



MEMO

From: Andrew Morris
Technical Communicator

To: Tom Johnson
Technical Communication Project Manager

Subject: New Software Proposal

Date: November 24, 2014

New Software Solution – MadCap Flare

With advances in software and hardware occurring constantly, technical communicators are responsible for ensuring that new technology and new updates are transmitted throughout a company and to all clients and customers as quickly, accurately, and efficiently as possible. Our current software solution is manageable, but I have researched new solutions and found a better software solution: MadCap Flare. MadCap Flare is a new software tool, which will increase our speed, accuracy, and efficiency in completing projects and liaising with the rest of the company, especially our computer software engineers. In the rest of this memo, I will present the case for why we should invest in MadCap Flare and how this new solution will benefit technical communicators, computer software engineers, and the rest of the company.

Current Situation

Currently, we have a team of five technical writers plus a dedicated web writer who converts our Microsoft Word files to HTML. This process is laborious, linear, and inflexible. We are operating on a “craftsmen” model of authoring which is inefficient and causes confusion as documents vary by author, and vary due to updates. We are left with numerous different versions and no simple or efficient way to reconcile any differences. We are also unable to specialize general documents as needed. MadCap Flare offers solutions to each of these situations.

Why Flare?

MadCap Flare uses the W3C standards of XML and CSS as the skeleton for single sourcing and modular/topical authoring. By “tagging” content in a clear and consistent manner, our writing team can work on documentation simultaneously and ensure clarity and consistency of writing. The drag-and-drop interface encourages users to pick up concepts quickly and implement their ideas easily. Additionally, the option for Flare users to add custom tags ensures we can create content quickly and efficiently.



One remaining feature ensures we can make a transition quickly and painlessly: we are able to import our current Microsoft Word projects into Flare and integrate our current stylesheet. We should not need to recreate any content through this transition.

Challenges

The cost of implementing a new software solution is recognized, but the company will quickly recoup the outlays on more efficient use of company time, reduction of duplicated work, and the ability to appeal to a more varied clientele.

Other challenges will arise with the fears, concerns, and frustrations of fellow staff members, but we can help reduce these situations by ensuring that

- We have a plan
- We communicate clearly, effectively, and often with the whole team and company
- Use a variety of training tools

Ultimately, communicating effectively, setting realistic deadlines, and providing flexible training methods will ensure the transition will proceed easily.

Benefits

The two principal benefits of choosing MadCap Flare as our software solution are:

1. Increase the value of technical communicators

By demonstrating the inherent value of single sourcing and being masters of this increasing documentation concept, technical communicators can show knowledge and data *within* context as well as providing analysis throughout a business, organization or company.

2. Professionalize the team

Single sourcing encourages consistency and maintains organizational standards. Each writer will be responsible for their own content, but by using this content within a greater whole both team members and the company will view us as professionals with key skills for company success.

Thank you for considering my proposal, and I am available if you want to discuss my proposal further. You can contact me through email or call me at my extension.