized FrameMaker plug-in solves this by means of coloring profiles based on the attributes for state of quality.

Other positive outcomes were also evident, including lower translation costs, improved metadata tagging, synchronized publishing, and the flexibility to use XML diffs to drastically reduce the time needed to review and approve materials. Also important was streamlined mapping of third-party component documentation to the company's standard formats.

Future plans

Now that its environment is XML-based, IAR Systems is positioned to evaluate future dynamic publishing options that will improve content search and accessibility. "With the huge volume of content in our user documents, relevant information has to be easily accessible," says Dahlén. "Because digital search is the norm for finding information, it's important to provide not only traditional content approaches like navigation and free text search but also to provide additional methods such as faceted search and dynamic content filtering."

Also under review is the possibility of producing HTML5 content to enable customers to filter content based on their needs—possibly reducing the number of documents IAR Systems would have to publish. "Our new structured environment has favorably influenced documentation production methods and quality. Based on our success using FrameMaker, our publishing roadmap looks promising and exciting," adds Dahlén.

For more information

www.adobe.com/products/framemaker



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